

Reece...from Page 1A



Craftmaking was just part of the fun at the Annual Reece Farm and Heritage Center Open House on Saturday and Sunday. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

brow, to the ink of his pen, Reece is more celebrated today than the moments he toiled behind a plow, or endeavored to capture the thoughts inside his head on paper.

That much was evident on Friday. Yes, on Black Friday, the biggest shopping day of the year, those books and all things Reece began to fly off the shelves of the Gift Shop at the Reece Farm.

Many visitors saw the event as an opportunity to purchase a unique Christmas gift for someone special in their lives.

The Gift and Craft Shop feature books by and about Reece and others on subjects pertinent to Appalachia such as Zell Miller's *Purt Nigh Gone*, *The Old Mountain Ways*. Other hot items included note cards, homemade and handcrafted items including jewelry, baskets, soap, scarves, wooden bowls, pottery, ornaments, quilts, and Reece Farm embroidered towels and pillows. Like his volumes of poetry and fiction, Reece hats and t-shirts also were weekend best sellers.

"We sold triple the items this year that we did last year," said Dawn Scarbrough, manager of the Reece Gift Shop.

On Saturday, event goers enjoyed door prizes, refreshments, book signings by local authors, and a tour of the farm life that Reece lived in the first half of the 20th century. On Sunday, patrons perused the Gift Shop, and toured the Farm and Heritage Center.

"The Reece Center just has so much to offer in terms of learning how Byron Herbert Reece lived," said Peggy Deyton. "You have the farm, the Heritage Center, the Gift Shop, there's something here for everybody."

Deyton, who has a rare autographed copy of Reece's *Ballad of The Bones and Other Poems*, said Reece's work lives on thanks to the Heritage Center.

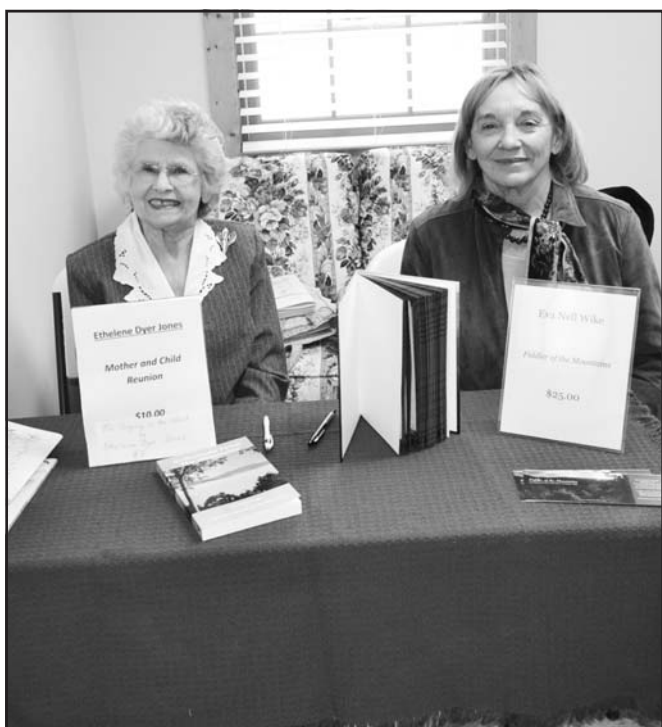
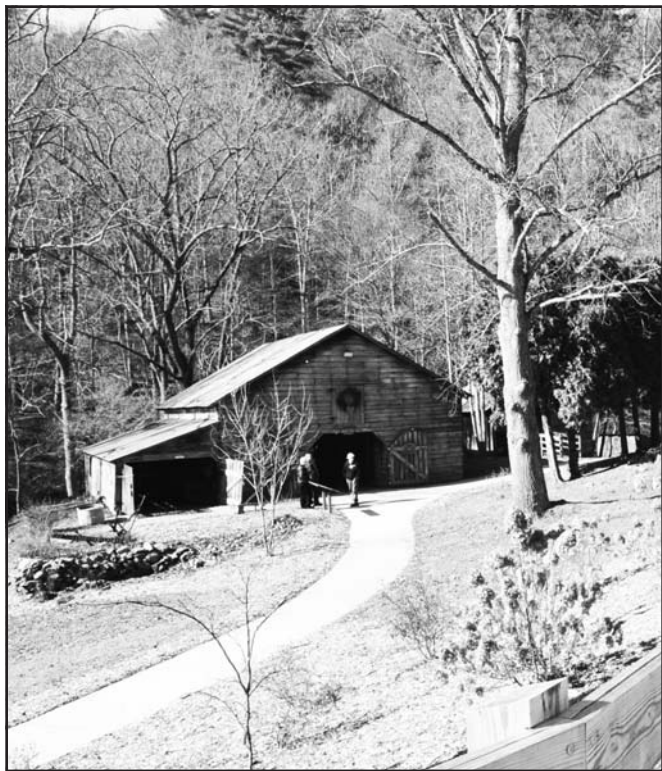
"His poetry is fascinating, some of it is very dark, but, it paints a picture of early Appalachia," she said.

Reece's works also provide an important lesson to today's youth, that no dream is beyond reach, Deyton said.

"How did Byron Herbert Reece happen?" Deyton said. "How did this little poor mountain boy become a legend? Where did those words come from? Byron Herbert Reece was really quite incredible."

"He didn't have Internet, he didn't have TV or radio. All he had was a few books, and the Bible," Deyton said. "What he accomplished with so few tools, it was simply incredible."

Reece Society President



From signed books by local authors to a tour around the Reece Farm, a good time was had by all over the weekend. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

John Kay said that the Hub Reece phenomena would continue into 2014.

The center hosted 30 events in 2013 that included weddings, tours by church groups, family reunions, field trips by students, and gatherings of historical societies.

The Reece Society will expand on that in the coming year.

"The weather was great for this year's event," Kay said. "We couldn't have asked for two days of more pristine weather. We could only hope for this kind of weather in the future."

Speaking of the future, Kay said attendance will improve in 2014. Almost 2,000 people visited the center in 2013.

"We were hurt this year by those prolonged periods of rain," he said. "We had a lot of

wet weather days that weren't conducive to our venue. If we can get decent weather, with the exposure we've had these first two seasons, we should increase the flow of visitors through here."

The Society looks for more field trips by senior groups, public and private school students and, of course, more church groups, as well as college students in 2014, Kay said.

Kay said that the Society has learned through the experience of the first two seasons that small group visitations are ideal for the venue.

"These need to be scheduled well in advance so that proper preparations can be made," he said.

The small groups that the Society will encourage to utilize the center include Sunday School classes, garden clubs, book clubs, historical society events, civic groups, and school field trips.

In 2013, two of the larger outings at the venue included the Union County Historical Society and Dahlonega Historical Society picnics.

A total of 10 special groups found their way to the Center. They included several committees representing various organizations, as well as church, literary, and special interest groups like the Master Gardeners.

The staff of the Georgia Mountain Regional Commission held a meeting and a photo shoot at the Center, an event that concluded with a catered lunch at the Reece Pavilion.

The Center will be closed until April with events resuming at that time. 2014 events include the successful Trailfest event in May, the Reece Society's 11th Annual Meeting at the end of May,

and various scheduled visits from a diverse group of organizations.

The 11th Annual Meeting will be held May 31, 2014 at 10 a.m. at the Reece Pa-

vilion. Robert "Terry" Reece, nephew of Byron Herbert Reece, will be the keynote speaker. Terry Reece, son of Hub's brother T.J. Reece, has distinctive memories of his

Uncle Hub.

It's a date you'll want to save to have the opportunity to hear Terry Reece's memories of his Uncle Hub Reece.