

Herald
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“Mountain heritage Award Is Presented To Ferguson”

Western Carolina University’s 1982 Mountain Heritage Award went last Saturday to Douglas James Ferguson, a potter of international reputation and a native of Possum Trot in Yancey County, for “creating works of art that preserve in sculpture, pottery, and tile the life of our mountain land.”

In a citation accompanying the presentation, WCU Vice Chancellor H.F. Robinson, said that Ferguson’s art “forms today a rich part of the culture that will be the heritage of future generations.”

The award, presented annually during the celebration of Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University, came as a complete surprise to the 70 year old master craftsman who operates the famed pigeon Forge Pottery five miles northwest of Gatlinburg across the mountains in Tennessee.

With his alma mater, Mars Hill College, meeting the WCU Catamounts on the gridiron for the first time since 1967, Ferguson had been persuaded by his wife, Ruth, to join their daughter, Esther Booth; his sister, Margaret Zelaasko, and cousin, Nelleen Robinson, for the Heritage Day celebration.

A bronze tablet presented by Dooley to Ferguson read:

“Western Carolina University Mountain Heritage Award, 1982 presented to Douglas James Ferguson in recognition of his contributions to the preservation and interpretation of the heritage and culture of Western North Carolina.”

In a ceremony on the lawn of the Chancellor’s Residence, Dooley pointed out that “the award is yet young, established only in 1976.”

“It has gone to authors, to preservers of mountain folk music and dance, to those who have helped keep alive in unique ways the Indian and pioneer heritages of our region, and to the region’s largest newspaper,” he explained.

“This year, it is a special source of pride for the university to recognize a person who is helping to create a very tangible part of our heritage, and to preserve in a singular way many aspects of our broader culture.

“This he is doing through a special form of art,” Dooley said, “and he thus becomes the first artist, the first artisan, and the first craftsman to be recognized with the Mountain Heritage Award.

“We hope that this particular superlative will be as significant and meaningful to him as it is to the university.

“His 47 years as a craftsman and artist have given us, the Southland, the nation, and many other parts of the world a perspective on life and customs of Southern Appalachia in a unique form, that of ceramics and pottery.

“Since 1935, Douglas James Ferguson, whom we honor today with the 1982 Mountain Heritage Award, had developed to a high art, ceramics stoneware, pottery, and artistic tiles, and is making a lasting contribution to our mountain heritage.”

Dooley said that Ferguson’s work is imbued not only with technical excellence not only with technical excellence alone we would gladly honor him.”

