PRESENTATION OF 1993 MOUNTAIN HERITAGE DAY AWARD
Chancellor Myron L. Coulter
September 25, 1993

The traditions that we have celebrated on Mountain Heritage Day, from the beginning of these observances in 1974, have included the human and natural forces that have shaped Western North Carolina.

Today, we present the 1993 Mountain Heritage Award to the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, in recognition of the unique way the folk school has helped to preserve mountain culture and to promote education about the mountain way of life.

Throughout its 68-year history, the John C. Campbell Folk School has stood as a driving force in revitalizing the Southern Appalachian handicraft movement and in giving dignity to the mountain life style.

It was founded by Olive Campbell and Marguerite Butler, two broad-minded educators whose ideal was to model a mountain school after the folk schools of rural Denmark. Their novel teaching methods engendered cooperation and understanding, and they forged an uncommon collaboration with the people of Cherokee County.

The John C. Campbell Folk School fosters individual expression and creativity through crafts, gardening, music and dance.

In recent years, it has taken on new life, thanks to its director, Jan Davidson, previously the curator of our Mountain Heritage Center. Jan's zeal and his knowledge of mountain heritage have helped invigorate the school, broaden its course offerings, and bring recognition to this singular institution in our midst.

Today, the folk school comprises 42 buildings on a 365-acre farm. Some 4,000 students a year – from preschoolers to senior citizens – participate in courses such as dancing, music, beekeeping, crafts, wildflowers, and other mountain arts. And the campus is now listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places.

Perhaps the John C. Campbell Folk School's enduring contribution to mountain heritage, though, is embodied in its motto: "I sing behind the plow," from an Old Danish poem. It captures the school's tenet that everyone is a craft person, a creator of beauty.