

Parris Receives Mountain Heritage Award

—Continued From Page One

author, and mountain son. In the discovery and recording of the humor and the history, the music and the mysteries of his native highlands, he had enriched the lives of the people he loves, and who love him, and has proved himself a man to match the mountains."

In the midst of classroom pursuits, and the basic teaching, research, and service mission of the university, Mountain Heritage Day was like no

other day in the academic year.

As the day's co-chairmen, Linda Perry and John Slater, said, "it's a day like our mountain forebears used to have, after the crops were gathered and before winter sets in. The kind of gathering where a man can demonstrate his prowess with a rifle or an axe, where the womenfolk get to set a spell with their neighbors near and far, and where the young'uns show each other

who's bigger'n stronger'n faster, too."

There was a children's dog show, for all kinds of canines, and the day was filled with weaving, chair caning, leather-working, woodcarving, pottery, needlework, glass staining for windows, and other crafts booths and demonstrations. Some folks showed how to rive shingles, others how to press cider, and how to shoe horses.

There was even a tobacco-

spitting contest in the warm midafternoon October sun.

As the evening came on, they broke out the barbecue and then the square dancers took over, with music by Marc Pruett and his New Day Country Band of Asheville, and Doug Davis of Cullowhee doing the calling.

And it was in the swirl and excitement of all those tributes to yesteryear, the flavor of which might have been lifted straight from one of his columns or books, that John Parris was honored.

The criteria for the award, Dr. Robinson said, provide that it be made "for outstanding contributions to the preservation or interpretation of the history and culture of Southern Appalachia, or for outstanding contributions to research on, or interpretation of, contemporary or future problems which threaten the quality of life of the people of the region."

The work of Parris, Dr. Robinson said, makes it "abundantly clear that he satisfied these criteria in every respect . . . for John Parris has done more than re-tell stories already familiar . . . he has sought out hidden stories, lost treasures, and fast-fading memories and brought them to robust and vigorous life. His is painstaking research, his is pioneering work, capped by a writing style that has illuminated our heritage as it has not been lighted before."

Dr. Robinson also cited Parris' career as a wire services reporter and war and diplomatic correspondent — a career that included coverage of World War II in Europe and North Africa and the founding of the United Nations. He noted that Parris' newspaper work began when he was in his early teens, as a correspondent in Jackson County for the Asheville Citizen-Times, and made him, at age 17, the chief of the Raleigh bureau of United Press.

And to point up the international correspondent's career that many present-day readers don't know about, Robinson quoted what Robert Bunnelle, chairman of the board of the

Citizen-Times who directed the AP coverage of World War II in Europe, wrote in a foreword to a Parris book: "For long years, John Parris roamed a Blue Book world of royalty and diplomats as a reporter for those great wire services — The Associated Press and United Press International."

"We are glad that John Parris always preferred the lure of the Oconaluftee and the tumbling waters of the Tuckaseegee to the 'sparkle of the Seine,' and we are glad he came back to the misty mountains of the Great Smokies," Dr. Robinson said.

It was in the early 1950s that Parris gave up a brilliant wire services career to return to Western North Carolina, and soon there after he began his "Roaming The Mountains" column.

Robinson also praised Parris' work in assisting the advancement of WCU and said "he has played a central role in proposing and working to bring to reality the concept of a WCU Mountain Heritage Center, on which construction work soon will begin."

Mrs. Parris, asked to stand with her husband as he received the citation, was described by Robinson as "one we know means most to him . . . and know of all his achievements, John is most proud of having married Dorothy."



Columnist Honored

John Parris, Asheville Citizen-Times columnist and author, received the Western Carolina University Mountain Heritage Award Saturday from WCU Chancellor, Dr. H. F. Robinson, right,

against the backdrop display of WCU's new Mountain Heritage Center, expected to get under way in early 1977. (Photo by Harry Duke)

Parris Receives Heritage Award

Asheville Citizen 10/17/76

CULLOWHEE — Western Carolina University Saturday night conferred its first Mountain Heritage Award on John Parris, the man who did come home again.

The presentation, made in Whitmire Stadium as dusk shadowed the nearby peaks, climaxed a day-long, old-fashioned get-together at WCU — its annual Mountain Heritage Day.

With his wife, Dorothy Luxton Parris, at his side, Parris received from Western Carolina Chancellor H. F. Robinson the

award plaque, fashioned from a weathered board.

A simple inscription, etched in copper by WCU Art Professor Ted Matus, read "Western Carolina University, Mountain Heritage Award, 1976, John Parris."

It was the first award of its type ever given by the university, and Parris was selected to be the first recipient by a special university committee headed by James E. Dooley, vice chancellor for development and special services.

In a citation also awarded to

the famed newspaperman and author, the university said:

"The people of the mountains owe an unpayable debt to John Parris, the master chronicler of their lives and their land. More than any other person, he has kept alive the wondrous ways, the vanishing arts, the disappearing days, and the lingering legends that are the heritage of the hills."

Borrowing from titles of Parris' four best-selling books, the citation continued:

"In 'roaming the mountains,' John Parris justly may claim

that these are 'my mountains, my people.' As one truly 'mountain bred,' he has found in 'these storied mountains' old times, magic moments, the seasons' glories, and ferreted out hidden lore, and through his peerless writing, preserved them for now, and for all time.

"Western Carolina University, in grateful acknowledgement of his monumental work, presents its first Mountain Heritage Award to John Parris, brilliant newspaperman, distinguished

—Turn To Page Five—A