

Library...from Page 1

erty owner for more than 40 years in the Towns County area, and she was also a full time resident since 2004.

Mary Burkett Strain grew up in Birmingham, Ala., and graduated from Birmingham Southern College in 1963 with a degree in Elementary Education.

For many years, Mary Burkett Strain taught children from pre-school through the third grade, and she absolutely adored it. To Mary Burkett Strain, according to her husband's words, these are the "formative years when children are learning to read, and she loved teaching children to read, as she was an avid reader herself."

The Mayor's Park in Young Harris, is the perfect location for the Little Free Library because, as Doug Strain pointed out, "Mama Mary, or Mimi, as she was called by her grandchildren, often brought them and the children of families visiting her home to play at the 'purple playground.' Therefore, this has become a special place in our grandchildren's memories," and therefore a perfect place for such a gracious donation in memory of such a gracious lady.

In addition, to the memories held by the family for the 'purple playground,' the Little Free Library will always have "Marigold Hill," which is a book published by one of Mary Burkett Strain's daughters, Susan, and the inspiration for the book came from the numerous letters Mary Burkett Strain wrote to her grandchildren which "contained stories about her life and travels."

Making not only the park special, but now the Little Free Library will always be a reminder of the greatness and fondness one woman held for her love reading and teaching children to read.

As Doug Strain explained, "the title of the story was 'Marigold Hill' because it was the nickname for Mary's home ever since she allowed her grandchildren to sprinkle marigold seeds all over her yard."

According to Doug Strain, "the concept of the Little Free Library was started in Wisconsin where Susan's family lives and has spread worldwide. The Little Free Li-

brary is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization that "promotes community, literacy, and the love of reading by creating free book exchanges in neighborhoods worldwide," and by the end of this year alone, "between 10,000 and 12,000 free library's will be erected."

This newest edition to the Little Free Library organization is located in Mayor's Park in Young Harris, but the book case for the library was created by Art Millican, Jr. of Sleepy Hollow Enterprises of Blairsville, and contains two enclosed shelves; the bottom one will be solely for children's literature while the top shelf will be open to books for all ages.

The colors of the book case represent the purple of Young Harris College and the playground equipment and the yellows and reds of marigold blossoms.

The Little Free Library area in the park has a planting area containing marigold seeds under the mulch, and will be joined by other flowering plants from Mary Burkett Strain's own garden.

The reading area will also have two benches installed soon, so that visitors to the Little Free Library will have a place to sit and enjoy the books.

Doug Strain would like to add some special thank yous to the many people who helped to make this dream a reality: The Little Free Library organization for granting their membership, Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby and the Young Harris City Council for donating a portion of the park for the memorial, Art Millican, Jr. and Sleepy Hollow Enterprises for designing and constructing the little library, Krista Corey and Roy Wright for their help in erecting the little library, The Enotah Garden Club, of which Mary was a member, for the memorial plaque, Sam Ledford for the construction of the rock benches that will flank the library, and Randy Dunn for contributing a pint of Young Harris purple paint.

For more details, go online to littlefreelibrary.org; also a special thank you from the citizens of Towns County for allowing us to have such a special place in our community.

Patton...from Page 1

County High Schools since that time.

She began her basketball career at Towns County Recreation Department from the third grade through the sixth, played for the Middle School Lady Indians in seventh grade, and was the leading scorer for the Lady Indian JV's as an eighth grader prior to unprecedented success with the Lady Indian Varsity from her freshman year forward.

She has also played travel basketball with various teams from the fifth grade forward with great personal and team successes included.

Among innumerable successes by her various teams are a state runner up finish for her Full Throttle 10 and Under recreation team in 2008, a third place finish for her DC Lady Tigers in 2011 in the state in AAU Division I, and the frequently documented successes of her Lady Indians teams.

Two Region 8-A Championships, two trips to the state tournament, and a state Final Four appearance last year are included within 23-7 and 26-5



Stephanie Patton continues her assault on the record books. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

team records for Patton's first two Lady Indian teams.

With almost two years remaining at TCHS, Patton has quietly committed her services for the collegiate level of play.

While officially signing scholarships is not allowed until a player reaches the senior year in high school, commitments may be made prior to this time and she has verbally committed to continue her career at Division I Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA.

Liberty has one of the top women's basketball programs in

the country with an especially noteworthy accomplishment of being included in the NCAA Field of 64 for Division I post season tournament play in 15 of the last 17 seasons.

But of greater significance than a very competitive basketball program is the fact that Liberty fits vital criteria for Stephanie such as a Christian environment and coaching staff, a beautiful campus with many extracurricular activities for students and athletes, and a challenging curriculum.

Liberty fits the bill in

all of these categories, making the school a perfect fit for Stephanie.

And speaking of college athletics, Patton's older sister and former Lady Indian three-year starter, Lindsay, and her father, Steve, are already involved in two separate sports at Point University in West Point. Lindsay is in her second year on the Lady Skyhawks basketball team, while Steve has just completed his first season as the head coach of both the women's and men's varsity golf teams.

It was, in fact, an ultra-successful season for both golf squads in the school's first year of competition with all freshmen on the women's team and just one sophomore and the remainder freshmen on the men's team.

Congratulations are extended from this reporter and the *Towns County Herald* to Stephanie Patton for a job well done in reaching the 1,000 points plateau in such short order and best wishes are extended to Stephanie for her future endeavors both on and off the basketball court.

Tower...from Page 1

fire protection and added water supply for the school and the surrounding communities."

Michael Anderson of the Towns County Board of Education added that "this effort is not only for the fire protection of the school, but it also adds to the well-being of the students and educators who are at the school every day."

Hiawassee City Manager Rick Stancil said that "this vital project would not have been possible without the cooperation and support of the Towns County Board of Education for allowing the easement to the water tower through the school grounds, and this includes the support and cooperation of our School Superintendent, Melissa Williams."

Stancil also wanted to convey his sincere appreciation "for the support of One Georgia Authority and the Appalachian Regional Commission because this project would not have been possible without their contributions of almost \$600,000."

Stancil continued by saying that "this is a significant investment in Hiawassee's infrastructure and will pave the way for future development in this area."

On hand to help break ground for this phenomenal community investment were members of the Hiawassee City Council, Towns County Board

of Education, principals of the Towns County Comprehensive Schools, Melissa Williams, School Superintendent, and Mayor Mathis.

Stancil said that "the site preparation is on the way and the project should be completed within two months, although this has been a project that has been five years in the making."

The City of Hiawassee received bids for the water tank and water line back in September, and the city engineers, and Engineering Management, Inc., reviewed and tabulated the bids, and the Council awarded the water tank contract to the Crom Corporation of Gainesville, Fla.

The low bid was in the amount of \$439,100.

The Council awarded the water line contract to Cedar Farms and Construction, Inc., in the amount of \$193,528.77.

Towns County is lucky to have received so much "state and federal assistance." Towns County government will have to kick in some funds which will come from Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax funds, but "luckily, the bulk of the cost has been in the form of state and federal grants."

For more details regarding the water tower, please contact Rick Stancil, City Manager, at the Hiawassee City Hall, 706-896-2202, extension. 3.

Parade...from Page 1

in the parking lot of the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, with parade float line-up at 4:00pm. When asked about the number of participants in this year's parade, Vicki Ellis reported that it is "hard to tell because in addition to those people that signed up prior to today, more local patron's and community members will show up today," but regardless of the count which appeared to be well over thirty, the parade this year looked to be a huge success.

After lining up at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, the parade then continued through the main street of Hiawassee, GA in order for all parade goers to join in the festivities and kick off the Christmas season.

The parade floats were all be decorated according to this year's theme, "Christmas at Home," and as the sheriff's department assured, all parade floats were



Towns County Veterans got in on the act on Saturday. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

well lit, not only ensuring safety as the parade made its way through the chilly night, but the lights also add that extra bit of Christmas to the night.

Since there was no entry fee for the parade float participants, the sheriff's office asked that parade participants join in the Empty Stocking

program by bringing new, unwrapped toys to donate to the fund, and the float participants did not disappoint.

In addition, to the toys donated during the parade, any person interested in helping in other ways can contact Vicki Ellis at the Town's County Sheriff's Department at 706-896-4444 to find out how. Other ways people can help this phenomenal program is by "adopting a child," or even "adopting a family," by getting the necessary information from Vicki Ellis which will include a list of "wish items" for that child or that particular family.

Any donation whether toys, money, or even volunteers to help with the shopping, wrapping and delivering of the gifts is greatly appreciated. Sheriff Chris Clinton's only goal is for all children to have a Christmas they will never forget because they do not want any child "to miss out on the magic of Christmas morning."

Reece...from Page 1

published a third volume of poetry, *A Song of Joy*. In 1955, he unveiled his second novel, *The Hawk and the Sun* and his final volume of poetry, *The Season of Flesh*.

The Reece Farm and Heritage Center is a lasting example of Hub Reece's life, and what he had to do to survive before the first word of poetic prose was penned, said local historian Jerry Taylor.

"The Reece Farm and Heritage Center is a good example of Appalachian Heritage," said Taylor. "Farming was a way of life in early Appalachia."

From the sweat of his 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.

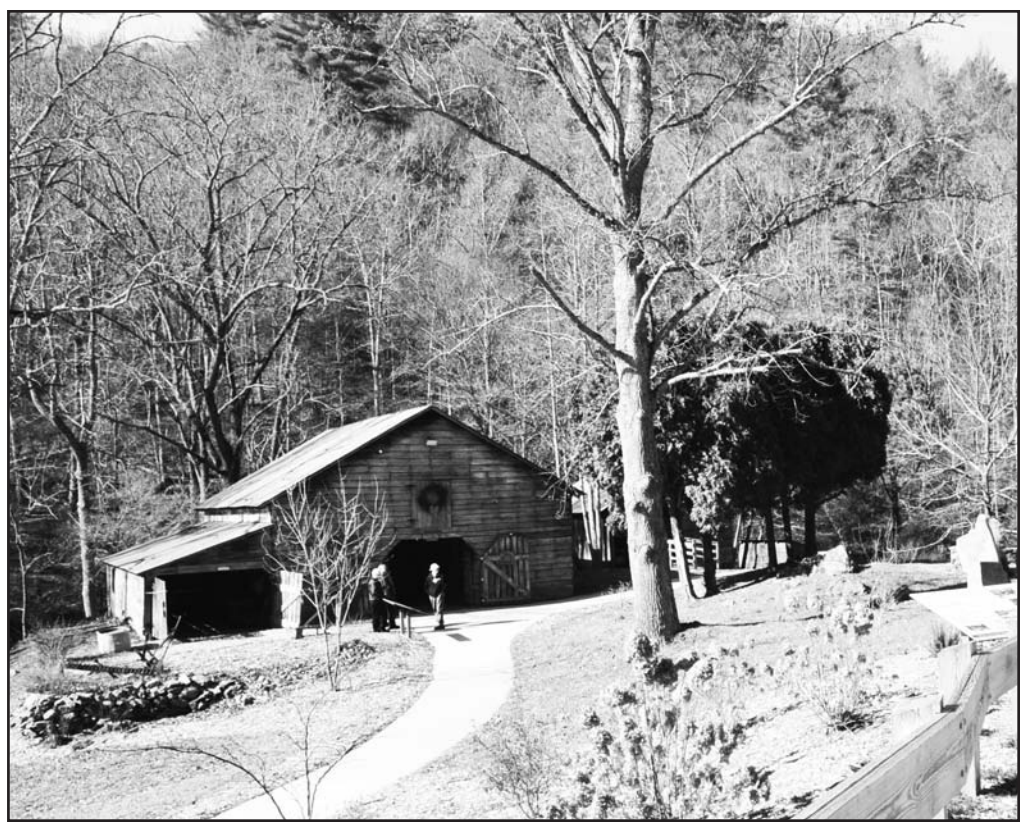
The Gift and Craft Shop feature books by and about Reece and others on subjects pertinent to Appalachia such as Zell Miller's *Purt Nigh Gone*, *The Old Mountain Ways*. Other hot items included note cards; homemade and handcrafted items including jewelry, baskets, soap, scarves, wooden bowls, pottery, 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



It was a weekend to remember at the Reece Farm and Heritage Center in Choestoe. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

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 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.