

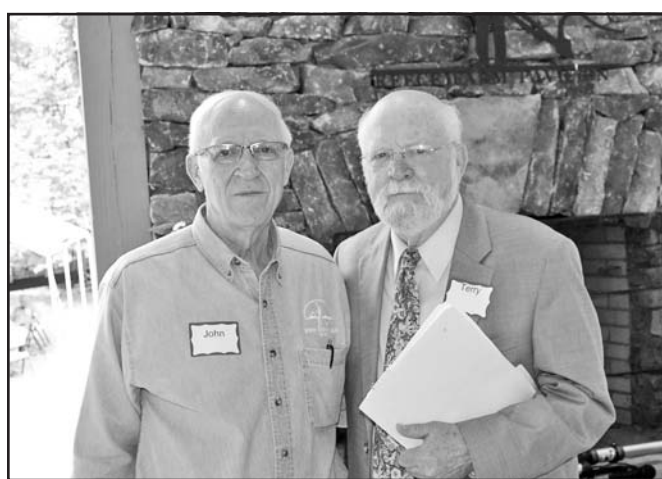
Reece...continued from Page 1A

Terry Kay said he liked the notion of Reece having "secrets."

"I like believing that Reece buried them by the thousands in the words he wrote," Terry Kay said. "Yet, for me, nothing was more unique about Byron Herbert Reece than this: He heard the music of the Earth – music not only of fiddle and flute, or harp and harmonica, but music of the plaintive voice of his history, word-music from the hills of Scotland and Ireland, and from the Old Testament poets of the King James Bible, and from the troubadours of the Middle Ages, and from hymn books of one-room churches making joyful noise."

When he wrote his own words to accompany that music, Terry Kay said Reece wasn't stealing or plagiarizing; "he was continuing."

"It was as though he had been anointed by celestial command as *One Who Carries On*," Terry Kay said. "When you read his poems aloud, especially the ballads, you can feel the heartbeat of that ancient music on your tongue. Your soul stands up to dance, and – to steal a thought from an old friend – with Re-



Dr. John Kay and his brother, author, Terry Kay. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

ece, you dance to the lyrics."

The music was in Reece's history, Terry Kay said, but it was also in the ground that he worked.

"For those who have never followed the plow, you cannot know the sound the blade makes in its slicing of soil," Terry Kay said. "It has a staccato rhythm – spits of a scraping, then silence, then the grinding of rock, then scraping. It is like a prolonged sigh, the humming of a lullaby. It is hypnotic and mesmerizing. The only counterpoint is the jangle of chains and the grunt of the mules and maybe the buzz of a horsefly."

"And if you give it some liberty, you could say the middle-buster had its own music, as did the two-horse

turner and the corn planter and the spring-tooth harrow and the fertilizer distributor," Terry Kay said.

A writer needs to hear that music – his music, her music – and it does not matter what he or she is writing, "poetry or prose," Terry Kay said.

"I do not know what sort of singing voice Byron Herbert Reece had. I've heard a recording of him speaking, as many of you might have, and from that I would suggest that as much as he favored classical music – choosing to die by it – he did not have a voice for the operas of Puccini or Verdi or any of the others. He was not Pavarotti. Yet, I am certain – in the deepest well of my certainty – that he sang

the songs of his history – the ballads and the church songs – as he followed his plow or struck the ground with his hoe or splintered firewood with his ax," Terry Kay said.

"Some hear their music from an iPod. Others hear it in a concert hall. Hub Reece heard it in fields carved from mountains. He might have planted corn or wheat or sorghum cane or potatoes, but he harvested words and fashioned them into symphonies," Terry Kay told the crowd.

Reece was in the perfect place to harvest words, Terry Kay said.

"There is no better writing studio on Earth than a field for corn, or for cotton, or for anything else that could use a mule and a plow," he said. "But that's a romantic notion for me – the mule and the plow, I mean. There's more to it than that. It's the growing of things that matters, whether you plant by mule or machine, by hoe or by helicopter. You have to keep up with the growing. It feeds both sinew and soul. I suspect it's why Reece wanted to be home when he was in such places as Atlanta or Los Angeles. He had something of a poetic damnation to deal with: he lamented not having the time to write because of the burden of work, yet he had to have the burden of work to inspire the writing."

Society remembers Sellers

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
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Choestoe - The Byron Herbert Reece Society's membership has voted unanimously to create a memorial fund in honor of Reece Society cofounder and driving force, Dr. Bettie Sellers.

Dr. Sellers died May 17th at the age of 87 in Hayesville, NC.

Georgia's former Poet Laureate, was an influential force in founding the Byron Herbert Reece Society, which today, is almost 300 members strong, said Dr. John Kay, on Saturday at the 10th Annual Byron Herbert Reece Society Meeting at the Reece Heritage Center and Farm in Choestoe.

"She was an original member of the organization and has been a cheerleader in every respect, both in her time and her financial support," Dr. Kay, Reece Society president, and chairman of the Society's Board of Directors, told the Society's membership on Saturday.

Fleming Weaver, of the Society's Executive Committee, recommended to the membership on Saturday, that a memorial fund be established in honor and memory of Dr. Sellers.

"And that the executive committee recommend to the board, an appropriate organizational structure, and use of said funds," Weaver recommended.

Dr. Kay told the membership that Dr. Sellers had given instructions for her memorial service that in lieu of flowers, that donations be made to either the Pastor's Discretionary Fund at Sharp Memorial United Methodist Church, or, the Byron Herbert Reece Society.

"Some contributions have been received in Bettie's memory by the Society," Dr. Kay said.

Society members voted unanimously to approve the creation of the memorial fund in Dr. Sellers' honor.

Sellers was a noted author, historian and of course, poet. She was a leader and cofounder of the Byron Herbert Reece Society, and she understood Reece better than anyone.

Like Reece before her, Dr. Sellers was a legend in her own time. She won an Emmy Award for her role in producing the film depicting Reece's life, *Voices*.

Dr. Sellers authored several volumes of poetry and was well published in academic literary journals and anthologies. Her many awards include Poet of the Year by the American Pen



Dr. Bettie Sellers

Women, Governor's Award in the Humanities, Georgia Author of the Year in Poetry, and being named Poet Laureate of Georgia during the tenure of Gov. Zell Miller.

However, Dr. Sellers was best known and loved as a teacher. She inspired students old and young through her 32 years of work at Young Harris College, her church, Institute for Continual Learning and frequent speaking engagements.

Her passion for liv-

ing, learning and language were lifelong and the accomplishments of her students are her greatest legacy.

Somehow, through the years, Reece and Dr. Sellers have become synonymous.

"Rarely does a person so gifted and giving appear to bless our lives," Dr. Kay said. "It is more than a cliché to say that she will be missed by the countless people who knew and loved her. Through her published works and students of all ages, she will live on."

Also during the annual meeting, the Society took the time to pay tribute to members who have died since the last Society meeting.

Those members include, Dr. Sellers, Phillip Greer, Lavon Butt, Faye Clegg, and Jack Lance.

Monday was the 55th anniversary of Reece's death.