Noted author Jesse Stuart visits here for day of honor

BY NICOLE URIAN

To those who heard Jesse Stuart speak at Tuesday's convocation, he was "a grandfather-figure, down-to-earth, imaginative and one of the finest writers of regional literature today."

Stuart spoke at a convocation Tuesday in the Memorial Student Center as a part of the "Jesse Stuart Day" festivities. In the afternoon, the Jesse Stuart Collection was dedicated at the library, where Stuart autographed previously unsigned books.

At the convocation, David Peyton, editorial page editor of the Huntington Advertiser, emphasized Stuart was from this area (W Hollow in Greenup County, Ky.) Also, Stuart had faith in this region and did not have to move away to write about it, he said.

Peyton said he and Stuart attended a lecture in Charleston on poetry writing style, and the lecturer said a writer should live in New York to write effectively about his region. Peyton and Stuart got up and walked out.

More than 90 per cent of Stuart's stories, Peyton theorized occurred within 10 miles of his home in Kentucky.

Stuart said he did not remember how he started writing. He began to write in high school and college. "But," he said, "that was a long time ago."

Stuart told anecdotes about his college days and his early years of writing. He said he had a fear of writing novels until he realized a novel was just "an extended short story."

Stuart said he follows the French writers in his style. "I give a 'slice of life' in my stories," he said. "I do not concern myself just with the plot, but with my characters—a this-is-the-way-a-person-dies something-as-it-occurs type of writing."

Stuart said he started writing poetry, then switched to short stories and novels. Now, he said he writes more poetry than novels.

Stuart said his writing was in two divisions. Before 1954 (when he had a heart attack), he had published 19 books. After 1954, he was, as he put it, "more productive," publishing 28 books.

At the dedication of the Jesse Stuart Collection in the James E. Morrow Library, Tuesday afternoon, Dr. Ruel Foster, chairman of the English department at West Virginia University and biographer of Jesse Stuart, gave a literary tribute to Stuart.

Foster said, "Stuart is strikingly original and his work is team with vitality. He said Stuart's works were drawn from the indigenous people of this region.

Foster called Stuart a genius who "created a fictitious world of W Hollow and wedged it everlastingly into the imagination of the American people."

Stuart, he said, was comparable to the Dutch artist Breughel the Elder. Both presented "hearty, full-faced peasantry, the rock of laughter and the amourour peasant life," he said.

"It is as though Stuart and Breughel reach across the centuries and shake hands with each other— as brothers," Foster said.

President Robert B. Hayes said he was pleased to have the collection at Marshall and to have brought Stuart here to dedicate it. It was, Hayes said, "a high honor."

THE PARCHEN

Wednesday, Nov. 19, 1975 Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia Vol. 76, No. 49

Jesse Stuart