

James Larkin Pearson Collection Getting A New Home

By Tammy Stewart

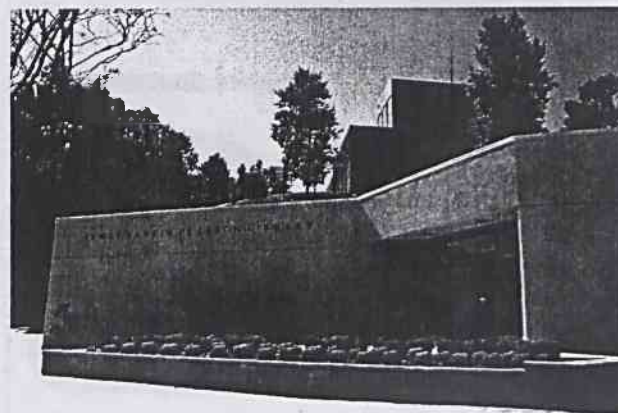
I'll admit that when I started attending the Wilkes campus of Wilkes Community College, it totally slipped my mind something was missing. The something in question is the James Larkin Pearson Building. James Larkin Pearson was North Carolina Poet Laureate from 1953-1981. I was determined to discover what had happened to the combination library/museum which contained historic accounts of James Larkin Pearson and where all the books, paintings, and other memorabilia had gone.

Realizing I may not be the only one who was curious, I asked fellow alumni if they would like to read about what happened in the *Cougar Cry*. After several positive responses, I was encouraged enough to do some research. My search led me to Dr. Fay Byrd, director of the Learning Resource Center (LRC), located on the second floor of the Student Services Building.

Dr. Byrd informed me that several of the materials from the James Larkin Pearson Building could be viewed throughout the LRC while many others are in temporary storage until they can be moved to their new building. Dr. Byrd also shared with me a very interesting project she is currently working on. She is editing autobiographies written by James Larkin Pearson entitled *Poet's Progress* and *Early Life of Jim Pearson*; Pearson wrote the latter when he was only fifteen. Also, several unpublished poems by James Larkin Pearson have surfaced, and Dr. Byrd plans to have them bound, published, and ready for display for the library collection in time for its move to the new location.

Dr. Gordon Burns, president of Wilkes Community College, answered my questions about the new location. This will be a four-level science and technology building which will be erected where the Pearson Building stood. The building will have an elevator which will take students to a walkway to the John A. Walker Community Center and the upper campus.

The second level of the science and technology building will house the James Larkin Pearson library and museum collections. There will be a separate library area as well as another room showcasing the printing presses and painting from the original building. There will also be several display cases containing James Larkin Pearson memorabilia. In addition to the Pearson collection, there will be two cyber classrooms and six computer labs.



The third level will accommodate four more computer labs, two biology labs, a physics lab, a chemistry lab, and a divided lecture room suitable for small or large groups. You will also be able to look down onto the second level.

If you ride the elevator to the fourth level, you will find the walkway leading to the upper campus and the John A. Walker Community Center. The elevator ride in itself will be exciting, as one side is glass which will allow visitors to look down into the building and view the fascinating collection of printing presses below.

Dr. Burns and Dr. Byrd are both very optimistic and excited about the up and coming building of the new facility which has come to be known as *The Next Step Campaign*. The funding for the \$6,906,589 project is supported by state bond funds, Wilkes County Capital Funds, WCC Endowment Corporation Festival Events (MerleFest), and the private fundraising campaign. Included in the costs are a new industrial (welding) lab/shop, land acquisition, equipment, and financing.

To help support WCC and make donations, call 838-6131 for more information.

