

# Skyway dedication a shining

By Kate Henry

Editor

Unicoi Crest Overlook was crowded with more than 500

## Skyway in North Carolina not 'scenic'

Members of the National Scenic Byways office were present at the dedication Saturday, Oct. 12, with brochures listing the Cherohala Skyway as a scenic byway — in Tennessee. Elizabeth Fischer, a North Carolinian in the Byways' office, said that North Carolina has until March to apply for scenic byway status for the North Carolina side.

When Congressman Charles Taylor was asked why the scenic byway status had not already been sought for the North Carolina stretch of the skyway, he said, "We want to see all of the implications and make sure the public understands all of the implications [of having a scenic byway designation]."

Shirley Crisp, a Graham County lobbyist who has worked diligently for 10 years to see the skyway completed, said she wants to know how or if scenic byway status would affect the timber industry in the viewshed.

"If it would require no timber harvesting within the entire viewshed, then I wouldn't be for it," Crisp said.

people who gathered Saturday, Oct. 12, to dedicate the Cherohala Skyway. The sky was a bright blue, the trees an array of gold and flame — as if in blessing all the work that has gone before to make this highway a reality.

While major media from North Carolina was conspicuously absent, many photographers, some local journalists and Channel 10 from Knoxville were on hand to record the event that began as a joking remark at a Kiwanas Club meeting in Tellico Plains, Tenn., in 1958.

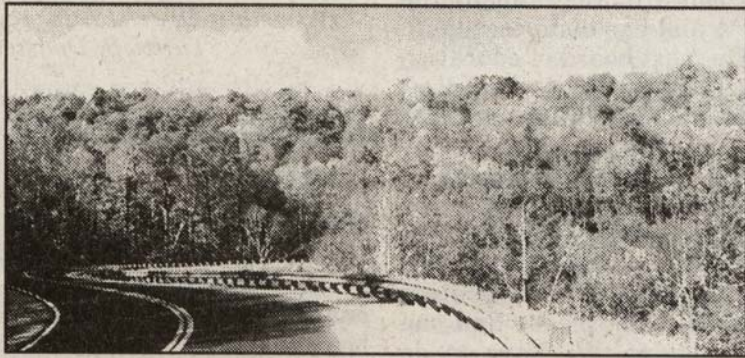
The joke led to a yearly wagon train, and the wagon train led to interest in some political leaders in North Carolina, Tennessee and Washington, D.C. Thirty-nine years later, the joke has become a two-lane black-topped road joining Eastern Tennessee and Western North

Carolina through some of the most scenic parts of the Cherokee and Nantahala Forests.

Much of the ridge route through North Carolina looks down on the Snowbird, Slick Rock and Joyce Kilmer forests and on clear days, one can see into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Charles Hall was one of the men who was at that Kiwanas meeting when the joke became a serious call to build a road to replace the wagon roads between Tennessee and North Carolina. He was master of ceremonies Saturday.

Hall introduced Congressman Charles Taylor of North Carolina; Congressman John Duncan Jr. of Tennessee; Thomas Edick, Gary Klinedinst and Lloyd Middleton, administrator, division engineer and construction operations engineer for the Federal Lands



Construction progressed rapidly over the past few weeks to complete guard rails, paint stripes, put stone block borders around overlooks and erect elevation and directional signs. The Skyway seemed deserted during the ceremony, but reports from folks who drove the Skyway Sunday said traffic was almost bumper-to-bumper.