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Book Review - South of the Etowah: The View from the Wrong Side of the River

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Off the SHELF

South of the Etowah: The View from the Wrong Side of the River by Raymond L. Atkins (Mercer University Press, 2016: ISBN 978-0-88146-565-5, \$18.00)

Raymond Atkins is an award-winning fiction writer and author of *Front Porch Prophet* (Medallion Press, 2008), *Sorrow Wood* (Mercer University Press, 2009), *Camp Redemption* (Mercer University Press, 2013), and *Sweetwater Blues* (Mercer University Press, 2014). *Camp Redemption* won the Ferrol Sams Award for Fiction, and the book garnered Atkins the 2014 Georgia Author of the Year Award for Fiction. In his latest book, *South of the Etowah*, Atkins turns to nonfiction writing. This latest work is a collection of short vignettes on a variety of topics revolving around themes of family, Southern living, and home improvement projects.

Atkins lives on the Etowah River in Rome, Georgia, in an old house that provides plenty of opportunities for spending money and spinning yarns. Atkins is married and has raised four children in this rambling house that is over one hundred years old and definitely plays a starring role in these essays. Tales of his children's adolescent antics and pets he has had through the years along

with anecdotes about learning how to drive and then teaching his kids how to drive are all extremely relatable. These stories can be described as observational humor, poking fun at everyday occurrences (such as choosing passwords for online applications), helping your kids create science projects, and noticing the strange nuances of modern advertising. As a self-proclaimed "old-guy," Atkins devotes some ink to lamenting his tragically unhip ways. The strategies he employs to counteract his lack of cool may have the opposite effect, but the stories that come out of these attempts make it all worthwhile.

Atkins has a perfect sense of comedic timing coupled with a talent for making routine events humorous. In the same vein as Dave Barry but with a Southern twist, these lighthearted essays will have you laughing out loud and longing for a simpler time, a time when passwords didn't require both alpha *and*

numeric characters. This book is recommended for those looking for a lighthearted, humorous read and as an addition to public library collections.

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