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Book Review - It's Not My Mountain Anymore

Rita J. Spisak

Kennesaw State University, rspisak@kennesaw.edu

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Off the SHELF

It's Not My Mountain Anymore by Barbara Taylor Woodall. Sylva, (Catch the Spirit of Appalachia, NC, 2011: ISBN 9780982761199, \$20.00)

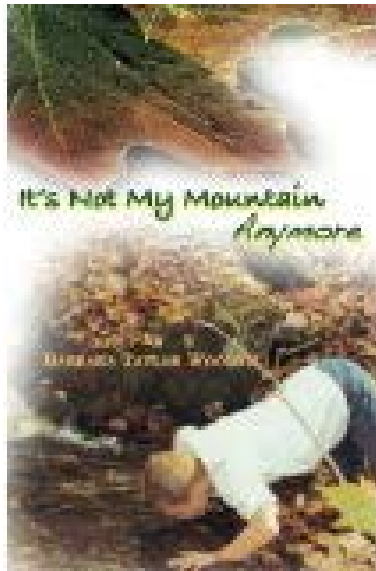
Barbara Taylor Woodall was a student writer for the *Foxfire Magazine* in the early 1970s. For those not acquainted with this periodical, it is a publication created by high school students that preserves the vanishing culture of Southern Appalachia. Woodall has used the same *Foxfire* homespun writing style to tell the story of the changes in her "close-knit family community on Kelly's Creek" in Rabun Gap, in northeastern Georgia. To quote Woodall, "It's a journey filled with appreciation, humor, love and loss. Take what you want and spit out the bones."

The book begins with Woodall's childhood on the family farm. Many of her tales are of "mountain hospitality." There were always neighbors helping neighbors in good times and in bad. Granny Lou was the community midwife. Payment was usually clothes, vegetables, or eggs. When Granny Lou told young Barbara that "A buzzard laid your brother Ernest, on a stump, and the sun hatched him out," she believed him.

In the fall of 1960, Woodall "began a twelve year sentence called school." In her junior year of high school, she had plans to quit school and find a job. She signed up for a journalism course

writing for the *Foxfire Magazine*. The encouragement of the *Foxfire's* staff changed her educational path. She believed in the *Foxfire's* purpose of "capturing mountain secrets" and "sounding our heritage like trumpets."

After graduation, Woodall and two other graduates were hired to write about issues affecting the mountain community and culture. One of the assignments was to see the impact of the filming of the movie *Deliverance* on the area. To this day, the area is still trying to overcome stereotyping: "Spectators peel their eyes, as they pass through, hoping to see a real-life-honest-to-God hillbilly hick straight from the land of the nine-fingered people. "



Today the mountain land is a "money-generating giant." Plots of land are sold for many reasons: aging landowners, medical bills, high taxes, and no heirs. Large homes tower over the ridges. Whitetail deer trails, sweet water springs, and eagles have vanished. "It's not my mountain anymore." It is Woodall's wish that future generations realize that the mountain's future destiny is in their hands and that they need to become involved and committed to its preservation.

Rita Spisak is Outreach Librarian at Kennesaw State University