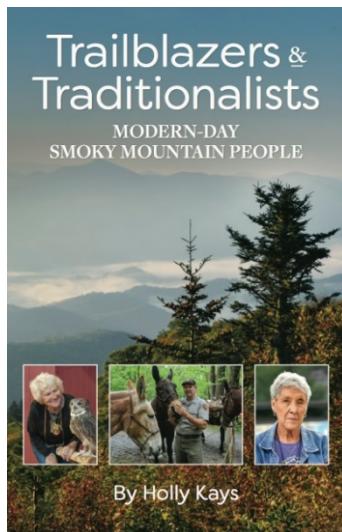


Trailblazers & Traditionalists: Modern-day Smoky Mountain People by Holly Kays Published by The Smoky Mountain News, 192 pages, \$15.95

Reviewed by Danny Bernstein



Holly Kays is one of the best outdoor writers I know. She writes for the Smoky Mountain News, www.smokymountainnews.com, the weekly paper which covers all the news west of Asheville. Although Kays is an all-around journalist of a small-town newspaper, she covers and loves the outdoors. As part of her beat, she interviews many people in the Smokies area. And now, she's chosen and compiled 33 feature stories in a book.

The book divides the interviews from *The First People*, modern Cherokees who've done so much for their community, to people specializing in trails, water and plants. Just a look at the table of contents told me that I must know some of these selected.

I started with Jennifer Pharr Davis, who held the record for the fastest person on the Appalachian Trail from 2011 to 2015. Instead of replaying Davis' accomplishment on the A.T., Kays focuses on her Mountains-to-Sea Trail hike in 2017. It's more recent and more relevant to Davis' life now with two young children.

Next, I read about Mary Ellen Hammond and Jim Parham, the publishers of my first two guidebooks and the founders and owners of Milestone Press. The chapter on them emphasizes how they work together on putting out biking and hiking books. Parham has written several biking books while Hammond focused on the editing and production side of things.

Since Kays wrote these profiles over several years, she recently contacted her respondents while putting the book together to see what had changed in their lives. Hammond and Parham sold Milestone Press (and the rights to publish my books) to the University of Georgia Press. It remains an imprint of UGA Press.

Then I went on to read about people whom I know but probably don't know me. About 18 years ago, I met Jerry Wolfe of the Qualla boundary at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian. At the time, Wolfe gathered museum visitors and gave them an introductory lecture about his life as a tribal member, his time at the federally run Cherokee Boarding School, his army service, his craft as a stonemason and his work as an instructor at the Oconaluftee Job Corps Conservation Center in Cherokee. All of this came back to me when I read Kays' interview with Wolfe. She captured his life so beautifully less than a year before Wolfe died at age 93. If you only read one interview, Wolfe's story is the one.

Here are the book details:

You can buy "Trailblazers & Traditionalists" at area bookstores including Malaprop's in Asheville and City Lights in Sylvia. It retails for \$15.95, with \$19.95 covering shipping, fees and taxes. It is published by The Smoky Mountain News. Order the book from Kays' Facebook page, www.facebook.com/hollykaysauthor, send \$19.95 to paypal.me/hollykays or mail a check made out to "Holly Kays Writing" to 144 Montgomery Street, Waynesville, NC.