

Harmony and True Grit

Mary Lou McKillip

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to one of God's White Stones, my beloved and wonderful almost picture perfect husband, Truman McKillip.

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Harmony and True Grit

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Introduction

The author's dialogue and southern colloquialism make her a unique writer. *Harmony* and *True Grit* depicts the Mitchner ancestor's families lives, loves and hardships in the Appalachian Mountains from North to South and West to Midwest; these stories still echo across the Appalachia and down through the Blue Ridge.

The author insists on using her own colloquialism and dialogue throughout this book; although she knows it is not always proper English. This does not reflect on the editor, publisher or printer.

The author tells these stories as the ancestors themselves would tell the stories in the era they lived in at the time.

She also portrays humor and love in this book, also how the families relied on God and His help as they traveled crossing the Appalachian Mountains down into the Blue Ridge Mountains; from the mid 1700 hundreds until the present time with such harmony and true grit.

She's uncovered their past in order for you to love and preserve their future.

Linda Sue Richards

Ellijay, Georgia

Era During and After the Revolutionary War



Colonel John Samuel Waddell was a British soldier who fought in the Revolutionary War. He became friends to an Indian fur trader by the name of Wolf Jack. Ole Wolf Jack had a daughter, her name was Naomi. When Colonel Sam Waddell saw her he had to have her for his wife, this pleased old Wolf Jack that a Colonel from England wanted his daughter to wed.

Colonel Waddell married Naomi and bought them a fine farm on the bank of a big creek in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Sam refused to return to England, his dream was here in America with his beautiful Indian maiden. One year after their marriage they had a son who they named John after the Colonel of course.

When John was three years old playing down by the big creek, his dog Boss ran a possum in a hole near the

creek. John ran to see if he could get the possum out of the hole and lost his footage. He fell into the swift water and was drowned, his dog Boss ran for the Colonel, but it was too late, John was already dead.

This was an awful grief for the Waddells, the Colonel was about to put their farm up for sale when Naomi came to him and told him she was with child. He decided to wait until after the baby was born.

Sammi was a beautiful baby girl who won all their hearts, she was born around Cherry blossom time and the Colonel wanted to name her April, but Naomi would not hear of it.

Her name was to be Sammi after the Colonel. Sammi was the apple of her grandfather's eye too! Wolf Jack taught her how to trap, she went everywhere he did.

Walter Mitchner came to America with two brothers; Frank and Raymond, they came after the Revolutionary War had ended. Walter fell madly in love with Sammi Waddell who the British soldiers called the light skinned beauty, Sammi was a beauty and every man who saw her wanted her for his wife.



Walter married Sammi in the fall of 1778, two years later Hardy Mitchner was born; he grew into a slender lad born in America, his mother was half Indian and his dad an Englishman. Walter and Sammi had four more sons; they were Lester, George, Drew and Arnold Mitchner.



Walter told Sammi one day how he missed his music shop that he had in dear old England. He had brought his Stradivarius violin with him. His brothers played the violin also. Walter built a shop and started to make violins and other string instruments as well.

Walter formed a music group with his brothers and they called themselves Mountain violinists. One day a real mountain man by the name of Jim McRenolds came into his shop and brought his violin and played the

mountain fiddle as he called it. Walter had a fit over the way he played and soon he was playing the tunes and renamed his band, Mountain Fiddlers and added Jim McRenolds to his music band.



Walter and Sammi's sons grew, they helped in Walter's shop making and selling instruments of all sorts. Lester became a music teacher. One day George and Drew were delivering an organ and had to go into the mountains and their wagon turned over, the organ crushed George to death. Drew almost lost his mind over the death of his brother. Drew left to go to Ohio and set up a shop to sell instruments. He married and later died with TB leaving Martha Colton Mitchner and young Sarah. Martha remarried and continued to sell instruments in Drew's shop. Arnold got interested in horses and trading them and built a racetrack. He married Mary Jane Downs and went to Virginia. He named his racetrack Downs Derby Racetrack.

Hardy Mitchner the oldest son of Walter and Sammie's left Lancaster County, Pennsylvania when he was eighteen and went west to Red Bank River in Armstrong County and helped to establish a settlement. He met his wife Ellie Ledford, the settlement was not

home to Hardy so he and Ellie traveled back to Lancaster County.

Hardy became the magistrate of Lancaster County and began studying law and became a good lawyer. Ellie Mitchner was a teacher and librarian.

The couple traveled to other States when they had the time. It was about three years before they started a family and they had Ben Mitchner who was in and out of adventures. He had not made his mind up as to what he wanted to do with his life, until one day at the county fair he met Lucinda Dweese. She was the daughter of Archibald and Mary Harban Dweese, Archibald was one of the early settlers on the Red Bank River who later came to Lancaster County to further his goals. Archibald was the founding father of the Presbyterian Church near the Red Bank River and later became the Bishop in Lancaster County.

Ben Mitchner saw Lucinda and could not take his eyes off her; she was a breath taking beauty with soft spun golden hair and blue eyes. He wasted no time courting Lucinda and soon asked her hand in marriage. Archibald liked Ben and thought the Mitchners were fine folks. Ben wed Lucinda in the spring and the following year they had a baby son, Josh. Ben loved his family, he and Lucinda planned to have more children. One day Ben decided to go hunt deer and while he was gone Indians came in and raided his house killing Lucinda and young Josh who was two years old at the time.

Ben didn't want to go on without Lucinda and Josh, he even thought of ending his own life the grief was so bad. Ben hated all Indians and almost killed one for the price of Lucinda and Josh. He thought an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Frank Mitchner his great uncle

came upon the scene and talked Ben out of this terrible thing, the Indian ran for his life. Frank invited Ben over to have a good meal with them and to calm down.

Frank Mitchner was the town doctor and veterinarian mostly. Everyone held Frank in high regard. Frank traveled around considerably before he chose a wife then married Lucille Dalton from Ohio. They had two sons Oscar and Milton Mitchner and three daughters Alice, Grace and Mary Elizabeth. Elizabeth was a late comer to Frank's family, her siblings were grown when she was born. She was a little spoiled by Frank and her other siblings.

Frank and Walter's other brother Raymond Mitchner set out on horse back for the Southern States and the family never heard from him again, but always wondered if he was killed by Indians or if he had a family somewhere in the South.

When Ben saw Elizabeth, Frank's youngest daughter; he took a shine to her and she for him. He would make a point to visit Frank just to see Elizabeth and they later married.

Ben sold his house and bought some land on the outskirts of town and established a sawmill, he built Elizabeth the biggest and best cabin around those parts.



Ben began to cope with life better. They had three children, Roxie Ann, Borigard and Nancy Sue.

When Roxie Ann was born Ben taught her to be a tomboy. She could shoot and do anything a boy could do or better, Roxie Ann wasn't afraid of anything. Elizabeth would fuss at Ben for spoiling her so.

"She's a girl and I need to teach her to be a lady, but her dad will not let me," said Elizabeth.

Ben grabbed Elizabeth hugged her tight and said, "Roxie Ann has plenty of time to become a lady, I need her to be with me doing things now, Elizabeth."

Roxie Ann didn't want to do chores that a lady did, nor wear dresses; it was trousers and a sloppy shirt of Ben's. She was seven and it was her birthday when Elizabeth announced to her she was going to get a baby brother or sister.

Roxie Ann feeling threatened asked, "I don't need a baby sister or brother, do I Daddy Ben?"

Ben took her on his lap and said, "I guess it would be fun to have a little sister or brother to chase around and play with."

Roxie's eyes widened as if to say this might be okay if her dad said so.

Elizabeth gave birth to Borigard who was the spitten image of Ben Mitchner. My how Ben's heart swelled with pride when someone told him the boy looked like him. Roxie Ann was jealous of Borigard and her dad. She told Borigard one day that they could have done without him. Borigard ran to his mother and told on Roxie Ann, Elizabeth made her apologize to him.

Elizabeth said, “Roxie Ann is just jealous of you Borigard.”

Oh how Borigard loved Roxie Ann and later she grew to love him also. They went to a Christmas program at church and Borigard said, “I want a baby brother like baby Jesus.”

Two years later Nancy Sue was born, Borigard loved her too, he would tug and play with her all day, while Roxie Ann was out with Ben playing, being the rough tomboy she was. Ben could never get Borigard to play rough, he wanted to play the organ with Elizabeth his mother and bake cookies.

Ben told Elizabeth almost the same thing she had told him, “Elizabeth, you need to let Borigard become a boy, not a sissy.”

They laughed about it later, but Borigard began to do more things with Ben like deer hunting and fishing, this still didn't set well with Roxie Ann. She began to get interested in boys and courting, she became more Lady like the older she became.





One night when they were at a revival at their church, folks got happy and went to shouting and jumping around for joy and the floor collapsed. The women started crying and ringing their hands. Ben found his way to the front and shouted over the women and said, Let's pray, he began, "Lord, we thank you for the prosperity and for the calamity too. Lord, put it in the hearts of these men to give trees to build a new church house. Lord I will saw them for free and then the men can build a new church house." Amen!



Whoa! This prayer got thing rolling and the men agreed to haul Ben Logs enough to build a new church house.

One woman started like she was going to shout and jump again, Ben hollered, “Lizzie put a muzzle on it for now and let the men go to plan for the new church house.”

Men started getting children and women out of the broken down floor, no one was hurt just scared to death. Women started to add their voices as how they wanted the new church house to be and how it was to be painted white.

The members wanted to name the new church house after Ben in some way and he was quick to say no, “This is God’s house and let’s name it, The House of Prayer.” So it was called The House of Prayer. God had answered their prayers.

The men hauled Ben logs and helped him to saw them and soon the new church house was being built. The women brought food and the children carried water to the workers. Little children played and soon a new church house stood tall and erect to God.

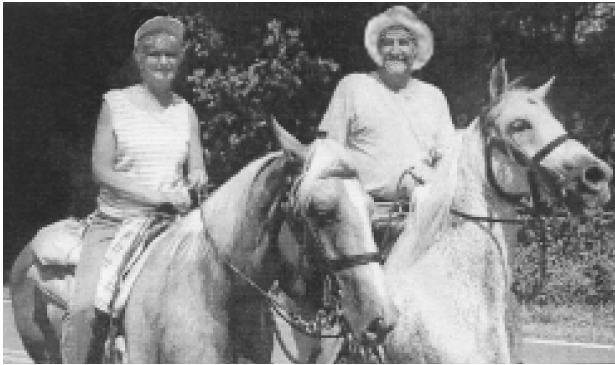


Roxie Ann met and married Everett Hodges who was an adventurer like Roxie Ann. When they married they had a church wedding in the new church house. Ben's heart was aching, his Roxie Ann was a woman now, not his little tomboy.



Roxie Ann and Everett's ride down the Cumberland River

Roxie Ann and Everett stayed with Ben and Elizabeth until they decided they wanted to travel. Elizabeth tried to talk this fool notion out of their heads, but their minds were made up, they were going to Mississippi. They planned to go across the Appalachians, into the Blue Ridge Mountains, to the Cumberland River, take a canoe down the river into Tennessee and then go by riverboat on to Mississippi.



Ben had a fit when he heard of their hair brained idea, but their minds could not be changed. Ben and Elizabeth in tears gave them their blessing and gave them two pack horses with everything for the trip. Their plan was to trade the horses for a canoe, with some money to boot for the expenses farther south on their way to Mississippi.

Ben was so glad he had taught Roxie Ann to take care of herself in the wilds. Everett was an excellent marksman with a rifle, they would be fine no doubt. It was in the springtime when they left, never to return to

see Ben and Elizabeth again, but they wrote letters when they could get a carrier to deliver them.

Roxie Ann could shoot and do most anything a man could do, she wasn't afraid of the devil himself. Roxie Ann was an avid storyteller. She told of the time she out ran a black bear while camping on the Cumberland and how she caught a copper head by the tail giving him a toss into the river before he had time to think, coil or strike, let alone bite them. Roxie Ann traded tales with the old Indian where they traded the horses for the canoe, she told him how she could shoot a hawk's eye over into the other one with him a-flying.

The old Indian left the trading post laughing and shaking his head. This lady Roxie Ann was a card in her own right or she wouldn't have made it down the Cumberland River to Mississippi.

Ben and Elizabeth talked about Roxie Ann all the time. Ben never got over missing his tomboy Roxie Ann.

