



Stand Up That Mountain: The Battle to Save One Small Community in the Wilderness Along the Appalachian Trail

Jay Erskine Leutze

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In the tradition of A Civil Action—the true story of a North Carolina outdoorsman who teams up with his Appalachian “mountain people” neighbors to save treasured land from being destroyed

Living alone in his wooded mountain retreat, Jay Leutze gets a call from a whip-smart fourteen-year-old, Ashley Cook, and her aunt, Ollie Cox, who say a mining company is intent on tearing down Belview Mountain, the towering peak above their house. Ashley and her family, who live in a little spot known locally as Dog Town, are “mountain people,” with a way of life and speech unique to their home high in the Appalachians. They suspect the mining company is violating the law, and they want Jay, a nonpracticing attorney, to stop the destruction of the mountain. Jay, a devoted naturalist and fisherman, quickly decides to join their cause.

So begins the epic quest of the “Dog Town Bunch,” a battle that involves fiery public hearings, clandestine surveillance of the mine operator’s activities, ferocious pressure on public officials, and high-stakes legal brinksmanship in the North Carolina court system. Jay helps assemble a talented group of environmental lawyers to do battle with the well-funded attorneys protecting the mining company’s plan to dynamite Belview Mountain, which happens to sit next to the famous Appalachian Trail, the 2,184-mile national park that stretches from Maine to Georgia. As the mining company continues to level the forest and erect a gigantic rock-crushing plant on the site, Jay’s group searches frantically for a way to stop an act of environmental desecration that will destroy a fragile wild place and mar the Appalachian Trail forever.

Much more than the record of a legal battle, *Stand Up That Mountain* takes the reader to a remote corner of Appalachia, a region often stereotyped and little understood, even now in the twenty-first century. A naturally elegant writer, Jay Leutze delivers a powerful, beautifully written story full of remarkable characters, such as “Wingfoot,” an elusive protector of the Appalachian Trail; a stubborn mining company engineer intent on pulling down the mountain in the face of intense opposition; and Ron Howell, a retired and legendary North Carolina Superior Court judge known as the “Heel Hound” for his relentless pursuit of legal victory. Jay’s plaintiff group is eventually joined by several national conservation groups who see that Belview Mountain and the Appalachian Trail must be protected for future generations of Americans.

A great contemporary story that demonstrates what is possible when local people set their minds to righting a local wrong, *Stand Up That Mountain* will appeal to conservationists, hikers, attorneys, and readers fascinated by Appalachia and rural life, and anyone interested in a compelling story both well told and true.



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