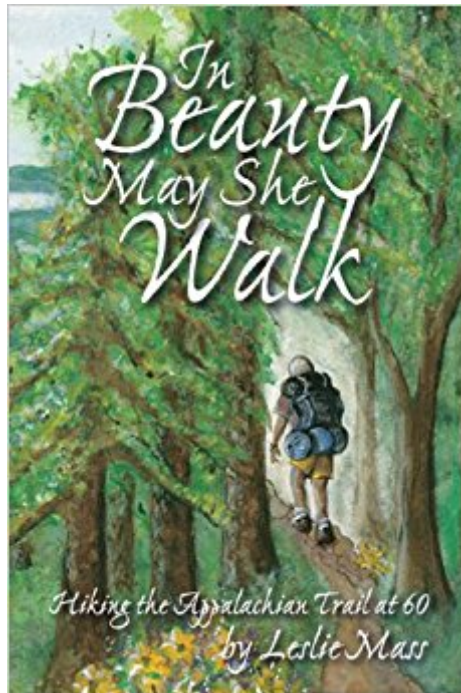




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In Beauty May She Walk: Hiking The Appalachian Trail At 60



Synopsis

In 2000, inspired by her father, Leslie Mass decided she would turn a lifelong fantasy into reality. At the age of 59 she began to train for a grueling journey, a thru-hike of the 2,000-mile Appalachian Trail. 'In Beauty May She Walk' chronicles Leslie's struggles and triumphs during her hike. On the trail, Leslie struggles with how to balance the needs of her family and friends while making the trail a priority; how to shed years of social conditioning that dictate how a woman should act; and how to know when to ask for help, while understanding that sometimes, help has to come from within. As the terrain toughens, she struggles to physically keep up with the trail community she depends on socially to keep going and realizes the difficulty of maintaining her obligations to family and friends. After Sept. 11, 2001, it all changes for a hiker even more alone on the A.T.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Her account is full of rich, emotionally charged detail about the journey and the personal growth that resulted from it. --Library Journal, September 2005

Reading Leslie's manuscript was what made me truly decide that publishing books was the right thing to do. Her journey, both physically and emotionally, gripped my heart, and at the end of the book I felt like Leslie was someone I'd known for years.

I found this book very inspiring in that the author took on a major hike at 60 and alone. I enjoyed her recounting her friendships, successes and struggles. What I found frustrating is that she had ample

financial and family reserves to be able to get off the trail, stay at bed and breakfasts, have gourmet meals and chauffeur service before returning to her hike. With that in mind, some of her complaints, dare I say whining, frustrated and irritated me. While I don't diminish her accomplishment, age, level of fitness and all, I think she might have missed the point someone else who did this without the luxuries and funds would have understood. Despite all of this, I recommend this book to anyone thinking of planning a long distance hike.

I have read a plethora of books, adding to my own personal research of the Appalachian Trail. I chose "In Beauty May She Walk" as my first AT read. Why, you may ask. I wanted to compare gender differences in how female vs. male would prepare themselves for the long journey. Simply put, we live in a dangerous world. As much as we would like to believe the AT is just a spiritual, safe and innocent journey, much danger lies ahead for anyone, and more so for a female who isn't prepared for her own safety. Growing up in the Blue Ridge Mountains made me naturally cautious when in the woods hiking. But I took my caution for granted. Reading this book helps a woman think and prepare. Leslie does a lot of musing in her book, sometimes I felt she had to learn as she walked. Sometimes I think she made very good decisions, such as separating herself from a rowdy bunch of male hikers when bedding down for the night. (Personally, I would have moved on) There are better books written for women who hike alone. However "In Beauty May she Walk" is a very good read, providing both entertainment in how Leslie writes and how she handles herself at difficult moments. I am a hardback book collector (not a book snob) and a critical reviewer, thus I rarely ever review books. I must, in all honesty say "In Beauty May She Walk" was a page turner for me. When finished, I sat for a long time, with a fresh cup of coffee, and stared out the window into my wooded back yard, thinking long and hard of the strengths of Leslie Mass. It was only after reading "In Beauty May She Walk" that I came to fully accept, that, which I already knew from research, yet, refused to believe in the beginning. There are, indeed, documented murders on the Appalachian Trail. A wake up call, but, by no means a reason NOT to hike the Appalachian Trail. (Side Note) Leslie Mass does not muse much about murder in her book. I wanted to emphasize that the female Author and the Title was the reason for the purchase. It was only later that I thought at great length the fragility of humans, and how we must practice safety when we venture into the unknown.

This turned out to be a really good read. I got it originally as I was interested in the problems faced by the older hiker. It was a while before I picked it up to read because, well to be honest, the title put me off a bit. Once I got started I could not put it down! The book is loaded with good insights and

helpful information, all wrapped in an interesting narrative. It is well written, thoughtful and well worth the time whether an armchair hiker, thru-hike dreamer, reliving the past or planning a thru-hike/section trek. It was time well spent, even for this old guy.

A good friend is getting ready to hike this trail so I thought it'd be fun to read about it from the perspective of woman who had done it. I really enjoyed the book. I have been worried about my neighbor going by herself. After reading this I realized that after the hikers get acquainted with fellow hikers they actually look out for one another. Each individual walks at a different pace but once they get to know you they do helpful things like save places at the shelters, share food, or, once in awhile, the cost of a motel room in town. This woman loved being out in nature and was a very determined hiker. Her description of the various trails made you feel like you were right there with her. It is a very informative book. I would certainly recommend it for anyone ever thinking about hiking The Appalachian Trail.

Parts are eloquently written; parts are just ordinary trail journaling (getting water, heating water, what she ate, etc.). The first part of the tale heavily involves a young man who hiked with the author (and was courting the author's daughter); then, suddenly, mentions of him are dropped. Wonderful accomplishment by the author to have done the AT; less so, her writing about it. And the production of the book is appalling - several pages had passages repeated!

This is another AT book, one of the few written by a female. Leslie Mass is completing a life dream at the age of 60. She hikes it alone and with community she meets as she goes, mostly men. Her hike is one shared often with family meeting up for a few days. How she is able to function in and out of the responsibilities of hiking with the outside world people and handling her own individual hike is the real message of the book. We women know that we have to juggle nearly every day, so her final understanding is something we can all embrace.

I have read many hiker stories about the Appalachian trail. This is one of the very best. I loved the female perspective instead of the typical male perspective. There are some printing errors but not so many that it is distracting. Thanks for a great book!

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