

Infinity Author Betty Lewis Tapes History Channel Segment

Little did Infinity author Betty Lewis know that her book entitled *Appalachia: Spirit Triumphant* would eventually attract the attention of History Channel producers. Inspired by her ability to capture the beauty of the lives and traditions of those living in the Appalachian Mountains, Betty Lewis was flown to their studios for an interview featured in a series about the region. Here is her story.

A dream can become a reality. I am proof of that. I had a dream. I live in the southern coalfields of Appalachia. You may have heard about us, our unique lifestyle, the way we cling to our age-old traditions handed down from our grandparents, our religion, original dialect, quilts, music, blacksmithing, our many struggles with issues like wildcat coal strikes, strip mining, mountaintop removal, black lung, the Hatfield & McCoy Feud and on and on. Yes, our lives our different and difficult, but wonderful in so many ways and worth documenting and preserving. This was my dream, documenting and preserving the history of Appalachia as well as educating the world in a positive but truthful manner.

I didn't know how I would be able to accomplish this huge undertaking but I had a dream, a real dream telling me one way to tell the world about our old ways of life was to use modern technology, design a website – www.AppalachianPower.com. But I continued to dream. I dreamed of recording permanently what I was collecting. A book was in order. I assembled my book, moving ahead as if I already had an agent and big-time publisher, which I didn't, but aren't we told in the Bible, To act as if it were so?

My dream had become a mandate, not only to tell the world about the special people in the Appalachian Mountains, but preserve their stories in their original dialect, their unique beauty captured in a book. I needed a special title - something compelling and uplifting, like the people. A friend, Jim Branscome, a contributing writer, suggested, *Appalachia: Spirit Triumphant*. Nothing could be more appropriate.

The book was coming together beautifully but not without many long, late nights, sometimes all-night sessions. I mailed my manuscript to traditional publishers. I sent the material to the University of Kentucky who held it two weeks and gave me good advice when they returned it saying I needed a strong narrative to tie together this important history. I didn't know I would have to actually write, but I got busy. Writing a narrative, developing a common thread to tie all the components of a region into a work that transcends a century of the history of Appalachia.

In the middle of this dream, both really dreaming and working on my dream, an email arrived from Japan inviting me to participate in the International Mining Conference as a historian from Appalachia. I toured Japan for nine days, all expenses paid, then, returned to the isolated hills of West Virginia to resume publication of my book. I came to terms with the fact I might not be able to land a big-time publisher since many publishers do not accept manuscripts without an agent, etc. However, at this time, Jane Martin, an Infinity author, contacted me wanting to borrow a story or two. She and John Harnish came to Appalachia to meet my fascinating people. It came to me sometime during this connection with Jane and John—that I too, could and would become an Infinity author, and I did

My book was juried into TAMARACK, the market place showcasing The Best of West Virginia, located in Beckley, WV, in November 2004 by a panel of published authors. The trip to Japan and my book juried into TAMARACK were wonderful unexpected rewards. Then, on February 16, 2005, an email arrived from David Ballard, a researcher for Greystone TV Productions who produces shows for the History Channel. He invited me to Hollywood, CA for an on-camera interview for a series on this region. He had found my website and knew I had published a book. I flew out on Wednesday, April 27 and was interviewed on Thursday, April 28 on the topics of Hatfield-McCoy Feud, Matewan Massacre and Blair Mine War for the History Channel. All expenses were paid and I received a token payment for my interview, which will air in the fall. That makes my dream a reality that came to be for me.

Good Luck with your dreams.