

RUTH'S MOUNTAIN by Leo Moon

Calvin Ralph March 17, 1930 - November 7, 2009

A dear old friend of mine, Mr. Calvin Ralph, passed away November 7, 2009. Calvin was known far and wide as Ruth Mountain's most popular and renowned Indian folklorist. Mr. Ralph was a very proud Cherokee Indian medicine man, able to read the skies, the streams-creeks, even bark on the trees around him. He knew how to boil the bark of a dogwood tree and use it to break a fever, knew bark from a willow tree would work better than aspirin, he knew the inside of the bark of a mighty white oak tree was best for relief of an upset stomach.

I met Calvin for the first time in April of 2007 and tried to go see him as often as I could. He lived 75 miles south of me on Ruth Mountain, Arab, AL. For the Hyatt family of north Alabama, Ruth Mountain is home, period. Family history begins there, and for a fortunate few, it ends there. My mother was born and raised there, my grandfather, John Henry Hyatt was raised there and my Great-Grandmother, Martha Emily Hill Hyatt is buried there. Each time I visited with Mr. Ralph I would ask him to tell me stories about our family's history. Calvin was married to a cousin of mine, and Oh how he loved to spin a yarn, tell a tale, he loved so to tell of the history of north Alabama and wonderful stories of olden days atop Ruth Mountain. Calvin's wife's great grandfather Dallas Poke Briscoe, my great grandfather also, gave Ruth Mountain its name in the early 1800's. He named it Ruth Mountain after Ruth of the Bible. Mr. Ralph's eloquence in passing on those old stories was unmatched, and he passed on to me several that I hope to be able to pass along to my grandchildren. I can only hope to share, and pass along such passion and love for the old stories about the wonderful God fearing, hard working patriots of our family scattered throughout America's history.

And so our story begins,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,

I arrived at Calvin's home one evening in early October 2008. After greeting me at the door he ask me inside to sit a spell. There inside his living room, surrounded by old photos, newspapers and magazines, we began our visit. I ask him to tell me another story about our family's history. It went something like this,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,

"Come on outside boy, I got something to show you, we put our coats on and walked outside, around to the back porch and sat down, what a beautiful view atop Ruth Mountain, for miles in every direction, breath taking, absolutely breath taking beauty. The golden leaves of orange, red and brown scream their beauty all along the side of the mountain. Then raising and old withered-hand he points toward what seems to be an old mountain pass, an old, long forgotten roadway, barely visible, hard to make out. Look BOY !!!! see it ? away over yonder, SEE IT BOY !!! right at the top of that pass, see it?" I listen intensely latching on to each word this kind old man says, fearing I might forget something. We need to stop here for a little side note about our story, known to Calvin and I from our talks before, this story is about Miss Martha Emily Hill Hyatt, born December 10, 1848, died December 26, 1904. She was married to Daniel Franklin Hyatt. Daniel served with the 38thA Company of Alabama during the civil war. Daniel was captured at Chickamauga when his horse fell off a bridge. He was taken to Louisville, KY until the war's end and then released. In early 1877, Daniel and Martha sold the farm they owned in Alabama and headed to Cass County, TX, where Martha's father owned some land. After being there a very short time Daniel was bitten by a rattlesnake and died. He was buried in Bivins, TX, in a cemetery where his father and mother-in-law would later be buried.

The year is 1891 -- A few years after Daniel's death, Miss Emily began to long for the beautiful hills of Randolph County, AL, known today as the Talladega National Forest, where she and Daniel lived before the war. Adding to her misery, east Texas was in the middle of a terrible drought, everyone

was losing everything they owned !!!! All crops where lost, livestock starving and dying everywhere, nothing for Miss Emily to do but load up the wagon and head home to Randolph County. Upon arriving back in Alabama, she realized the farm they had lived on before was no longer in the family and the older children who had stayed in Alabama had moved elsewhere. She was told her oldest son, James Pleasant, had moved to a place called Arab, Alabama. So, off through the wilderness she went looking for him.

Our story picks up from there,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,, back to Calvin's back porch, "look Boy !!!,see it?, see the farthest pass just over yonder? It was the second Friday of February, 1891, late in the evening, just before dark, a tiny little buckboard came over that rise there. Inside rode Miss Emily, her children and all her earthly belongings, it was a very small buckboard wagon, didn't even have a top on it, but it was all she owned in the world. It had been sleeting and now it was snowing hard. Just as the old roadbed became completely cover in snow, the tiny wagon hit that two foot hole-rut, in the road, see it Boy ? right on the side of that Mountain where I am pointing too, I can see it in my mind plain as day and my mind wonders back to that little wagon,,,,,,,,,,,, hitting that hole slammed the wagon over to its left side hard, jarring all aboard, making those pots and pans hanging on the side of it ring louder than any church bell they had ever heard before, it woke the baby in Miss Emily's lap, he was now crying,,, it spooked the horse, causing him to tear off down the side of that mountain, running as hard as he could with the wagon behind. By the time the wagon was stopped, Miss Emily had realized she was lost in the wilderness, getting colder by the minute. It would seem to most all was lost, but not for this lady !!! not after what she had been through,,, Miss Emily was known on many occasions, when things got tough, seemed tougher days where ahead, she was always known to say "We will cross that bridge when we get to it " ,, well,,, it was " THAT BRIDGE" and, it was time to

cross,... stopping the wagon, she told the older boys to start cutting wood and to build a bonfire in the middle of the road, the boys cut wood all night as Miss Emily walked around the fire with the baby to keep him warm. Now, the rest of the story. After daybreak the next morning, Miss Emily headed off the side of that Mountain, along that old roadbed. Toward the bottom they ran across an old abandoned cabin that someone had built years before and left. She set up house there, getting by on the meager provisions she had, along with what meat the boys could hunt and kill. They made it through the rest of winter. Well into the spring, a Mr. Crandfield happened by,,, he was living father down in Apple Valley. He had heard someone had moved into the old Briscoe place and wanted to see who it was. Anyway, Mr. Crandfield, more out of spite, trying to make fun of or ridicule more than anything else, joking told Miss Emily if she wanted a place to live all she had to do was to go the land office in Huntsville, Alabama, and apply for a land grant, receive a sheepskin deed, and it was hers to keep, knowing all the time it was unheard for a woman in the 1800's to receive a land grant. Well !!!!! seems Mr. Crandfield didn't know Miss Emily to well. The very next day off to Huntsville she road, applied for, and later received (personally signed by no less than the President of the United States himself, Benjamin Harrison) a land grant for 166 acres.

These days, if you leave Arab, Alabama, heading north on highway 231, just outside the old city limits, you will see Ruth Mountain Road heading west. After turning onto that winding road, that same old path, and traveling about ten miles you will arrive at the top of Ruth Mountain. And, there on the left side of the road you will see Mount Oak Methodist Church. On the west side of this beautiful old church, looking toward Apple valley, you will see a small graveyard and there is where you will find Miss Emily's grave,,,,,,,,, overlooking the beautiful homeland she gave to all who follow her to,,,,,,,,RUTH's MOUNTAIN.

About Leo Moon----

Leo Moon, 57 of Fayetteville, Tn. is one of thirteen children born to Oscar and his wife, Dollie Hyatt Moon. Leo is one of a set of triplets, Cleo, Leo and Theo. He has one child, a daughter Tracey, a son-in-law, Rodney Hillis and two grandsons, Luke and Jacob. Leo is an avid fisherman who helps sponsor a "Take a Kid" fishing tournament for more than 1000 children. Leo makes a living running a water treatment plant in Fayetteville.

Leo traces his Hyatt ancestry this way: Thomas Hyatt, b- 1612 England, Charles Hyatt, b-1650 Md, Seth Hyatt, b 1694 Md, Meshach Hyatt, b-1723 Md, Asa Hyatt, b-1756 Md, Allen Hyatt, b-1790NC, Daniel Franklin Hyatt, b-1829 NC, John Henry Hyatt b-1872 Al, and his mother Dollie Hyatt Moon.

Leo loves the study of American history and family history. He takes events in American History and tries to find someone in the family who was involved in that event. He hopes to pass on the love of these stories to his grandchildren.