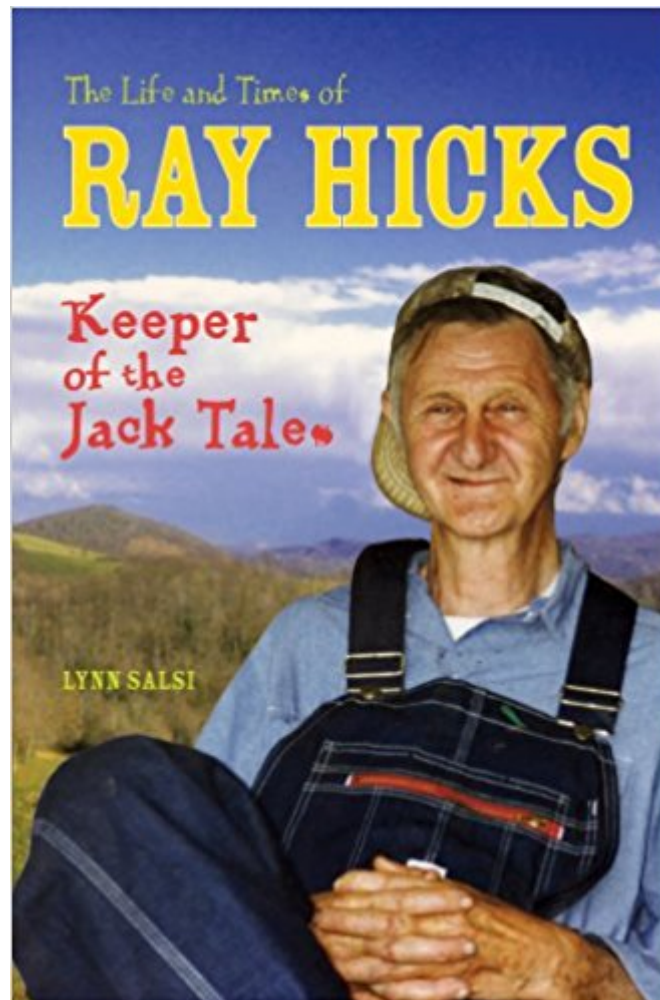




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# The Life And Times Of Ray Hicks: Keeper Of The Jack Tales



## Synopsis

Renowned storyteller Ray Hicks was a certified national treasure. He received many prestigious honors in his lifetime, including the National Heritage Fellowship Award from the National Endowment for the Arts. Best known for his traditional storytelling and also for saving the original Beech Mountain Jack tales brought to the Appalachian Mountains by his ancestors as early as 1776, Hicks was conscious of the role he played in the preservation of oral storytelling. Many of those stories are included in *The Life and Times of Ray Hicks*. Born in 1922, Ray lived his whole life in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina. (Although it finally got a refrigerator and electric lights, Ray's place never did get a telephone, indoor plumbing, or a radio or television.) It seems he knew everything there was to know about living off the land and about his family's history. A lot of what he knew is in this new book. Hicks made his public storytelling debut in 1951, when a local schoolteacher invited him to her class. In 1973, Ray performed at the very first International Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee. He appeared at every one until he became too weak to attend. He died on Easter Sunday in 2003. Based on hundreds of hours of interviews and visits, painstakingly pieced together by Lynn Salsi, *The Life and Times of Ray Hicks* comes as close as possible to capturing the way Ray talked. Part memoir and part biography, *The Life and Times of Ray Hicks* presents, sometimes in Ray Hicks's own words, the most important part of his long, colorful life—a life scarcely less interesting than the Jack Tales he told so well. Lynn Salsi is the author of several books, including *The Jack Tales* and *Young Ray Hicks Learns the Jack Tales*. She has received the American Library Association's Notable Book Award, six Willie Parker Peace History Book Awards, and was named the North Carolina Historian of the Year in 2001.

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## Customer Reviews

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Lynn Salsi wrote this in first person as if Hicks was speaking. I was surprised at how well it worked, a testimony to Salsi's long and affectionate relationship with Hicks. This is as good a telling as I've found of the trials of living off the land in the often unforgiving Appalachians. It offers insight into family and community life, humor and heartache. It's just like I was sitting with Ray and he

recounted his life. I heard Salsi speak once and she said Hicks would not let her include the more brutal aspects of his life because it might cast others -- his father in particular --in a bad light. I felt cheated at the time, but realized later that if Hicks were telling it, that's how it would be told. A great book for anyone interested in twentieth century mountain life. Very suitable for older adolescents.

This being my uncle Ray can not brag on it enough book was like brand new loved it would buy from seller again

Lynn Salsi's close relationship with Ray Hicks led to this invaluable book when trying to learn about the man. It helped immensely in my research!

Those who are not students of Appalachian history or folklore would likely not pick this book up. They would be missing out on something special...From the start this is not just another dry non-fiction about what life was like up in "them thar hills!" Rather it is an experience of seeing life in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina through the eyes of one of its preeminent story tellers. Prepare to be transported to the parlor of the Hicks home to sit on the simple wood floor and warm yourself before the woodstove as you listen to Ray spin the greatest yarn of all for you; the one of his own life. You will climb the mountains, learn to make do with what is available and yes, you will sit on his grandfather's lap and learn the great stories that had been handed down through the generations. In short, in a few pages you will look up and realize that the mountains have just been delivered to your living room. J. Keith Jones Author of "In Due Time" In Due Time

I was about 3 years old when my family went to a cabin that belonged to my grandparents way up in the mountains. I remember the gravel road winding up forever through the trees. I remember wild blueberries and a fire pit beside our cabin. And then I remember sitting in Ray Hicks' home across that gravel road. We sat in a home that didn't have electricity or plumbing and listened by a crackling fire as he told us the story of 'Sop Doll'. I was 3 and I can remember all of it clear as day. That day is my earliest memory and that story is one I will never forget. This book is a collection of stories from a true story telling master and I encourage everyone to read it. Ray Hicks was named a National Treasure a few years back and deserves every bit of the recognition and acclaim. My only wish is that the rest of the world could have been as lucky as I to have a first hand experience with the man. Rest in Peace Ray!

If you want to learn how life was lived in the Appalachians not all that long ago, you must read about this extremely interesting man and his family.

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