
NONFICTION IN BRIEF

AUNT ARIE

A Foxfire Portrait.

*Edited by Linda Garland Page
and Eliot Wigginton.*

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By **RICHARD J. MARGOLIS**

Among the many elderly residents of southern Appalachia whose words Eliot Wigginton and his Georgia high school students have carefully recorded and set down in Foxfire magazine, Arie Cabe is easily their favorite. They found her in 1970, living alone in a log house in the mountains of Macon County, North Carolina, and they kept coming back until her death eight years later at the age of 92. "Aunt Arie," one of a series of books created under the direction of Linda Garland Page from material collected by Foxfire students and staff, brings together many sprightly conversations and descriptions of kindnesses exchanged.

As Mr. Wigginton observes in an introduction, Aunt Arie was not one to conceal her affections. "We set the groceries on the lounge," he writes, describing a typical arrival at the cabin of himself and the "younguns." "I hugged her . . . and she gave me a wet affectionate smack on each cheek and pounded on my back; then she turned to grasp the hands of each of the students in turn . . . and exclaim over every one of them. . . . 'Where have you been so long? I gave out a'th'notion you was ever comin' again!'" She loved them all, Mr. Wigginton says, "instantly and without reservation." The students returned her love. They chopped wood, patched the roof, did the chores. Most of all, they helped her fight off loneliness. She would marvel, "It doesn't look like young people like that would come see me and stay with me."

The picture we get is of an unworldly woman who nonetheless had world enough and time to live wisely and generously. Because the editors relate to her as a friend rather than a charac-

ter, Aunt Arie emerges whole and genuine. As she said, "People twist a lie t'suit themselves, but y'can't twist th'truth. It'll be there today, tomorrow, and forever."

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