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Emory Jones brings local history to life in first novel *'The Valley Where They Danced'* will be for sale during book signings this weekend

by Billy Chism
White County News

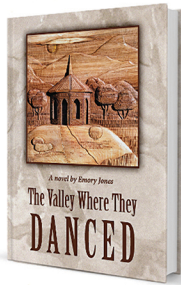
Emory Jones has written his first novel, *The Valley Where They Danced*.

But writing the 304-page book of historical fiction, set in White County and the surrounding area in the aftermath of World War I, wasn't easy.

"In fact, it's been the hardest project I have ever undertaken," Jones said. "But it's also been the most satisfying."

The book will go on sale this weekend in a number of local stores. Available only in hardback, it sells for \$26.95.

Jones, 64, grew up in the Mossy Creek community of White County, spent three years in the U.S. Air Force, graduated with a journalism degree from The University of Georgia and then began a career in advertis-



ing in Atlanta that lasted 30 years.

In 2001, Jones and his wife, Judy, returned to White County and opened Yonah Mtn. Treasures on the Helen Highway.

Jones has written several non-fiction books, including *White County 101*, *Distant Voices: The Story of the Nacoochee Valley Indian Mound*, *Zippping Through Georgia on a Goat-Powered Time Machine*, and *Heart of a Co-Op: The HEMC Story*.

"I tried to be as true to the history of the area as possible," Jones said. "In fact, I asked some 30 people to read all or part of the manuscript. That's because everybody had their area of expertise. Everybody made it better. Alan Boggs, for example, pointed out that I hadn't mentioned red-eye gravy, so I fixed that."

He continued: "Dr. Max White read it for Indian history. Danny Tatum read for Tallulah Falls and Rabun County facts. John Erbele about the Hardman Farm. Ann

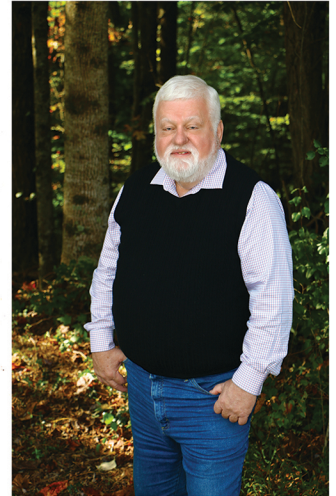
Banke read it for historical accuracy of the Valley. Others read it for a variety of reasons."

In the book's acknowledgement, Jones gave credit to 44 people and put it this way in the opening paragraph:

"While writing this book, someone asked me who my editor was. I thought about that and answered honestly that my editor was northeast Georgia. I tried hard to put myself in the middle of every scene and conversation and to remember how my Uncle Howard, or my grandmother, or the other folks I've known, all gone now, would have expressed themselves. I'm sure I didn't get it exactly right, but I tried to be close – preserving history is a sacred thing."

Here's what a few had to say, who have read the book in its early manuscript:

"The story captured me completely," Linda Jordan of Clarkesville said. "After reading, I couldn't travel Ga. highways 17 or 255 without feeling I was in a horse and buggy and moving slow enough to experience the scenery, the smells and the



Emory Jones' *The Valley Where They Danced*, his first novel, will be released this weekend. (Photo/David Greear)

See **EMORY JONES** Page 10A

EMORY JONES

countryside."

She added: "The use of names so familiar was a device that made the story quite real. I loved the reality of Bean Creek folks in all their strength, fun and similarity to their descendants."

Garrison Baker, probate judge of White County and a historian in his own right, said: "Emory's gift as a teller of tales – well-known to those who know him – is on full display as he takes the reader back in time. The book provides an accurate, detailed look at what life must have been like during this period. Emory's careful and meticulous research is evident. But much more than that, it's a great read."

As a member of the Meaders family, Jones said he could not write this book without bringing in the potters at Mossy Creek. One highlight in the book is a trip

the two main characters make to buy some churns from the Meaders pottery shop in 1919.

Caroline Crittenden, a former librarian whose family has been a special part of the Valley for decades, had this to say: "Emory has captured Northeast Georgia's cultural diversity and dialects in a compelling story, with eerily familiar characters."

Betty Highsmith of Cleveland noted: "Emory wanted me to read to check historical facts. But, I was so engrossed in the story that I forgot about my original task. Many White County names are woven into the story. Emory certainly did a lot of research, but mainly he has a story that kept me interested."

Cindy Mullinax, office manager of the *White County News*, said: "Reading *The Valley Where They Danced* was such a joy.

I was taken back in time and felt as if I was there, as a member of that community. The characters came to life for me, and I could see the events unfold as they happened. I felt their happiness and sadness."

Jones began working on this novel in 2011, but really didn't get going until Thanksgiving 2013.

"By this time, I really got caught up in it," he said, "and so did Judy, my main listener. She also made plenty of comments. We kept asking, 'What if...?' Soon, the story took over the book, and the story became the boss. It told me what to write."

So what's the story about? The two main characters are Dr. Tom Garrison of Macon, who arrives in the Sautee Valley as a young, idealistic doctor, and Lenore Conley, who lives with her parents on a small farm in the Valley.

Phil Hudgins, longtime columnist in Northeast Georgia, noted: "Emory writes in a way that puts the reader inside the story. He knows the language of the Georgia mountain people because he is a product of the area. And he uses that colorful voice to tell a wonderful tale about love, conflict and survival in the horse-and-buggy era. His novel is definitely worth your time."

Jones concluded: "The story is not just a love story. It reflects the bittersweet reality of life and death, and is full of twists and turns, with a little bit a mystery at the end.

"And who knows," he said. "It might make a good movie one day."

The Valley Where They Danced
is now available on Kindle

from Page 1A