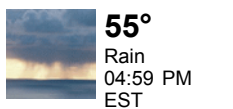




'Kudzu Debutantes' is fun summer read

By Cari Gervin
Staff Writer



Weather Forecast



"
REVENGE OF THE KUDZU
DEBUTANTES"
by Cathy
Holton
, Random House 2006, 288
pages
, \$24.

Take a few cheating lawyer husbands, some fed-up wives, a lot of margaritas and a dash of sarcastic fun at the expense of the Junior League, and you have the basic recipe for "Revenge of the Kudzu Debutantes."

The first novel by longtime Signal Mountain resident Cathy Holton could be viewed as a Southern version of Olivia Goldsmith's "The First Wives Club," without the actual divorces — and a lot more kudzu.

Like Ms. Goldsmith, Ms. Holton spent years sending out unsolicited manuscripts before an agent finally took a chance on her. She now has a two-book deal with Ballantine, a division of Random House.

Her novel is set in the fictional small town of Ithaca, Ga., where three middle-aged Southern belles discover that their husbands have been up to no good on their annual Montana hunting trip. They decide to teach their soon-to-be ex's a lesson in more ways than one, and in this book, revenge is not a dish best served cold.

Local readers will get a kick out of things like a deli called Shapiro's and the Kudzu Ball, in which the novel culminates. (Ms. Holton's version is nothing like the original.) Ms. Holton lampoons genteel Southern traditions like debutante balls. But she also skewers lawyers, artists, rednecks, Yankees and just about everything else with good humor.

Although the revenge plot isn't new, and the pacing could stand to move a bit faster, by the end of the novel you can't help rooting for the would-be debutantes and wondering what will happen in the sequel, due out next spring.

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BOOKSIGNING

Cathy Holton will be signing copies of "Revenge of the Kudzu Debutantes" at Barnes & Noble on Tuesday, June 6 at 7:00 p.m. and at Wild Hare Books on Signal Mountain on Saturday, June 17 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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