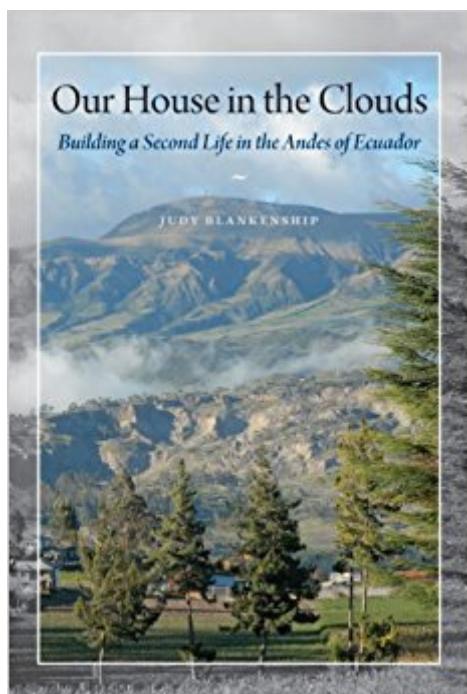


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Our House In The Clouds: Building A Second Life In The Andes Of Ecuador (Louann Atkins Temple Women & Culture)



Synopsis

While many baby boomers are downsizing to a simpler retirement lifestyle, photographer and writer Judy Blankenship and her husband Michael Jenkins took a more challenging leap in deciding to build a house on the side of a mountain in southern Ecuador. They now live half the year in Cañar, an indigenous community they came to know in the early nineties when Blankenship taught photography there. They are the only extranjeros (outsiders) in this homely, chilly town at 10,100 feet, where every afternoon a spectacular mass of clouds rolls up from the river valley below and envelopes the town. In this absorbing memoir, Blankenship tells the interwoven stories of building their house in the clouds and strengthening their ties to the community. Although she and Michael had spent considerable time in Cañar before deciding to move there, they still had much to learn about local customs as they navigated the process of building a house with traditional materials using a local architect and craftspeople. Likewise, fulfilling their obligations as neighbors in a community based on reciprocity presented its own challenges and rewards. Blankenship writes vividly of the rituals of births, baptisms, marriages, festival days, and deaths that counterpoint her and Michael's solitary pursuits of reading, writing, listening to opera, playing chess, and cooking. Their story will appeal to anyone contemplating a second life, as well as those seeking a deeper understanding of daily life in the developing world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am a former Peace Corps volunteer who lived and worked in Cañar, Ecuador for two years in the

late sixties. It is not surprising to me that Judy Blankenship and her husband Michael found it a magical place to build a home. They did not enter into the project as arrogant outsiders. Having spent much time already learning the ways of the Ecuadorean culture in general and the Cañari indigenous culture in particular over many visits extended over a dozen years, their advanced cross-cultural skills allowed them to work with local people to create their dream home in the clouds. Part anthropologist, memoirist, photographer, and adventurer, Ms. Blankenship opens up a world previously little known by foreigners, and shows how establishing good, even loving, relations with a native people is the essence of being a good neighbor, and the key to building a warm home.

As a retiree in Cuenca, Ecuador, I loved reading about the joys and challenges of Judy and Michael. I related to few circumstances and chuckled when I thought, "I know that feeling." I share the joy of living in Ecuador where I can enjoy a healthy lifestyle. I look forward to spending some time in Canar. Viva Ecuador.

We enjoy traveling very much, and one of our main joys in traveling is to meet people in different parts of the world who have quite different lives from us. Third World countries and peoples are especially interesting to us, though it's often difficult to get accurate insights into their lives. When we plan to visit other countries, we read books for several months in advance, to learn some history and culture, so we can absorb better when we're actually there. This is an excellent book to read if you're interested in Ecuador, or indigenous peoples of the Andean highlands. It makes the Canari culture come alive, through the eyes of Americans who build a life there. It's also a very interesting story of building a life (and a house) in a foreign culture. It gives deeper insights into the Canari people and culture than any visit of a few weeks could do. I really enjoyed reading this book.

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