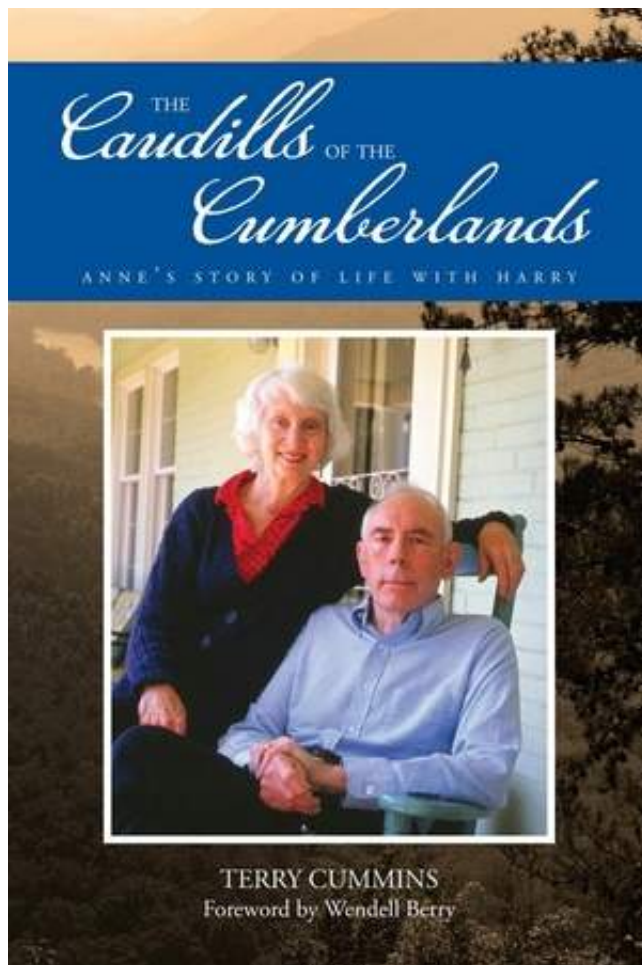


Caudills and their Cumberlands

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In January 1945, when Anne Frye met Harry Caudill at the University of Kentucky, two forces began melding into one spirit. Making their home with Harry's people in the mountains of Whitesburg, they worked together to alleviate misery among the coal mining families in Eastern Kentucky who had been betrayed by the industry.

With Anne as his sounding board, typist, keeper of the home fires and partner in every way, Harry's disturbing thoughts about the plight of his people accumulated and resulted in his enormously impactful "Night Comes to the Cumberlands." The family was thrust onto the international scene, and their

lives became enmeshed in service for those who needed a more powerful voice. The book earned a place in the history of American literature; it is often compared to Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin," Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath," Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" and Michael Harrington's "The Other America."

Harry's work in the legislature and in his law office, along with his subsequent novels, teaching and speeches, kept him and Anne in the public arena. For decades they became touchstones of communication on the ruthless methods of coal mining and how the lack of control by federal involvement destroys the heritage of the people while decimating the irreplaceable mountains of those who live among them.

Terry Cummins gathered material for his biography through lengthy interviews with Anne, and reading masses of books and articles written by and about the Caudills. With access to files of her work with schools, libraries, hospitals and mountain culture, which include personal letters and guest books, he has created a carefully worded and immensely interesting account of civic advocacy, accomplishment and lasting friendships. The author blends history and issues with a great love story.

Despite some repetitive prose, the book contains comprehensive material that explains background, motivation and the significance of the work of the Caudills. "Night Comes to the Cumberlands" and succeeding books opened the eyes of Americans who stamped to their door, where the book-loving and reflective family preferred to share a home-cooked meal while hashing out ideas and laughing over good stories.

A foreword written by Wendell Berry speaks of Anne's "... steadfast good will toward our fragile and suffering world." Still captivating and charming her many friends in later years, there is no lack of enthusiasm in the soul of Anne Caudill. "Nobody grows old living a number of years; people grow old by deserting their ideals. ... Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul."

Cummins has written his book with respect and affection for his subjects, whose work is more relevant today than ever. He presents the facts as seen in the history of our Appalachian coal region and because the area continues to be assaulted inspires a rededication to the ideals set in motion by the Caudills of

the Cumberlands.

Mary Popham is a writer and book reviewer who lives in Louisville. She has a master's degree in fine arts from Spalding University. Her new book, "Back Home in Landing Run," is published by MotesBooks.

1. <http://www.courier-journal.com/comments/article/20140110/FEATURES06/301100015/Caudills-their-Cumberlands>