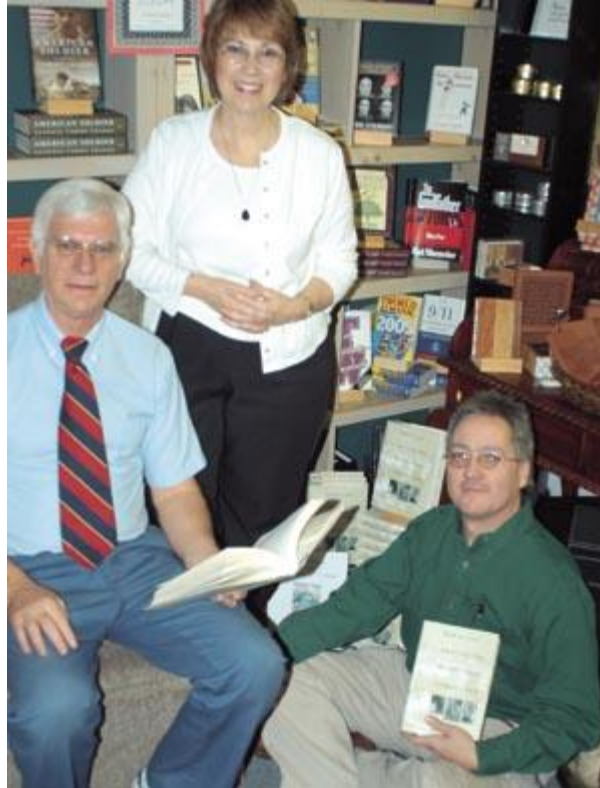


Signing here tomorrow by editor-authors

Mike Birdwell and Calvin Dickinson



Signing books tomorrow -- Calvin Dickinson, retired Tennessee Tech history professor, at left, BookWorks owner Judith Mariano, and TTU history professor Michael Birdwell get ready for tomorrow's book signing from 1-4 p.m. * H-C Photo/Camille Fliss

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Local history buffs, something new is coming your way. Tennessee Tech Professors Michael Birdwell and Calvin Dickinson have just published a book of 17 essays about the Upper Cumberland. The book goes on sale at BookWorks tomorrow where the two will be signing copies from 1 until 4 p.m.

The Upper Cumberland area includes Putnam and 13 other counties in Tennessee and 12 counties in Kentucky.

"We used to get people calling us all the time wanting to read about the Upper Cumberland. There's so much here that people are curious about or haven't heard about," said Birdwell.

"That information is scattered all over the place but has never been put into one volume. So we tried to include as much as possible. We wanted this to have good solid scholarship and be entertaining at the same time," he said.

Entertainment runs throughout the articles which cover such diverse subjects as the 'clothing optional' nudist resort in Cumberland County, movies that were shot in or about the Upper Cumberland, the uses of caves in daily life for things like refrigeration and hiding moonshine and numerous footnotes that contain snippets of information that couldn't be fitted into the articles.

"Gary Cooper looked nothing like Sgt. (Alvin) York," writes Birdwell in a footnote to his article on the real Alvin York who spent most of his life and much of his money bringing educational reform to the Upper Cumberland.

"Though both were six feet two inches tall, the resemblance stopped there. York weighed almost 300 pounds when the film was made, had red hair and wore a moustache his entire adult life. Contrary to the statue on the lawn of the Tennessee State Capitol in Nashville, York did not use a Springfield rifle. Like many other doughboys, York swapped his heavy, slow American weapon for a British Enfield."

"There's lots of fun stuff in those footnotes that we just couldn't fit into the articles," Birdwell said.

"We hope people will pay attention to them!"

When Birdwell and Dickinson realized the amount of information that was available and near at hand, the idea of a book took hold and they wrote a few sample essays and submitted them to the University Press of Kentucky.

"We courted Kentucky on purpose," Birdwell said. "They specialize in academic disciplines and they're strong on regional studies."

The acquisitions editor at Kentucky's University Press at that time was Jennifer Peckinpugh who gave the two professors the go-ahead for creating the book.

"We put the topics together that we thought should be included.

"And then we went after the people who knew about them, the people we thought would be most qualified to write the material," Birdwell said.

"Charlie Wolf, for instance, is the expert on country music. Wali Kharif from TTU covered several different thriving African-American communities in the area. Lynwood Montell is an authority on folklore.

"Each author wrote about something close to his or her heart," Birdwell said.

Other articles in the book cover architecture, religion, the Civil War, literature, health spas, the Upper Cumberland as a socialist outpost and the 800,000 WW2 troops who trained and were bivouacked in Cookeville and the surrounding area from 1942 to 1945.

All the articles were edited by Birdwell and Dickinson and then sent off to Lexington, Ky., where they were edited again by the University Press editors, returned to Cookeville with comments and sent back to the authors for revisions.

"It was a pretty good system except for one author. We asked everyone to write an article whose original manuscript ran between 25 and 35 pages. One of our authors submitted a 75-page manuscript which was returned to him with edits from us and from the University Press of Kentucky.

"When he finished his revisions, the article came back longer than when he first submitted it!

"We finally got it down to 32 pages," Birdwell laughed.

The book has plenty of well-produced black and white photos and is dedicated to the late Cookeville and Herald-Citizen photographer Jim Heard whose collection of photos has enriched many publications in the area.

Unlike commercial publishers, University Presses don't consider profit to be the motivation for publishing.

"Academic presses run off small print runs," Birdwell said.

"They're not in it for profit but to promote knowledge and scholarship. One thing every professor has to do is publish articles in his field. The university presses often make that possible," he said.

So the *Rural Life and Culture in the Upper Cumberland* is not cheap and copies are not plentiful.

"They ran off an initial run of 1,000 copies," Birdwell said.

And the price for the 369-page book is \$45.

BookWorks is at 230 East Broad, northwest of the Courthouse Square.

For more information call (931) 372-8026.

Published December 10, 2004 1:13 PM CST

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