

## A LONG HARD STREAK VIEWED BY FULL HOUSE

This past Saturday afternoon, Fentress Countians were invited to be part of a unique event and large numbers accepted the invitation. This quickly became evident as, at least half an hour before the screening of A Long Hard Streak\* began at Castle Cinemas, the parking lot was already starting to fill up.

One of the early arrivals myself, I was fortunate to be able to spend a few minutes talking with the film's producer and director, Scott Rabideau, before the screening began. Scott has family ties to Billy Dean Anderson through his (Scott's) mother, Mary Matthews-Rabideau, who was Billy's cousin. He also has several other relatives who grew up in the Pall Mall area; some who were directly involved in the tragic story that unfolded during the time that Billy hid out in the high hills that overlook the valley, evading capture and becoming the center of one of the longest and most intense manhunts known to have ever occurred in this area.

Among those relatives was a cousin, Kay Wood Conatser, whose vivid memories of that time became the material for the book that she later wrote, titled Billy Dean Anderson-A Criminal Life. After Kay and Scott met, they began working together to bring Billy's fascinating, tragic and often contradictory story to life on the screen.

The product of their collaboration, A Long Hard Streak, tells how this young boy who grew



up in the beautiful Pall Mall area among family and friends, attended church and developed an artistic talent that resulted in the creation of numerous paintings with Christian themes, became a criminal and a wanted man as an adult.

The film is especially interesting because several of those paintings he created while hiding out in a cave in the hills above the Pall Mall community) remain today in local churches and homes, and were located by Kay to be filmed by Scott for inclusion in A Long Hard Streak

The film is also the story of a rural community and how its residents came together to protect one of their own from outsiders unyielding in their intent to capture and, if they deemed it necessary, to kill him. Interviews with some of those individuals were filmed for inclusion in the film. What they have to say about Billy, his life and death, are straightforward and often poignant, with one thread that seems to run through all of them, that being:

“Yes. Billy did things that were wrong. He committed crimes and deserved to be punished. But he didn't deserve to be hunted down and killed the way he was.”

Scott Rabideau summed up the film and its subject this way:

“Despite Billy's wild life of crime, what really drew me to this story was his creative drive. I couldn't imagine living in a cave for so long, surviving, writing and painting while the FBI was conducting a nationwide manhunt. It was fascinating that he chose to be creative at all, to use his artwork as a tool to communicate with friends and loved ones while he was in hiding. For me, the film is about the power of art to pull you out of your darkest moments; and I think it did that for Billy. From the words in his journal and the images he produced in the cave, I see a conflicted human being striving to get back to his true self.”

A Long Hard Streak is a powerful film. It tells the story of a life

with much promise that, because of a propensity for crime, ended badly. It is also the story of a people held together by love of family and community. Beyond that, it is a testament to the power of creativity to overcome the direst of circumstances and environment.

Both the creative and technical aspects of the filming are amazing. It had to be very difficult to film the scenes of running through the trees and climbing into and out of the cave, carrying equipment, keeping the camera steady for some of the more difficult shots; but both and more were done well.

The 60 minute version of the film will be broadcast on PBS sometime during the coming months and the feature-length film will be available on Amazon Prime Video. Our readers can keep up-to-date on viewing opportunities and other information pertaining to the film by visiting <https://longhardstreak.com> or at [www.facebook.com/longhardstreak](https://www.facebook.com/longhardstreak). The film title comes from a line of a poem that Billy wrote while in the cave.