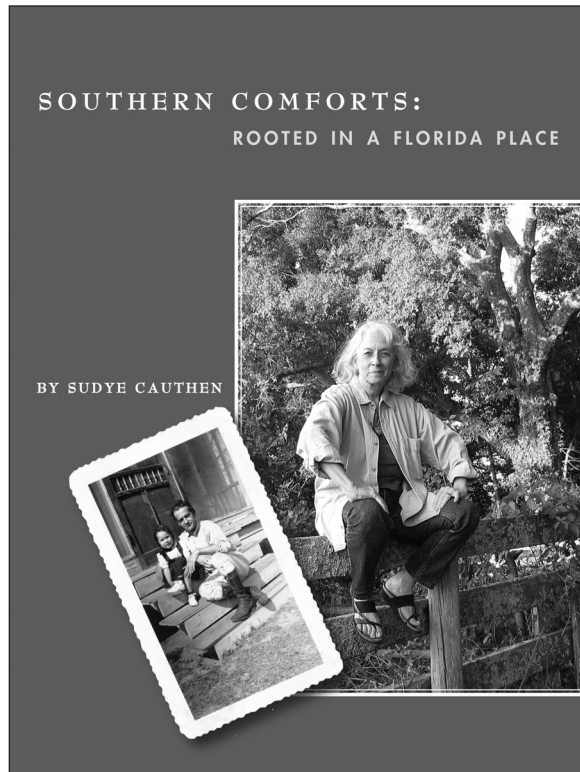


# Southern Comforts

Rooted in a Florida Place

**Sudye Cauthen**

*A moving meditation on what Florida has lost and still stands to lose*



August 2007  
 6¾ x 9 | 192 pp. | 24 b&w photos  
 7 maps | 33 illus.  
 Cloth, \$29.95t  
 ISBN-13 978-1-930066-58-8

*Distributed for the Center for American Places*  
 A volume in the *Center Books on the American South* series,  
 George F. Thompson, series founder and director  
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“The Florida I love is perishing,” says Sudye Cauthen. In *Southern Comforts*, this fifth-generation Floridian blends memoir, oral history, and cultural geography to explore the tensions between community and environment in America today and her own ambivalence about Alachua, the place just north of Gainesville where she was born and reared. Cauthen raises a cry for all that is lost as Florida’s—and America’s—landscapes and traditions are replaced by interstates, condos, shopping malls, and the new way of life they represent.

Part self-reflection, part meditation, and part social analysis, Cauthen’s work threads through the stories of blacks, whites, and Native Americans—men and women—including her own family members. Through their words and hers, Cauthen explores northern Florida’s unique history, culture, and geography while she seeks a greater understanding of herself and her surroundings.

Cauthen’s journey takes readers down dirt roads and city streets, to her people’s tobacco fields and churches. She sifts sand at an archaeological dig for the lost Spanish mission of Santa Fe de Toloca, peers into an aboriginal grave, and everywhere marshals evidence for the primacy of place in determining who we are. One story takes us on a fox hunt; another reveals lingering racial problems. Permeating the book is the ever-present menace of growth and development and what it holds for Cauthen’s Florida.

**Sudye Cauthen**, founder of the North Florida Center for Documentary Studies, directed Florida’s first Folk-Arts-in-the-Schools program. Her awards include a state of Florida Individual Artist Fellowship in Literature. Her work has appeared in such publications as the *Chattahoochee Review*, *Florida Review*, *International Quarterly*, *Kalliope*, and *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Cauthen lives on the Suwannee River near White Springs, Florida.

“Cauthen’s book is a personal history told so beautifully, layer upon layer, that even James Agee would be undone. A longing like a wildfire runs through these pages, entwined in stories of farmers and preachers, churchgoers and criminals: *Go back, go back*. Folkloric and spiritual, this uncommon study is a monument to a place that was.”

—Janisse Ray, author of *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*

“To make history—place—beat with the pulse of blood is perhaps the most difficult of all the writer’s alchemy and, when it is done well, it is the most rewarding. Cauthen has rewarded us with the eye, ear, and memory of the natural writer. Pick up *Southern Comforts* and read it all in one sitting, as I did.”

—Harry Crews, author of *A Childhood: The Biography of a Place*

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