

Ann Patchett Book smarts

PHOTO BY HEIDI ROSS

Author Ann Patchett is the featured speaker on Nov. 20 at the Literary Arts Portland Arts and Lecture Series. Her new work, "This is a Story of a Happy Marriage," came out this month.

The famed author and now independent bookstore owner wants to put paper books back into our hands

BY SUE ZALOKAR
 STAFF WRITER

With six novels and three books of nonfiction to her credit, award-winning author Ann Patchett has come a long way since she began her career as a staff writer at Seventeen magazine.

But Patchett will tell you that her time at Seventeen honed her skill at crafting nonfiction pieces, whether for The New York Times or Vogue magazine.

Her most recent nonfiction book, "This is a Story of a Happy Marriage" released Nov. 4, explores the theme of commitment as it is reflected through her life as a young writer.

In 2011, Patchett opened Parnassus Books with business partner Karen Hayes in Nashville, Tennessee — the city Patchett has called home since she was six years old. More than that, Patchett has become a spokesperson for independent bookstores and the printed word.

In 2012, Patchett made TIME magazine's list of the 100 most influential people in the world for her work to raise awareness about the importance of book selling (and buying). She is the featured speaker for the Literary Arts Portland Arts and Lecture Series, at 7:30 p.m., Nov. 20, at the Arlene

Patchett is the featured speaker at the Literary Arts Portland Arts and Lecture Series, Wednesday, Nov. 20, 7:30 p.m. at the the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall.

Schnitzer Concert Hall.

When we matched schedules recently, I found myself in the Street Roots office at 5 a.m. so that I could still make it to my day job working as an instructor at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, a topic that started our conversation around the odds against convicted felons from the start — and of course, a book recommendation.

Ann Patchett: An amazing book — if you have the time to read — is called "Crossed Over" by Beverly Lowry. It is about Karla Faye Tucker who was the first woman to be executed in this country in 50 years. She was executed 13 years ago. Beverly is a good friend of mine and she had read about Karla Faye. It was right after Beverly's son was killed and she became interested in Karla Faye's story and she ended up writing this book about before (Karla) was conceived, she had no chance.

Sue Zalokar: Since you came out of the gate with a book recommendation, let me ask you about the bookstore you opened in Nashville in 2011. What was the impetus to start Parnassus Books?

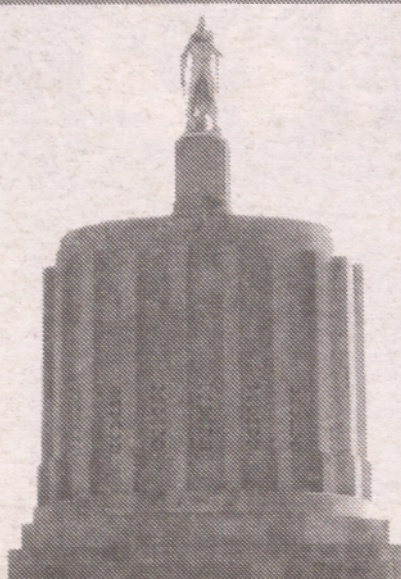
A.P.: The bookstores (in Nashville) were closed and I didn't want to live in a city that didn't have a bookstore because where would I go and get my books? "State of Wonder" came out in the summer of 2011 and Parnassus Books opened in November. My wonderful local frame shop, The Beveled Edge and my alterations shop, Stitch It, were the two stores in Nashville that sold my book locally and I will always love them for that.

But you know, I'm in this business. I need a book store. I did not want to open a bookstore. This is not my life-long dream. Frankly, the genius of it all is that I have an amazing partner, Karen Hayes. Our deal is, she would do all of the work and I would pay for it and do the publicity. And it is a marriage made in heaven.

S.Z.: Part of the charm of an independent bookstore is the sense of intimacy between people and

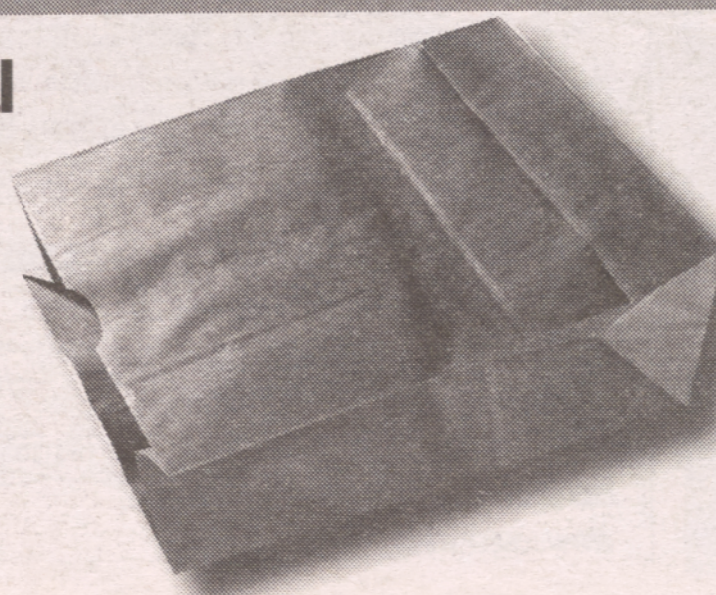
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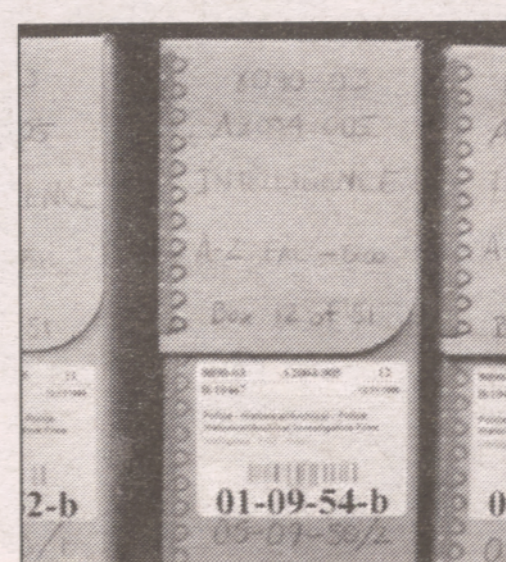
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