

BOOK STORES

In celebration of Independent Bookstore Day, visit one of the many shops that enrich the Columbia Pacific

Coastal Life

Story and photos by MATT LOVE

Over the long years of my coastal life, I have found one of the more soothing and rewarding experiences is stepping inside an independent bookstore. Nothing compares to the intimacy of their ambiance. They represent the pacific antithesis of everything digital, distant and anonymous in our increasingly fast-paced culture.

Here's what you can expect when you enter one of the independent bookstores from Manzanita to Long Beach, quite possibly the highest concentration of such establishments in Oregon and Washington outside of Portland and Seattle:

The store will exist in a charming retail space and not sell tires and cheese alongside books. It will smell good inside, vaguely of tea and wood. There might be a crackling gas fire burning. A kindly dog or cat might greet you. Children will be sitting on the floor thumbing through books. There will be a real person — not a website or a phone app — who greets you with “hello” and is knowledgeable and passionate about books. Most likely that person is the owner of the shop.

Can't find the book you came into buy? No problem. The owner will gladly order it for you. Looking for a recommendation for a great novel? Just ask the owner, and she will eagerly provide one. She's read everything under the sun.

The store will have robust local history and local authors sections. It will advertise community events. It will sponsor and host literary presentations that enable independent authors and publishers (like me) to succeed reaching readers. In fact, for many authors, these stores are practically the only way they can reach readers. I would have never survived as an Oregon publisher for 13 years without their existence and generosity.

A customer will meet other denizens of bookstore culture — the bookworms among us. They are a resilient and loyal bunch who didn't allow the disappearance of the inde-



The quaint entrance to the Cannon Beach Book Company.



Lucy's Books in Astoria is happy to place special orders for customers.

pendent bookstore in the Age of the Internet, unlike the denizens of record store culture. It could have happened and that would have resulted in a catastrophic loss for this nation's intellectual life. It was predicted by many in the late 1990s as the big box book retailers dominated the landscape in shopping malls.



Oz the book cat snoozes in Seaside's Beach Books.



Jupiter's Books offers new and used books and a rare book collection.



Beach Books in Seaside boasts a spacious interior, an upstairs art gallery and Oz, the book cat.

They're dead. I haven't missed them at all. Who has?

Yes, visit an independent bookstore and you will be enriched by the experience. It basically comes down to this with coastal independent bookstores: Small is good; small is special. It also comes down to this: I asked Lisa Reid, owner of Lucy's Books in Astoria, what her greatest pleasure was of operating an independent bookstore. She said, “It's about being able to help readers find books.”

A computer algorithm can never replicate that distinctive human touch.

May 2, 2015 is Independent Bookstore Day across the country and what better time

to show your support for the fantastic ones in our area: Cloud and Leaf Books in Manzanita; Jupiter's Books and the Cannon Beach Book Company in Cannon Beach; Beach Books in Seaside; Godfather's Books and Lucy's Books in Astoria; Time Enough Books in Ilwaco. Visit these proud purveyors of literature and come out loaded down with books.

Matt Love lives in Astoria and is the author/editor of 13 books about Oregon, including “A Nice Piece of Astoria: A Narrative Guide.” They are available at coastal bookstores and through www.nestuccaspitpress.com