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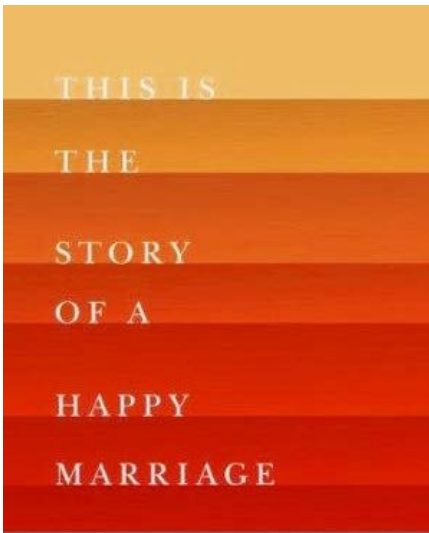
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Ann Patchett is 2014 Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award recipient

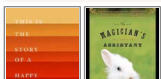
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Patchett

Posted: Sunday, March 30, 2014 12:00 am | Updated: 7:25 am, Sun Mar 30, 2014.

By JAMES D. WATTS JR. World Scene Writer | 1 comment

Novelist Ann Patchett's dedication to literature — and the places where it can be obtained — knows few bounds.

Take libraries.

Patchett, whose novels include the award-winning "Bel Canto" and "State of Wonder," was asked to speak earlier this month at the Public Library Association conference, being held in Indianapolis.

"My mother is going through some health problems, so I couldn't take the time to drive there," said Patchett, who lives in Nashville. "And you can't get a direct flight from Nashville to Indianapolis.

"So, long story short, I ended up renting a private plane," she said. "And the weather is just desperately terrible to the point that the pilot can't land. I was thinking, 'This is my Buddy Holly moment.' "

The pilot was finally able to touch down, and Patchett raced across town to where the convention was being held.

"I'm an hour late, and I'm tearing off my coat as I'm running through the crowd to get to the podium, where about a thousand librarians from around the country had been

Video



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waiting — no doubt very quietly — for me to arrive," she said.

"So I think that proves," Patchett said, laughing, "that I'm very committed to libraries."

Patchett is the recipient of the 2014 Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award.

She will be in Tulsa to receive the award — a \$40,000 cash prize and an engraved crystal book — at a black-tie gala Dec. 5 at the Librarium, 1110 S. Denver Ave.

Patchett will give a free public presentation about her work and career, and will sign

copies of her books, Dec. 6 at the Hardesty Regional Library, 8316 E. 93rd St.

She has written six novels, starting with "The Patron Saint of Liars," published in 1992. Her fourth novel, "Bel Canto," about a group of terrorists who take over an embassy in an unnamed South American country, earned her a worldwide audience, winning the Orange Prize and the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction.

Her latest novel, "State of Wonder," published in 2011, follows a woman researcher for a pharmacology company into the Amazon River basin to learn the fate of a close friend, believed dead of a tropical disease, and to confront a former teacher who has supposedly discovered a miracle fertility drug.

Although Patchett's novels routinely make best-seller lists and get glowing reviews, there are some critics who find fault in the way the stories tend to resolve in positive, even upbeat ways.

For example, as the siege in "Bel Canto" drags on, the relationships among those in the embassy — terrorists, politicians, Japanese businessmen and an American opera singer — take unforeseen turns, including toward romance.

"There are positive stories out there," Patchett said. "They do exist. I'm writing from my own experience in a lot of ways, and I have to say that I've known a lot more wonderfully kind people than I have serial killers."

As for the quietly magical air that permeates her stories — not quite magical realism, but a sense of the uncanny and inexplicable — Patchett laughed and said, "Oh, that's Catholicism.

"Those were the stories I was raised on," she said. "For me, Butler's 'Lives of the Saints' had a similar place in my childhood that 'Grimm's Fairy Tales' had for others. I grew up believing that these stories were absolutely true. If I were hard-pressed, I could say that intellectually much of it didn't happen, but on an emotional level, these stories were carved into me — that sense of anything being possible."

Patchett has also written three nonfiction books, including her most recent volume, "This is the Story of a Happy Marriage."

"There was a time," Patchett said, "when nonfiction was what I did to make a living, so I didn't have to work as a waitress or teach. Over the years, when I didn't have to do it, I discovered that I really loved writing nonfiction.

"That's been a blessing because this has been a hard year, with two sick parents and other family things to attend to," she said. "I don't think I've had five minutes to myself so far in 2014. And I need a good bit of time to devote myself to writing fiction.

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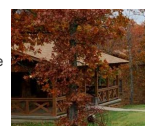
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"But I can carve out a few minutes and write an essay," she said. "It's like knitting — I can pick it up and focus on it for a short time, then put it away and move on to something else."

Patchett's devotion to books of all kinds led her to open Parnassus Books in Nashville, after other independent bookstores in the city had closed.

"What you really need is the right space and a good landlord, and I think we have both," she said. "The store is about 3,000 square feet, which I think is the sweet spot when it comes to bookstores. Anything much larger, and you're really just curating."

"It's like the difference between going to small restaurant, where there may be 10 items on the menu, and you want to try them all," Patchett said, "and going to someplace like the Cheesecake Factory with its 50-page menu, which has so many things you get kind of sick. A smaller venue lets you reflect the tastes of your customers and your staff in what you sell."

Running the store with her business partners has also changed the way Patchett herself reads.

"In the past, I might re-read a Henry James novel, or read something by Dickens or some old French novel I'd always been meaning to get to," Patchett said.

"Now, a lot of my reading is determined by which authors are coming to the store," she said. "I had the galley of Susan Minot's '30 Girls' in my car for three months, and it wasn't until I knew she was coming that I finally got it out of the car and read it. And it's fantastic."

It's also made her a much more discriminating reader.

"I can tell in the first five pages if a book is going to hold me," she said. "That's not to say that it's a bad book — quite the contrary. It's just that I know this book isn't one I want to spend time with."

"The same thing is true of my own books," Patchett said. "As I get older, I have a great sense of my own time and other people's time. And I don't want to waste either. I only want to write something that I really want people to read."

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Updated: 8:35 am



John Christner Trucking

posted: March 30



John Christner Trucking

posted: March 30

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brette pruitenski posted at 11:15 am on Sun, Mar 30, 2014.

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The Helmerich Award always seems to go to people who already have received better-known awards and already have high literary profiles. Not sure what the point is unless it's to bring in literati who otherwise wouldn't be coming to town. Seems the money would be better spent on a promising first-time author.



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AT THE CAPITOL: MAKING THE CASE FOR EDUCATION FUNDING

25,000 rally for schools

• Speakers called on lawmakers to increase funding for education

BY KIMBERLY

ACAPULCO — With high school seniors and college students in the crowd, a group of about 25,000 people gathered at the Oklahoma State Capitol Tuesday for a rally to demand more funding for education.

The rally was the largest in the state since 2009, according to organizers. It was held in front of the Capitol building, where lawmakers are currently debating a budget for the next fiscal year.

Speakers at the rally called on lawmakers to increase funding for education, particularly for schools in rural areas. They also urged lawmakers to support a constitutional amendment that would allow voters to vote on a sales tax to fund education.

The rally was organized by the Oklahoma Education Policy Center, a think tank that advocates for education reform. The center's executive director, John H. Johnson, said the rally was a "show of force" to let lawmakers know that parents and teachers are concerned about the state of education in Oklahoma.

Johnson said that the state's current funding levels are not enough to provide a quality education for all students. He said that the state needs to invest more in education, particularly in areas like teacher training and classroom resources.

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Education rally focuses on students, teachers

• Teachers, parents and students were on hand for schools' higher education

BY KIMBERLY

ACAPULCO — Teachers, parents and students were on hand Tuesday for a rally at the Oklahoma State Capitol to demand more funding for education.

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ACA sign-up helpers battle last-day glitches

BY KIMBERLY

ACAPULCO — ACA sign-up helpers are battling last-day glitches as they help thousands of Oklahomans enroll in health care plans.

The sign-up period for the ACA is set to end on March 31, but many people are still having trouble enrolling. This is due to a variety of reasons, including technical issues with the enrollment website and a lack of information about the process.

ACA sign-up helpers are working to help people enroll as quickly as possible. They are providing information about the enrollment process and helping people troubleshoot any problems they are having.

The sign-up period for the ACA is set to end on March 31, but many people are still having trouble enrolling. This is due to a variety of reasons, including technical issues with the enrollment website and a lack of information about the process.

Tulsa County voters heading to polls today

BY KIMBERLY

TULSA — Tulsa County voters are heading to the polls today to cast their ballots in the 2014 general election.

The election is being held on Tuesday, March 11, at 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Voters can go to their local polling station or vote by mail.

The election includes several contests, including the U.S. House of Representatives, the Oklahoma State Senate, and the Tulsa County Commission. There are also several local ballot measures on the ballot.

Voters are encouraged to arrive at their polling station early to avoid long lines. They should also bring their voter ID and a photo of themselves.

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