

Written by Kristy Woodson Harvey
Monday, 19 February 2018 15:14



Kristy Woodson Harvey on sharing stories, loving old houses, and standing in Pat Conroy's library.

Standing in Pat Conroy's private library is not something I had ever imagined I would do. But then, suddenly, the night before a speaking engagement at USC-Beaufort, I found myself there, in Cassandra King's lovely home that she shared with her late husband, with an amazing group of women who had gathered to welcome me to town, as Southern women do.

I would never have asked to see it, wouldn't have snooped, wouldn't have pried unless I was offered. I guess when you get right down to it, there's not too much private about a library. But somehow, being inside a writer's library feels intensely personal, as if you are gaining entrance—if only for a moment—to a part of his or her soul.

There was a silence in that room, a hush that I couldn't just hear with my ears but could feel with my body. It was a sense of calm, a feeling of peace.

I'm a millennial, technically, though with all the flack my generation gets, maybe that's not something to admit with pride. Nevertheless, it's important. Because I'm a phone picture taker, an Instagrammer, a blogger. My hopes and dreams are readily available via my Pinterest board, and I remember my friends' birthdays because Facebook tells me to. The innerworkings of my private life have never been particularly private because most of my life is broadcast from my iPhone.

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Only, standing there that day, I didn't broadcast. I didn't so much as snap a photo. In the moment, I didn't, because more than I'm a millennial, I am a Southern girl with Southern girl manners. You don't take pictures in church.

And you don't take pictures in Pat Conroy's library.

Surrounded by what you feel like, in the moment, are volumes and personal belongings that are downright holy; it's just not appropriate to pull out your iPhone and start snapping. Maybe it wouldn't have been that wrong of me to take a picture. I don't know.

But it didn't make any difference; not then, not now. I knew already it was a moment I would never forget. I didn't need the picture because I would always carry that feeling with me of standing where one of the greats had stood.

I didn't touch anything, scarcely breathed, really, feeling as if I were studying an oil painting at a famous museum. I didn't want to sully it with my fingerprints, didn't want to leave anything behind or take anything with me—besides a memory, of course, one that I am quite certain I will one day share with my grandchildren.

Maybe that moment will be a part of my legacy.

In addition to his exquisite body of work, the Pat Conroy Literary Center must certainly be a part of Pat Conroy's legacy.

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