

June 2006

Op Ed -- Pam and Susan's Excellent Greenwich Village Bookstore Adventure

Susan Campbell

York College of Pennsylvania, scampbel@ycp.edu

Pam Cenzer

University of Florida, pam.cenzer@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Campbell, Susan and Cenzer, Pam (2006) "Op Ed -- Pam and Susan's Excellent Greenwich Village Bookstore Adventure," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 18: Iss. 3, Article 10.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4958>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

Op Ed — Pam and Susan's Excellent Greenwich Village Bookstore Adventure

by **Susan Campbell** (Library Director, Schmidt Library, York College of Pennsylvania) <scampbel@ycp.edu>

and **Pam Censer** (Serials Librarian, Marston Science Library, University of Florida) <pam.censer@gmail.com>

As your conference mentors, we want to tell you about an extraordinary experience, inspired by **Charleston Library Conference XXV** speaker **Larry Portzline**, "Bookstore Tourism: a New Twist on Literacy Travel," who sparked a national movement for bookstore tourism.

Tours of bookshops are now available in many parts of the country. Some of the more popular destinations are Northern California and Charlottesville, Virginia. Some of these trips include stops at the homes of famous authors, but the main feature is visits to independent bookstores in an area.

For thirty years your mentors have celebrated their mutual birthdays in a unique way. When we heard **Larry** speak in November, he piqued our literary imaginations. When we saw the Greenwich Village trip announced on his Website (www.bookstoretourism.com), we signed on.

On a dark, foggy Saturday morning before dawn, we boarded a motor coach in a suburban Harrisburg shopping mall parking lot chock full of chain stores, bound for the city of cities. Armed with a map and descriptions of 22 independent bookstores, we plotted our strategy. Which stores to visit?

After disembarking at Fifth Avenue and Tenth Street, we proceeded quickly to the first shop on our list **Books of Wonder** and the **Cupcake Café**. Our children are grown, but your ever youthful mentors retain a passionate interest in children's books. **Steven Kellogg's Library Lil** and **Maurice Sendak's miniature Nutshell Library** collection were our first dazzling discoveries. The lure of **Skyline Books**, **Bookleaves**, and **Three Lives and Co.** lead us away from the temptation of the **Cupcake Café**.

Speaking of food, we moved toward **Bonnie Slotnick's Cookbooks**. Smaller than the average suburban kitchen, **Bonnie's** shop housed esoteric volumes including a cookbook devoted entirely to eggplant and squash. Who could resist such a treasure? It seemed

a good idea to ask **Bonnie** for a restaurant recommendation. She and her canine companion guarded our purchases while we enjoyed a fine lunch in neighboring **Café Raffaella**.

Fortified, we sprinted sixteen blocks across the Village to **Housing Works Used Book Café** described by the *New York Times* as "a comfortable, down-to-earth place and one of the hottest literary hubs in New York." By now this Greenwich Village trek was beginning to share certain similarities with a hike to the bottom of the Grand Canyon with no end in sight as we travel to **Bluestockings**, a remote feminist outpost.

Back in the chaos of Broadway and

disappoint. Autographed copies and the bookseller's recommendations inspired many purchases.

Lest you surmise that our attention never wavered from bookstores through the entire day, our shopping bags contained many gourmet specialty items from Bleecker Street and exquisite handmade papers from Fifth Avenue.

When our pedometer reached 19,971 steps (ten miles) we boarded the bus with 48 other exhausted and exhilarated book addicts. Driving home in

a driving downpour we watched the bookstore classic *84 Charing Cross Road* starring **Anthony Hopkins** and **Anne Bancroft**.

Over huntsman and aged provolone cheeses on fresh rosemary bread, followed by cocoa dusted hazelnuts, we reflected on our day in Greenwich Village. The booksellers we met were knowledgeable, helpful, dedicated, and colorful. We renewed our commitment to independent bookstores.

Our bookstore tour group was full of bibliophiles from a variety of professions. There was a videographer making a promotional film of our group's experience. Sadly, you will not see your mentors in the video as we were pre-empted by public television celebrities, attorneys, and a musician who is featured on the bookstore tourism Website!

Thanks to **Charleston Library Conference** speaker **Larry Portzline** for a wonderful birthday celebration! Your intrepid culture vulture mentors will continue to explore opportunities for you! 🍷

Thanks to **Charleston Library Conference** speaker **Larry Portzline** for a wonderful birthday celebration! Your intrepid culture vulture mentors will continue to explore opportunities for you! 🍷



"Our bookstore tour group was full of bibliophiles from a variety of professions."

the Village, we found a quiet oasis at **Shakespeare and Co.** A forlorn Springer spaniel reminded us that we had seen no literary felines on this trip. Have dogs displaced cats as literary mascots? What is the meaning of this?

Nearing the end of our day we were flabbergasted by the 2,000,000 books on 18 miles of shelves at the **Strand Book Store**. In spite of this volume, the store lacked both titles we were seeking. Neither the short story compilation nor the *Beer Can Chicken Grill Book* were in stock. Who developed this collection? What were they thinking?

With time running out, we repaired to another sidewalk café for liquid refreshment and a final strategic planning session. **Partners & Crime, Inc.** was the last bookshop on our list. It did not