



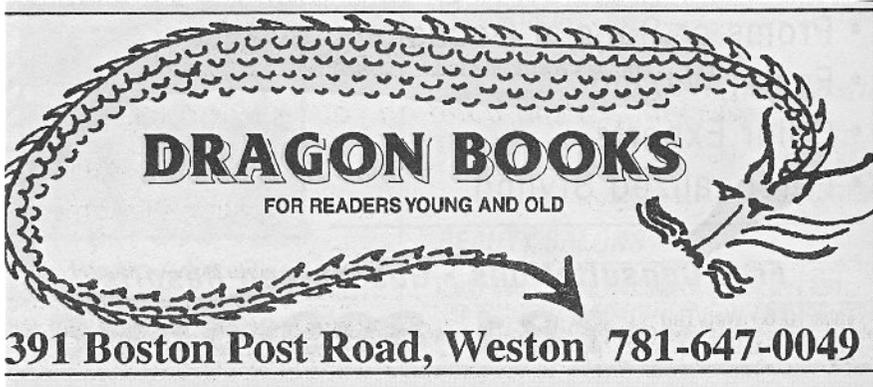
Dragon Books partners. Left, Patience Sandrof about 2011 (Courtesy of Barbara Elmes) Right: Nancy “Nanny” Decaneas (Courtesy Tony Decaneas)



A Fond Farewell to Dragon Books

Last fall, Dragon Books closed its doors after two decades as Weston’s popular community bookstore. As a small town with a limited retail base, Weston had been fortunate to have this unique place to buy books and gifts, browse, or just chat with the warm, knowledgeable staff. The comfortable atmosphere reflected the personality of the store’s founders: Patience Sandrof and the late Nancy “Nanny” Decaneas.

Patience Ferris Sandrof was born in Boston and lived most of her life in Weston. One of her memories as a child is visiting the Village Book Stall, located where Cambridge Trust is today. She loved books and remembers climbing the stairs to the children’s section on the second floor. “Bookstores were sort of in my blood, I guess,” she reflected in a February 2012 interview.



Above: The Dragon Books logo was designed by Sandrof. Below: The children's room was always well socked with books and gifts. (Photo by Casey Stirling, courtesy of Patience Sandrof).



After college, Patience married Mark Sandrof, who worked with Weston resident Tony Decaneas in the photography business. Patience grew close to his wife Nanny. “She read everything” Patience recalled, “especially psychology and Eastern philosophy. We always thought there should be a bookstore in Weston.



Dragon Books exterior. (Photo by Casey Stirling, courtesy of Patience Sandrof)

As our children got older, we looked for space to lease; and when the John Douglas clothing store closed, we went into business.” The lease began on September 1, 1991, and the store opened in December that year.

Patience always liked dragons, and Nanny’s study of Eastern religions had taught her the expression “Dragons show your life’s path” —hence the name, Dragon Books. Patience designed the logo that appeared on the store’s colorful bookmarks.

“Even before we ordered the books, we ordered the stuffed animals, because I love stuffed animals.” Patience recalls. “In the trade, they call them ‘sidelines.’” The store also sold cards and gifts, and “we were always looking for something different, fun, and authentic.” Over the years, the store sponsored many book-signings and three or four gallery shows, the longest running show being Mark’s landscape photographs.

According to Patience, the best thing about the store was the “wonderful people.” “Weston is a great place.” She remembers the excitement among younger readers on the arrival of a new Harry Potter or other anticipated title or sequel to a series. Patience and Nanny had a unique relationship with many women in town, who came for the conversation as well as for the books. They shared laughter and confidences. Mark remembers the professional women who would come in and say “I need five books,” take the recommended five with little scrutiny, and go roar-

ing out. Later they would come back and say the books were exactly right. Patience and Nanny knew their customers.

This remarkable relationship ended in 2005, when Nanny Decaneas passed away. Although Patience never took another partner, she had many loyal helpers, including Eileen Schaubert, Roberta “Bobbie” Harvest, Casey Stirling, Faith Rand, Cheryl Sickels, Jennifer Potter, Ann Peacher, and James Southcott.

Sales were relatively even over the years, but “you don’t start a bookstore to send your kids to college.” She doesn’t blame the Internet for the store’s closing. To keep up, she feels she needed more outreach and a substantial investment in technology, perhaps including purchase of an on-demand printer. She looked for about a year for someone to take over the store.

“Everyone wants to run a bookstore,” Patience observed, but in the end she was unable to find someone with the passion and some money to invest. One of her youngest customers expressed the feelings of many in town when he said, “You can’t leave. Please don’t leave.” The store closed on September 1, 2011.

Thank you Patience and Nanny, for twenty years that Dragon Books enriched our town.

By Pamela W. Fox



Sculptures by Raya Bodnar-chuk of Washington, D.C., in one of the Dragon Books gallery shows. (Photo by Casey Stirling, courtesy of Patience Sandrof)