



Last issue, we told you all about “Pat Conroy at 70: A Literary Festival Celebrating South Carolina’s Prince of Titles,” coming up in late October. As Beaufort prepares to throw the biggest birthday party anybody’s ever seen, we at *Lowcountry Weekly* have been talking to some of the Southern writers who’ll be heading here for the festivities. We asked them each a simple question: How has Pat Conroy influenced you?

Katherine Clark (*The Headmasters Darlings*), above

I have wanted to be a writer of fiction ever since first grade, when I read my very first work of fiction, *Sammy the Seal*. But after four decades, I had received nothing but rejections on all the novels I sent to publishers. Then one day as I was reading Pat Conroy’s memoir *My Losing Season*,

I encountered the passage where he quotes his college professor: “Hemingway didn’t know he was Ernest Hemingway when he was a young man. Faulkner didn’t know he was William Faulkner. But they had to take the first step. They had to call themselves writers. That is the first revolutionary act a writer has to make.” It sounded like Pat Conroy was talking directly to me with those words. So I stopped thinking of myself as a failed novelist and started calling myself a writer. A few months later, I began writing the book that has become my first published novel,

The Headmaster’s Darlings.□

In one of the most magical twists of fate I’ve ever enjoyed, Pat Conroy became a reader of this novel, then a cheerleader, mentor and editor, and ultimately a publisher through his Story River Books imprint at the University of South Carolina Press. Best of all, he has also become a friend. This friendship has changed my life. But before I ever met him, this transformation began when he spoke to me through the words in his book and urged me to take the revolutionary step of calling myself a writer.

Pam Durban (*Soon*)



I never had the pleasure of having Pat as a teacher or a mentor, but what I've learned from him is how full-hearted writing looks, sounds and feels, and that's the most valuable lesson any writer can teach another.

Patti Callahan Henry (*The Idea of Love*)

Madeleine L'Engle says that the author and the reader "know" each other because they meet on a bridge of words.

Southern Writers on Pat Conroy

Written by Editor

Tuesday, 22 September 2015 13:45 - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 September 2015 05:07



Southern Writers on Pat Conroy

Written by Editor

Tuesday, 22 September 2015 13:45 - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 September 2015 05:07



Pat Conroy (1945-2016) was a prominent American author and journalist. He is best known for his novel "The Great Gable" and his memoir "Stop-Time". Conroy was a member of the Southern Writers' Guild and was elected its president in 1998. He was also a member of the National Academy of Arts and Letters. Conroy's work often explored themes of family, identity, and the South. He was a prolific writer, with over 20 books to his credit. He was also a successful journalist, having worked for several major newspapers. Conroy was a lifelong resident of South Carolina, where he spent much of his time writing and teaching. He was a member of the Southern Writers' Guild and was elected its president in 1998. He was also a member of the National Academy of Arts and Letters. Conroy's work often explored themes of family, identity, and the South. He was a prolific writer, with over 20 books to his credit. He was also a successful journalist, having worked for several major newspapers. Conroy was a lifelong resident of South Carolina, where he spent much of his time writing and teaching.