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Interview with Ann Morrissey

Ann Morrissey

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**Interviewer: Catherine Fisher
Interviewee: Ann Morrissey
Makers@PPL, Portland, Maine
4.25.2015**

CF: Okay, so we're here at the Portland Public Library for Makers@PPL, the makers fair. This is Catherine Fisher. It's the 25th of April, year 2015, and I'm here with Ann Morrissey of Yarmouth, Maine.

Ann, you're going to talk with me a bit about what you like to make and I know of a couple of things so... what would you like to start with?

AM: I like to make stories. I like to write. I never feel like I should be doing something else if I'm writing.

CF: Like chores?

AM: Right, right. Yeah, they're gone. Forget it. You know—it's not as important as writing.

CF: What kind of writing do you do?

AM: Well, I'm better at non-fiction than I am at fiction. But I'd like to change that, but in any case, non-fiction. I like to summarize things. I like to make the points that may be hidden underneath those words. I want to bring them out and put them up front so that people know what it is they're reading.

CF: Oh! So the point underneath the words. I love that.

AM: Good! (Laughter) No, I really think it's important. I think people read a lot and I'm not sure they always see what's there, the thing underneath the writing that the writer has spent hours and hours trying to get to.

CF: One of the things that you like to write about in your non-fiction is writing itself—about stories, would you say? Is that what you're saying—you're helping to point out what's going on under the words?

AM: Yeah, sure, even to point out what's in there. Even if I'm looking at a collection of materials in the Maine Women Writers collection—it's not fair to just say this is 24 years' worth of articles. I mean, you have to say, Why did this last 20 years? What is it about her writing that jumped out off the page and made people read it for 24 years? To simply say what's in the collection is, I think, not really treating the writer with enough respect. Why did she do this? How did she do it?

CF: And so why do *you* do it? Writing?

AM: Well, because I don't know what I think until I write it. If I've written it and thought about it and figured out what has to be at the front of the paragraph, what leads it off, and what's at the end of the paragraph—I know it—I know it in a way that I didn't know it before I tried to write about it.

CF: How long have you been at it?

AM: Well, I've always been a good writer in terms of non-fiction. I worked at a bank for 34 years and I was known for my one-pagers. "Get Ann to do a one-pager on such and such," they'd say. I can distill anything down to one page.

CF: That's great.

AM: Silly skill to have, but it's what I do have.

CF: And that's what you bring now to your writing of longer pieces?

AM: I hope so. I don't think people have as much patience as they did in the old days. You know what I mean? To read ten pages of something that could have been said in one.

CF: If you would like to talk about it, I know that you're also a quilter. Do you want to talk about how you got into quilting and what kinds of things you make?

AM: Yes. I was, as I say, a banker and I used to go out to my branches. One of the branches was in a Connecticut town called Willimantic and Willimantic is an old mill town. There was a quilting shop there with a quilt in the window that was—I couldn't believe it—and I knew I just had to do that. I'd never quilted and never been in a quilting shop before. So I went in and the woman said she was going to run a class to make this quilt and I said, May I sign up for that? And she didn't ask if I had ever made a quilt before and I never told her I hadn't. Well, only two people out of ten finished the class—myself and [unclear]. The only reason I finished was because if I didn't finish it, I wouldn't know what to do with it. You know what I mean? I had to stay current or I was dead in the water. So I've loved quilting ever since. I make sure all my quilts are wonderfully colorful. They please me.

CF: Do you see any connection between putting the pieces of a quilt together and putting a story together? A piece of writing?

AM: It doesn't come to me immediately. Do *you* see any connection?

CF: Well, I don't know. It could also be that it comes from two different parts of you or satisfies two different parts of you. Or it could be that you're piecing something together to make a larger thing and maybe that's something that you like to do. I don't know.

AM: That's a good idea. I'll have to think about that.

CF: Thank you so much, Ann.

AM: Thank you for doing this.