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MARSHA PATRICK, TREASURER OF THE FRISCO GARDEN CLUB, CAN DIG UP THE DIRT, AT LEAST FICTIONAL DIRT, AND SHE HOPES READERS LIKE WHAT SHE HAS UNCOVERED.

Last August, Patrick brought a proof of her first book jacket to a Frisco Garden Club planning meeting at Vivian McCallum's home. The cover, with its church spire and skewed letter P in the title *Town Proper*, attracted the attention of every person there. They knew she had been writing a book for years, now they would get to read it and see if they recognized any of the book's characters' mannerisms.

Patrick likes small towns, fine jewelry, art, gardening, horses and watching people – great attributes for someone who wants to write fiction with a dash of scandal, murder and sex.

Patrick is half of a fledgling writing team styling themselves as Patrick Avington. Her longtime friend, Dorothy Avington of Pennsylvania, is charged with bringing Patrick's brainchild scribbled on legal pads into some semblance of order. It is not an easy task because even when she's speaking casually Patrick's thoughts race ahead like the horses she grew up loving and showing. The two women have taken what was the urging of friends and made it a reality. Though they are doing their own publishing and marketing, book signings are already scheduled in the Northeast and the two hope to have an agent in the near future. The book is available through

Istbooks.com, something that Patrick finds amusing since she is terrified of technology. Her husband, Brian, an engineer for the City of Frisco, had to force her to learn to use a laptop as the book became a reality.

"I have touched Fabergé eggs and handled million-dollar canary diamond rings but I'm terrified of touching a computer,"

Patrick admits of her working style. She explained that for years friends would listen to her descriptions of people and events and say, "You ought to write a book – and I would say, I don't think I can, I would have to tell it."

Town Proper is book one of a trilogy about the movers and shakers of a small town and the secrets and the ambitions that are buried under a proper exterior. Patrick has been a horsewoman, a jeweler, co-owner of a restaurant and fine arts gallery and she brings her years of experience in these areas to the project. She admits her concerns over her "very basic education" and questionable spelling held her back for a long time.

Patrick was the sole owner of Sunset Hill Jewelers Ltd. and Fine Arts Gallery in Westchester, Pennsylvania for 15 years. During part of that time she was also one of the owners of a restaurant known as Vincent's. "I would leave the store, sometimes wearing thousands of dollars of jewels, cross the street and put on an apron and

begin another life." Prior to owning her own business, Patrick also worked antique jewelry shows, including the big shows in Madison Square Garden and the Park Avenue 7th Regimental Armory. It was her experience in the high dollar world of jew-



digging up dirt:author, marsha patrick

by jane whittledge

elry and art that inspired her to write a novel. "When you live in the jewelry business, you live on the edge," she said, explaining the constant worry over theft and other crimes.

Roxanne Goodman is one garden club friend who has finished the book and is ready for the second. "It is not a trashy love story, it is not political, it is not gory and bloody but it has a hint of passion, a hint of crime and a hint of scandal," she said.

Patrick shucked her businesswoman's lifestyle nine years ago to enjoy small-town life in Texas with Brian and her Maltese, Cody. "I got here just on the fringe. The biggest (development) was Preston Vineyards and The Royal still had the coffee guys meeting there, north of that just seemed to be prairie and plains."

Patrick joined the Frisco Garden Club and has served several years as treasurer. Her sense of style and her vast business experience have been great assets as that organization has revitalized during the last decade after nearly folding in the 1980s. Patrick wears high-heeled pumps and suits to Garden Club meetings and she saves her cowboy boots and hat for trips back to Pennsylvania where her daughter now operates the family jewelry business. "I love being from Texas. I go back and people say here comes Dallas!"

Jane Whittledge is a freelance writer living in Frisco

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