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RICH PEOPLE SHOP HERE
A Tale of Love, Redemption, and Bargain Hunting

“Rich People Shop Here is the gripping account of one woman’s long and desperate struggle with hardship and misfortune. It is at the same time a testimony to the power and faith of healing in redirecting a person’s life. It is a story of ultimate triumph and hope.” -George Gallup, Jr.

When Dennis Welch decided to spend a few hours every Saturday morning with his mother Patsy, interviewing her about her long and often difficult life, he had no idea that he had stumbled across the story that would become his first book. The former Gallup executive, now an Austin, Texas based singer, songwriter and public relations executive, said his goal was to preserve his family’s history. Instead, he unearthed an inspiring story about the power of faith and forgiveness.

Patsy, the perfect mix of Southern Belle and Lucille Ball, was just a young girl when her mother left her to be raised by a string of relatives and friends. Moving from house to house, she had few examples of stable, family life. She married young and soon found herself with two ex-husbands and two young sons. Struggling to stay afloat, Patsy kept her sense of humor intact, while taking three buses and several hours to get to her job at a Houston hamburger joint. There, the young mother worked long hours strictly for tips, enough to keep the boys fed and her life afloat. She wasn’t particularly looking for love when young Ronald Welch strolled in. But she

caught his eye, and eventually the young World War II veteran with an easy smile won her over. So Patsy married again, gave birth to Dennis, and began again to create a new life for herself and her boys.

Unfortunately, Ronald Welch was a binge drinker, who often disappeared for days at a time, leaving Patsy alone with the kids and her job. Her coping strategy was to ferry the boys away from the house when trouble was afoot. “I only remember seeing my Dad drunk once,” recounts Dennis. “In my earliest years, I remember going on those jaunts to people’s homes and returning late, never having a clue at the time what it was all about. “ What it was about was Patsy’s decision to forge ahead, no matter what.

In her mid-twenties, with three young sons and an alcoholic husband, Patsy stumbled across Boots Jackson, a salty, no-nonsense woman who dragged Patsy into church and into the force that would reshape her entire life. It was in that small Baptist church that Patsy changed the course of her life, and her family’s, by dedicating her life to Christ. “What happened next,” says Dennis, “really makes no sense for any other reason than faith.” Patsy took up the calling and lived her life to serve others. Together, she and Boots became the two-woman squad for solving the woes of anyone who came across their path. Whether these souls needed food, shelter, money or someone to advise them, they came to the right place. From the battered wife who lived on their street to the sick and bleeding stranger that Patsy encountered at a convenience store one day, the pair jumped in with little thought for their own comfort, or even safety.

Boots not only befriended Patsy, she became Ronald Welch’s best friend. When he threatened to kill her in the middle of a drunken rage, she told him he might as well go ahead, as she was the only friend he had left in this world. Those words sunk in, and Ronald, like Patsy before him, decided to turn his life around. He forged a new path, beginning at church, and went on to live 20 more years of a stable life, becoming a steadfast father to all three boys and a devoted husband to Patsy.

Through it all, Patsy kept her wits about her and her sense of humor intact. The book is sprinkled with what the family calls “Patsy Moments,” short stories of the times when Patsy was so consumed in thought that she returned from a trip to the supermarket without the groceries or one of her sons, or drove the family car straight THROUGH the garage when arriving home after waving to her family on the front porch.

“I learned some new things in talking to my mother,” says Dennis, with a laugh. “Some of the stories I remember, some I don’t think I ever knew.” Together, this one woman’s story shows us all:

- The power of forgiveness
- The value of a sense of humor
- Why true friendship is truly transformational
- Why using our lives to serve others is the highest calling

Rich People Shop Here is more than the tale of one woman’s struggle. It is a funny and inspiring look at how love, faith, friendship and forgiveness are transformative. It is a must-read for anyone struggling for meaning in their life.

Dennis Welch has always been a word man. From the tender age of four when he learned, quite by accident, that he could spell, he’s loved the words and the power of a great story. A long-time marketing executive at Gallup, he is also a published songwriter. Dennis currently works as Director of Public Relations at Cave Henricks Communications, where he works every day bringing books and authors to widespread public attention. Dennis lives in Austin with his wife Susie. They are the parents of two sons, Dylan and Daniel, and grandparents to Alexis and Matthew.

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A Tale of Love, Redemption and Bargain Hunting

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www.RichPeopleShopHere.com

www.imprbooks.com

A Patsy Moment “Yonder Goes Your Momma”

Mom was frantic a lot. That caused her to develop a bad habit of leaving us places when we were young. Freud would have had a field day with this. It was a little unsettling, to say the least.

I'm sure she never meant to. She was very protective most of the time, but there were moments when the imp of absent mindedness would take over and then anything was in play.

One day, one fine sunny day, as I recall, Mom and my brother Keith went to Weingarten's, the local grocery store down the street a mile or so from our home. They did their bit of shopping and at that time there were porters who took your grocery cart out to a special lane next to the store, ostensibly to meet you out there and put your groceries in your car for you. That's how it's supposed to work anyway.

The first part went okay. She finished shopping, paid for her purchases and took Keith and the groceries out to the pick-up lane. Keith waited with the porter while Mom went to the car.

She had a lot of her mind. Other errands were waiting after this one.

She was frantic.

So, instead of driving through the lane and getting her groceries, she got into her car, started it up and drove home.

“Should I get the groceries out of the car?” Michael asked.

“Well, of course you should.”

“Yes, ma'am.”

He went outside and began to rummage through the car, looking for any sign of groceries. Nothing. He opened the trunk. No milk. No bread. No Keith.

He came back in and told her that the car was complexly empty and that something must have happened to the groceries because they weren't there and oh, by the way, his brother wasn't anywhere to be found either.

Then, as has often happened in her life, it dawned on her. Her trip to the grocery has some unfinished business! She leaped to her feet, jumped in her car, revved the engine and sped away.

When she got to the store, Keith, who I believe was quite shaken by the whole experience, was crying. I've heard that abandonment often has that impact on a person. Mom flung open the car door and, in her most casual voice (like she had intended all along to drive off and leave everything, including a relative) she said cheerily, "Jump in, son!" He did and the porter put the groceries in the car, got his tip and ran away.

"Did you mean to leave me, Momma?" Keith asked as he got in.

"What in the world did that man say to you when he saw me get into my car and drive away?" she asked.

"He pointed at your car and said "Yonder goes your mama..."

Excerpted from ***RICH PEOPLE SHOP HERE*** by Dennis Welch, Intermedia Publishing Group, November, 2009.

An interview with Dennis Welch,
author of
Rich People Shop Here

Q: What prompted you to start interviewing your mother, Patsy, about her life? I had written a guest column for the Houston Chronicle called Rich People Shop Here about how mom used to take us boys shopping for our school clothes at The Purple Heart or The Salvation Army. She would always preface these little shopping trips with the encouragement that we boys “shouldn’t feel bad about shopping in a second-hand store for our school clothes because a lot of rich people shop in these places.” I note that if the definition of wealth was having a great reputation, good family and friends who love you, then she was right, rich people DID shop there because she was one of the wealthiest people I knew. I wanted to share her story with my nephews, nieces, and my sons. So, I started interviewing her for two hours every Saturday and started writing.

Q: What surprised you most about these sessions? You were there, of course, for a good bit of her life, but I am curious about whether your perception changed when you talked through the experiences with her as an adult. I was most surprised about Patsy’s resilience. I knew she had a lot of that, but to hear it in context of all the trouble she went through was amazing.

Q: Some of the stories in the book are very difficult. Did Patsy have trouble re-living these recollections? Sometimes. Especially the stories about my dad. He was definitely the love of her life and there were parts of his story that caused her to pause for a moment and collect herself.

Q: What can other people learn by reading Patsy’s story? That whatever is going on in your life, no matter how difficult or hopeless it seems to be, better days can be just around the corner.

Q: Boots Jackson emerges as a pretty big figure in the story – taking Patsy and ultimately her husband, Ronald, to the church which transformed their lives. How does she feel about the book? She loves it. She thinks we left out some of her and Patsy’s funniest and strangest episodes, so there may have to be a sequel.

Q: Friendship emerges as a big part of Patsy's story. It's almost amazing that she continued to make friends during some of the more difficult times in her life. Do you think that was a conscious choice on her part? Yes, it was. She has always followed the admonition that says "to have friends, one has to show themselves friendly." She never let her troubles make her bitter toward others and she never blamed other people for her trials and tribulations. That was a key. People are attracted to her because of that, I think. She is 80 now, and her phone rings off the hook and her social life is as busy as a beehive.

Q: People often think that their struggles are unique, or that no one else would understand them. Patsy's story seems to prove otherwise, doesn't it? Yes, it does. Everything seems to be here. Even a story about a "hit man." All with a happy ending.

Q: If people could take a single lesson from *Rich People Shop Here* what would you hope that the lesson would be? Give your life away. Care for other people and see what that investment pays in your own life. You'll be richer for doing it.