

Just a Thought

TT Patton makes *dreams come true*



Theresa Patton in her store

Theresa Patton leads a double life. She is a woman living her creative dream while maintaining her full-time position in the corporate world. And while her daytime job requires her full attention, you'll find her, evenings and weekends, at TT Patton—her new store dedicated to the art of fine writing.

As a graduate from Boston University who majored in electrical engineering, Patton never found it necessary to write full sentences. When she later obtained an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management, which topped *Business Week's* 2004 ranking of the best MBA programs, she was required to write papers and strategy documents. Now that her store has opened for business in Barrington, Illinois, she indulges herself with exquisite journals, fine papers and writing instruments—and helps others compose their sentences of hopes and dreams. TT Patton is an intimate environment for those who enjoy browsing and buying, stopping by for author appearances and workshops—like that recently given by author Sheila Bender—or attending monthly journal club meetings.

"I've always loved paper: fine paper, stationery, greeting cards and things like that...and I really love

THE FIRST COME ON THE HISTORICAL

The store carries a unique variety of papers and pens.



journaling. So I wanted to create a backdrop where people could come and relax and sit and write in their journals..." says Patton. And as she thought more about it and put her thoughts into words, she found she was actually pulling her business plan together and moving forward with her dream of a store. It took less than a year from concept to the store opening in November of 2005. Patton believes that it's a nice thing to have a passion and to make it really come to life.

Patton began keeping a journal in 1987, while in college, and this

habit continues. It began as a way to vent emotions, to write down thoughts and reflect on them later so she would "never have to take something back once said," she shares. It soon became a habit to write things down and review them afterward to see if the words were suitable for spoken communication. Her entries are always dated on the right side of the page, and not one to waste space, she writes on both the front and the back of each page.

Patton keeps some of her old journals in safety deposit boxes, and some have been thrown out, and she is currently contemplating the issue of what to do with all the journals she fills. Unlike one of her clients, who has been journaling since 1970 and always uses the exact same style of journal, Patton never uses two that are alike. This results in an interest-

ing and eclectic collection of color, size and style; she buys according to her mood. "I go from a cork journal, to leather, to an 8 1/2" x 11", to 5" x 7", to lines, to wraps, to enclosures—it's whatever I feel like carrying at the time," she says. One year she even made a journal for every member (12 in all) of her book club, which turned out to be a time-consuming, though rewarding, adventure.

Patton is proud of the shop's décor and intimate, upscale atmosphere. "It's really different," she says. "We have antique Asian furniture that houses all of the products. I've got this desk that the cash register is on that's from the Forbidden City—and some other interesting artifacts, like an altar from China and old doors that are from the early 1800s." Tea, water and sparkling water are on hand for patrons, and on special evenings they open a bottle of champagne or red wine. There are two comfy chairs for those who wish to sit and chat for a while. →



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Not surprisingly, the store carries an assortment of journals to cater to all tastes, from conservative to colorful, and with enthusiasm in her voice as she talks about them, it's clear that she knows her products. "I have leather, I have lined with leather, I've got a line out of Italy that's got three different papers," she says. "I've got a line out of Chicago by an artist named Barry Zacky who does this crumpled paper on the outside—it's Asian paper that's treated and it has a really cool texture. I've got Molly West silk journals..." and lots more. She plans to expand her pen lines and her stationery supply a bit more. "I've got a G. Lalo line of paper that comes in different weights. I now carry stationery by Bernard Maisner, a calligrapher from New York. I love his hand-colored butterflies and hand-colored dragonflies—those are my favorites," says Patton. In the continuing quest for rare and extraordinary merchandise, Patton will be traveling to Italy this summer, looking for those exquisite products and papers that don't often make it to the United States.

"I don't know if I really thought about the shop as much as I did about the concept of creating an environment for fine writing," Patton confides about her earliest inklings of a store. "But since I started to look at other stores and think about what I like to do when I shop, I decided I wanted something very different," she says. And apparently she's right on target. "People don't want to leave when they come in. Sometimes they sit down, and sometimes they don't." But they always come back. Z