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Famous Author Enchants Sweet Thursdays Crowd

By Cathy Tyson



From left Maria Hjelm, Friends of Lafayette Library Board Member and Chief Producer, Sweet Thursday event series, Dave Simpson, Proprietor, Lafayette Book Store and co-sponsor with Friends of Lafayette Library of Sweet Thursdays, Lisa See and Casey Sasner, Friends of Lafayette Library Board Member and Deputy Producer Photo Cathy Tyson

"Hello literary lovers of Lafayette" said Past President and Board Member of Friends of the Lafayette Library, Linda Peterson, welcoming a roomful of fans to a rare Friday appearance of "literary rock star" Lisa See, author of the new book *Shanghai Girls*.

Like all Sweet Thursdays events, Friends of the Lafayette Library and the Lafayette Book Store co-sponsored the production. For an astounding seventy years the "Friends" have been supporting the library; this was no exception, 20% of books sale proceeds go to the new Lafayette Library and Learning Center. Lafayette Book Store is proud of its many community partnerships and was twice voted the East Bay's best indie bookstore. At Sweet Thursdays events, book lovers can get the story behind the story from a famous author, snag an autographed copy and donate to the library, not a bad deal.

"Sweet Thursdays attendees have a great eye and ear for talent. When we had Lisa See after the publication of *Snowflower* and *The Secret Fan*, our audience members enjoyed her perceptive observations about friendships between women and what one culture and era can learn from another. She's continued to grow and blossom as a writer, and we were so grateful to have a coveted spot on her *Shanghai Girls* book tour. She's a gifted storyteller and someone who's willing to share the backstory of whatever she's writing," said Peterson.

With three novels, one book of non-fiction, three mysteries and numerous articles under her tiny belt, Ms. See has spent her career writing about relationships. It was apparent that many audience members were familiar with recent best sellers *Snow Flower* and *The Secret Fan* and *Peony in Love*, both are book club favorites. "I know a lot about love and hate, husbands and wives....because I've experienced them myself," said See about the old saw, write about what you know.

"This book is the closest to my heart," said See. "Feeling a loss of the people and places we lose from our lives is at the heart of *Shanghai Girls*." Sisters Pearl and May are the fictional main characters who leave Shanghai in 1937 for arranged marriages in Los Angeles.

"The sibling relationship is the longest we will have in our lifetimes. A sister is the person who should stand by you, support you, and love you no matter what. And yet your sister also knows exactly where to drive the knife to hurt you the most." See had the audience in stitches with many of her observations, for example, "Sisters are for life - I don't know if that's a good thing or a life sentence."

Using colorful anecdotes to review the plot, history, and amazing amount of research behind her latest book, this once self-described "pathetically shy" young woman proceeded to charm the predominantly female audience gathered in the Stanley school gymnasium.

Sweet Thursday events will continue throughout the summer. On June 18 at 7:30 p.m. in the Lafayette Library Sophia Raday will discuss her book, *Love in Condition Yellow: A Memoir of an Unlikely Marriage*. On July 2, also at 7:30 p.m. at the Lafayette Library first time novelist Tanya Egan Gibson will discuss *How to Buy a Love for Reading*.

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