

# Sister, sister

Patti Callahan Henry

ascends within the ranks  
of Southern women writers.

BLUFFTON TODAY

Vacationing in the Lowcountry has paid off for writer Patti Callahan Henry.

Her visits to Daufuskie Island over the past 17 years have inspired her new novel, "Where the River Runs."

"We usually spend most of the summer down there," she said in a telephone interview from her home in Norcross, Ga. "I threaten about once a year to run away and move there but it just hasn't happened yet.

"It's definitely where my heart is," she said.

Henry got engaged on Daufuskie and it's where her in-laws live.

Her father-in-law's friendship with some of the native islanders helped her get acquainted with Gullah culture.

"I was just always very fascinated more by the endurance of it than anything else," she said. "How it was still being passed along."

A Gullah proverb, "If you don't know where you are going, you should know where you come from," sparked "a story about a woman who wakes up to who she really is," that became her second novel, "Where the River Runs."

Other Gullah proverbs are peppered throughout the book and a Gullah character is central to

the story, but "it's not a Gullah novel," she said.

"I used an older Gullah woman who used to be this woman's housekeeper as a child as an impetus to help her remember who she is and come back to who she is meant to be," Henry explained. "It's such a spiritual and enduring culture."

## Early success

As a novice novelist, Henry had the good fortune to have her first book, "Losing the Moon," picked up by Penguin, a national publisher.

Her second book follows almost a year to the day later.

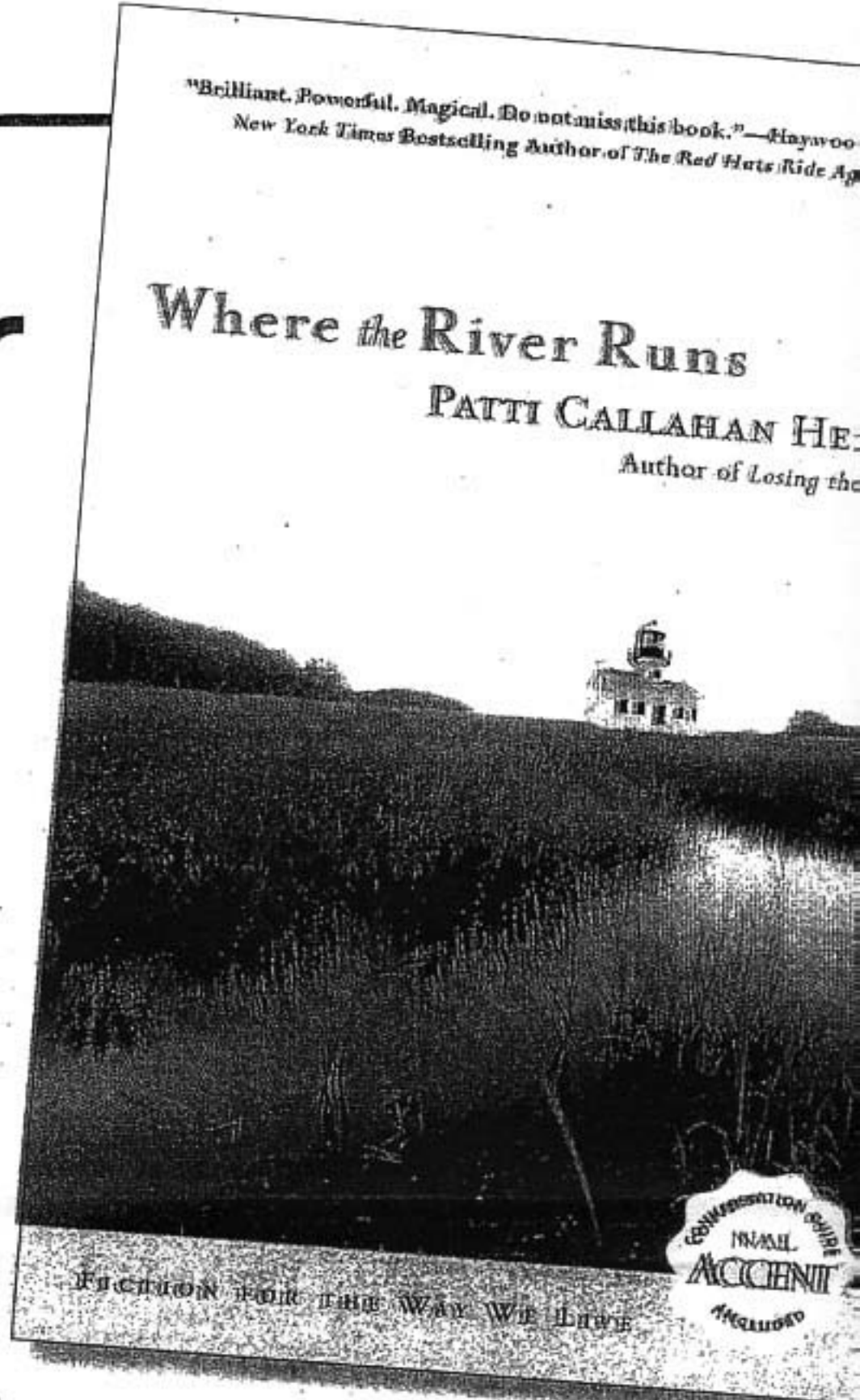
"I'm so blessed, I wouldn't have self-published, not because I don't believe in it, but just because of my lifestyle with three young kids," she said. "It either had to be purchased by a major publisher or sit on my desk for awhile.

"In the blur of it I didn't appreciate it as much as I did looking back at it," she said.

Henry has found a sisterhood among the other Southern women writers she's encountered in promoting her book.

"There is definitely a camaraderie among the Southern women authors that I have met," she said.

"They have taken me under



## BOOK SIGNING

**When:** 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. June 25  
**Where:** Bay Street Trading Co., Beaufort  
**Details:** 524-2000

## ON THE NET

Check out Henry's Web site at [www.patticallahanhenry.com](http://www.patticallahanhenry.com)

their wing, all the way from Kathy Wall to Dottie Frank to Mary Alice Monroe to Marjorie Wentworth — it's been amazing because I didn't expect that.

"In Atlanta, there's a very competitive atmosphere amongst writers," she said. "I don't get wrapped up in that because I've got three little kids and I'm just trying to make it through the day."

Her children are 12, 10 and 6. "It's really all they've ever known as far as beaches go," she said of Daufuskie. "It means a slower pace, less stress — they're a lot freer down there because of

the isolation.

"They ride their bikes anywhere they want, they can go crabbing whenever they want, they can go fishing. They don't even care if it's raining, they just know they're going to be outside."

While the Lowcountry has inspired her novels, she has created fictional Southern towns and settings, instead of using actual locations.

"Towns mean a lot to the people who live in them," she said. "If you get it wrong it's almost insulting their relative."