

NY HEARD & SCENE

Author's Newest Novel Stays 'Close to Home'

Holly Peterson Celebrates 'The Idea of Him'

By MARSHALL HEYMAN

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The Grill Room at the Four Seasons is a significant location for Holly Peterson.



Author Holly Peterson *Patrick McMullan/PatrickMcMullan*

Many scenes in her new novel, "The Idea of Him," which [William Morrow](#) published on Tuesday, occur in a space much like the Grill Room, mixed, naturally, with expensive watering holes like Casa Lever across the street and Michael's a few blocks away.

"I did that so I wouldn't get sued," Ms. Peterson said.

It was the site of her book party on Wednesday night, which brought out a whole cast of power players and media elite, friends like George Stephanopoulos and Ali Wentworth, Barbara Walters, Jane Friedman, Pamela Gross and Jimmy Finkelstein, Lauren Zalaznick, Meryl Poster, Bob Weinstein, Jess Cagle, Ann and Andrew Tisch and Peter and Susan Solomon.

And it's the place where Ms. Peterson and her father, Blackstone Group co-founder Pete Peterson, meet at least once a week. at the same table. for lunch.



Liz Smith, Ali Wentworth and Pete Peterson *Patrick McMullan/PatrickMcMullan*

On occasion, she said, sitting with Mr. Peterson at their regular booth, she will invite friends for "salon lunches."

"They'll grill him about what's going on in the world," Ms. Peterson said, as she ordered a salad and salmon. Though the restaurant's famed Julian Niccolini tried to ply Mr. Peterson with a special of no-doubt expensive caviar and potato, Mr. Peterson kept it simple with a fruit plate and some yogurt.

It is a kind of game he and the restaurateur play. Mr. Peterson knows Mr. Niccolini's tricks. He has been coming to the Grill Room for years, often three days a week, mostly because Blackstone Group's office is right across the street.

"It was a little bit like our cafeteria," he said, "and I almost never get the same thing."





Ghislaine Maxwell with Bettina Zilkha Patrick McMullan/Patrick McMullan

"It's more shake-up-company gossip than sex gossip," Ms. Peterson added.

Mr. Peterson has written several books, including "Running on Empty," "and I'm about to turn in another one," he said, which will focus on the problems of long-term debt.

"Because he's 87 and not busy enough," his daughter said.

Mr. Peterson chimed in: " Ted Sorensen once said of one of my books, 'If you put it down, you won't be able to pick it up again.' He was one of the world's funny people."

His daughter's fiction tends to be more of the page-turning variety. In 2007, she published "The Manny," a satirical take on Upper East Side social life. As an

early adopter of social-media publicity, she shot a YouTube video featuring many of her friends, including [Tinsley Mortimer](#), Jennifer Creel and Carole Radziwill. The book, she said, was particularly easy to write, "like one long style piece," she explained. It jumped from lunch at Sette Mezzo to nursery school dropoff.

"The Idea of Him" was much more difficult, she said, and more personal. In it, the marriage of a successful publicist and her media maven husband begins to crumble.

Ms. Peterson wrote it as she was going through her own divorce. "It was awfully close to home," she said.

The process of completing the novel, which she sometimes wrote between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m., before her children were up, was "three years of hell."

Still, Ms. Peterson said she wanted to explore the idea that women are fearful of being on their own, of "Saturday nights of cornflakes."

"Women don't appreciate their passion and their gifts," she said. "They need to have more confidence and strength. It doesn't necessarily take a man to complete a life."

As Ms. Peterson delved into her salmon, her father said he was particularly impressed not by only the book, but also his daughter's assertiveness and her ability to network.

"She's the pushiest broad in New York," Mr. Peterson said. "I'm very proud of her."

Despite his accomplishments, he said, "Out and about, I'm actually known as Holly Peterson's father."

Write to Marshall Heyman at marshall.heyman@wsj.com