

## **Fellowship Point, by Alice Elliott Dark**

*Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy*

Fellowship Point, Alice Elliott Dark's engaging new novel, centers on the lifelong friendship of its two main characters. Octogenarians Agnes Lee and Polly Wister grew up near one another in a wealthy section of Philadelphia. Their families summered in adjacent "cottages" at Fellowship Point, an enclave on a pristine coastal Maine peninsula.

Agnes and Polly had inherited their treasured Fellowship Point retreats, and, now in their later years, they spend several months a year in Maine. Despite their contrasting personalities and life choices, the two women remain best friends.

Fiercely independent, Agnes, who never married, is sharp-witted and "absolutely sure of her opinions and her worldview." A children's book author, she wrote thirty volumes of a popular series, called *When Nan*, with stories based on a little girl she once knew. Writing under a pseudonym, Agnes furtively authors a set of books for adults— *Franklin Square*—which skewers her social circle in Philadelphia.

Polly, on the other hand, has been married to Dick, a philosophy professor, for sixty years. Often chided by Agnes for being "conditioned to please your master," Polly habitually defers to Dick and their three sons. A people-pleaser, Polly "never minded making way for someone else, but she didn't want to bother others herself. She was charged with making the world kinder, and reciprocity was besides the point."

Over the years, Agnes kept secrets from Polly, including a past relationship she had had with a man at Fellowship Point. When Maud Silver, the young editorial assistant working on the latest *When Nan* book, suggests that Agnes write a memoir about her life, she demurs.

The long-standing friendship of Agnes and Polly is tested when the sanctity of their beloved Fellowship Point community is threatened by property speculators, including Polly's son James. Agnes fears that "Development would destroy the beauty of the place. Eagles' nests had been occupied uninterrupted for decades. The thought of yachts and condos displacing them made Agnes' heart literally hurt. She had to block that possibility if it was the last thing she did." To curtail the development, however, Agnes will need to convince Polly to stand up to her family.

Near the end of *Fellowship Point*, there's a farfetched coincidence, which, if rendered by a less skilled writer, could sink a novel's plot line. Alice Elliott Dark, nevertheless, manages to pull off her implausible reveal. Insightful and memorable, *Fellowship Point*, in this reviewer's opinion, is one of 2022's best novels.

(Note: *Fellowship Point* is part of the Heritage Hills Library and Somers Library collections. For a list of new books at the Heritage Hills Library, please see page 11.)