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A Father's Day Appreciation from a Darien Daughter

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Editor's note: This essay we just came across by Librarian Jen Dayton in a Darien Library newsletter (also [on the library website](#)) moved us, to say the least. We think you'll want to read it for Father's Day, too, and it deserves a wider audience:

It's the Final Father's Day Edition

Greetings and welcome to the Final Father's Day Edition of *You Are What You Read*.

The Traveling Companion and **I** will be traveling to Florida to spend this Father's Day with my dad. It will be the last one that we celebrate with him.

My dad grew up in Westchester, mostly Larchmont and New Rochelle. Lou Gehrig was a neighbor. One day the Yankee star tried to offer my father some advice while he played ball with some neighborhood kids.

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My father allegedly told Mr. Gehrig, "This is the way my father taught me, so I am going to stick with that." Mr. Gehrig is credited with the gracious reply of, "That's always the best way to go, son."

If you knew my Dad, this story will not shock or amaze. This was probably not the first time he stubbornly refused help nor would it be his last.

He attended St. John the Divine's Cathedral Choir School as a boy soprano and he sang at Fiorella La Guardia's funeral. He rarely spoke of his time there, but when he did it was in rather Dickensian terms. The boys were required to sing all the Masses and were not allowed home for holidays or weekends until the last Mass had been sung. I think he was grateful when his time there ended but, later in life, equally grateful for the experience.

This weekend is his 65th reunion at South Kent School. Dad was hoping to attend, but it was not to be. In fact, the Banner of 1952 will be held aloft by the widows of his classmates. Dad was one of the last ones left.

In the fall of 1952 he first came to Darien as a guest of his college bestie/roommate from Hamilton College who lived on Tory Hole Road. When Dad was transferred in the 1970's from Ohio to New York, he immediately knew that Darien would be our home.

My mother swooned when he told her what the housing max would be and then proceeded to weep in the back of a realtor's car when she saw what it would actually buy. I suspect she wasn't the first to have that experience, nor will she be the last.

Mom and Dad lived here from 1971 to 1993, when they relocated to Florida. Mom settled right in, but I don't think Dad ever felt as comfortable as my mother. Yet he stayed and remarried a few years after my mother died.

He has been in ill health for a while now. Last Sunday he had a lovely lunch and went to sleep and never woke up. He is now in hospice care and not expected to last much longer.

Before he fell ill our conversations always began with the same question, "What are you reading? Is it any good?" We were rarely on the same political page, but as far as the book page went, we were pretty simpatico. He knew that security for me meant a big stack of library books to work through every week.

As a kid, I would faithfully ride my bike to Leroy Avenue and stock up, with the obligatory side trip to Fairbank's Sweet Shop. To put it mildly, I was not a small child. The best Saturdays were the rainy ones.

Dad would offer a ride and breakfast at The Sugar Bowl, where he would catch up on town gossip with friends and enjoy two eggs over easy deftly served by Bobby, while I started in on The Stack and a stack of french toast. Books were our bridge during the fraught years of adolescence and beyond. Books kept avenues of communication open when all the others seemingly closed. Books kept us close.

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So thanks **Peter Dayton**. Thanks for the love of reading, a life well lived, and the indispensable advice to “Never buy an umbrella in New York on the street when it’s raining.” I love you very much and will miss you in equal measure.

[*Darienite.com* editor's note: Here's the books part of the newsletter, which we're including. The newsletter has links for placing a hold on a book you want, getting an audio book or an e-book, so if any of these titles interest you, [go to this library Web page](#) and you can do it from there.]

This week we have Ancient Greece, a childhood, and some dialect.

Let Us Begin

The Amazing Amanda has gone to Ancient Greece. "In high school I devoured *The Persian Boy* by Mary Renault in which I followed Alexander the Great through the eyes of his slave. [The Song of Achilles](#) by Madeline Miller shares the same feel as that classic 70's novel. Like the earlier work, Achilles is not told through the eyes of the main hero himself. Instead, his lover Patroclus is center stage as he recounts their tragic tale. The audiobook narrator is somber. I can't tell if I'm projecting too much on the voice actor or if it's in the knowing of Achilles and Patroclus' fate that keeps me from feeling too emotionally invested. The book is richly detailed, beautifully told, and digs deep to make a long dead era feel vital. Mentally, I could almost feel my head turning to watch Achilles run past, all golden and princely. He's not a war-obsessed grump as in [The Iliad](#). Instead, he's a thoughtful young man who values honesty and learning. He's a good prince. How is the Battle of Troy going to change him?"

Sweet Ann has finished [Anything is Possible](#) by Elizabeth Strout. “This novel follows Elizabeth's Strout's previous novel, [My Name is Lucy Barton](#), but you do not need to read that novel to enjoy this one. However, it could give you more insight into the characters. *In Anything is Possible*, the reader goes back to the hometown of Lucy Barton and through interlocking chapters meet people who knew her as a child and her family; the neighbors who did not realize the impact they had on her or others in this small town. They will speak of her success as a novelist and marvel at her new book which details her childhood. *Anything is Possible* is a character driven novel that introduces us to many interesting people in the town, including the school janitor who was at times the only nice person to Lucy as a child. There are tragic stories as well as redemptive tales in this novel. It will keep you thinking long after you have closed the book. I was captivated by this literary gem.”

Dapper James McN is having fun with one of his obsessions: language. “Josh Katz’s [Speaking American: How Y'all, Youse, and You Guys Talk: A Visual Guide](#) is a book you can judge by its cover. Heat map after delightful heat map highlighting the prevalence of regionally varied vocabulary and pronunciation within the U.S. While I knew it was weird that y'all refer to garage sales as “tag sales,” I didn’t realize how concentrated that usage is in Connecticut, nor that “stoop sales” is picking up in the City. If you’re not from around these parts, I can’t recommend this book enough. When Adam next door at Michael Joseph’s would ask me if I wanted my sandwich on a “roll” or a “wedge,” I used to always reply, ‘Whichever you think would be better.’ In my mind rolls are exclusively dinner rolls, and the only wedge you would consider

eating is a wedge of lettuce. Abby, Virginia and I flipped through it together; Abby basically harassed Virginia and me about the way the two of us say different things while we just looked at each other not wanting to tell Abby she was the weird one.”

The Effervescent J-Rae is back for the summer and here’s what she’s been chewing on. “[Freud: An Illustrated Biography](#) by Corinne Maier is the perfect hour long read for an eclectic learner who can appreciate a well-drawn panel. While Freud is a household name, you’ve never seen him quite like this. With detailed drawings, pops of color, and witty dialog this book gives you a true immersion into the life, achievements, and scandals of the Father of Psychoanalysis. I treat graphic novels like a sprig of parsley: something quick to chew on between heavy courses. Give it a go!