

End of Your Life Book Club (Schwalbe)[Summary](#) | [Author Bio](#) | [Book Reviews](#) | [Discussion Questions](#) | [Full Version](#) | [Print](#)**The End
of Your
Life
Book Club
Will
Schwalbe**

(http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0307594033/ref=as_li_tf_il?ie=UTF8&camp=211189&creative=373489&creativeASIN=0307594033&link_code=as3&tag=litl-20)

The End of Your Life Book Club*Will Schwalbe, 2012**Knopf Doubleday**352 pp.**ISBN-13: 9780307594037***Summary****"What are you reading?"**

That's the question Will Schwalbe asks his mother, Mary Anne, as they sit in the waiting room of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. In 2007, Mary Anne returned from a humanitarian trip to Pakistan and Afghanistan suffering from what her doctors believed was a rare type of hepatitis. Months later she was diagnosed with a form of advanced pancreatic cancer, which is almost always fatal, often in six months or less.

This is the inspiring true story of a son and his mother, who start a "book club" that brings them together as her life comes to a close. Over the next two years, Will and Mary Anne carry on conversations that are both wide-ranging and deeply personal, prompted by an eclectic array of books and a shared passion for reading. Their list jumps from classic to popular, from poetry to mysteries, from fantastic to spiritual. The issues they discuss include questions of faith and courage as well as everyday topics such as expressing gratitude and learning to listen. Throughout, they are constantly reminded of the power of books to comfort us, astonish us, teach us, and tell us what we need to do with our lives and in the world. Reading isn't the opposite of doing; it's the opposite of dying.

Will and Mary Anne share their hopes and concerns with each other—and rediscover their lives—through their favorite books. When they read, they aren't a sick person and a well person, but a mother and a son taking a journey together. The result is a profoundly moving tale of loss that is also a joyful, and often humorous, celebration of life: Will's love letter to his mother, and theirs to the printed page. (*From the publisher.*)

Author Bio

Will Schwalbe has worked in publishing (most recently as senior vice president and editor in chief of Hyperion Books); digital media, as the founder and CEO of Cookstr.com; and as a journalist, writing for various publications including *The New York Times* and the *South China Morning Post*. He is on the boards of Yale University Press and the Kingsborough Community College Foundation. He is the coauthor, with David Shipley, of *Send: Why People Email So Badly and How to Do It Better*. (From the publisher.)

Book Reviews

Sharing books he loved with his savvy New Yorker mom had always been a great pleasure for both mother and son, becoming especially poignant when she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2007, at age 73. Schwalbe, founder of Cookstr.com and former editor-in-chief of Hyperion, along with his father and siblings, was blindsided by the news; his mother, Mary Ann Schwalbe, had been an indomitable crusader for human rights, once the director of admissions at Harvard, and a person of enormous energy and management skills. Could a book club be run by only two people? Schwalbe and his mother wondered as they waited together over many chemotherapy sessions at Memorial Sloan-Kettering. It didn't matter: "Books showed us that we didn't need to retreat or cocoon," he writes; they provided "much-needed ballast" during an emotionally tumultuous time when fear and uncertainty gripped them both as the dreaded disease ("not curable but treatable") progressed rapidly. From Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach* to Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, William Trevor's *Felicia's Journey* to Josephine Tey's *Brat Farrar*, Geraldine Brooks's *People of the Book* to John Updike's *My Father's Tears*: the books they shared allowed them to speak honestly and thoughtfully, to get to know each other, ask big questions, and especially talk about death. With a refreshing forthrightness, and an excellent list of books included, this is an astonishing, pertinent, and wonderfully welcome work.

Publishers Weekly

(Starred review.) This touching and insightful memoir [will] appeal to readers of *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *The Last Lecture*, but also to people who love delving into books and book discussions.... While it is a story about death, it is mostly a celebration of life and of the way books can enrich it.

Booklist

Schwalbe (co-author: *Send: The Essential Guide to Email for Office and Home*, 2007) chronicles his book-related conversations with his mother after she was diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer. Books provided the author with much-needed ballast during the chaos and upheaval of his mother's terminal illness.... Books provided an avenue for the author and his mother to explore important topics that made them uneasy.... Each chapter holds a subtle message fleshed out through their

readings and discussions, and themes include gratitude, loneliness, feminism, faith, communication, trust and grief. In a heartfelt tribute to his mother, Schwalbe illustrates the power of the written word to expand our knowledge of ourselves and others.

Kirkus Reviews

Discussion Questions

1. Does this book have a central theme? What is it?
2. Why does Mary Anne always read a book's ending first? How does this reflect her character?
3. Early in the book, Will writes, "I wanted to learn more about my mother's life and the choices she'd made, so I often steered the conversation there. She had an agenda of her own, as she almost always did. It took me some time, and some help, to figure it out." (page 6) What was Mary Anne's agenda?
4. Mary Anne underlined a passage in *Seventy Verses on Emptiness*, which resonated with Will: "Permanent is not; impermanent is not; a self is not; not a self [is not]; clean is not; not clean is not; happy is not; suffering is not." Why did this strike both of them as significant? What do you think it means?
5. Throughout the book, Will talks about books as symbols and sources of hope. How has reading books served a similar function for you?
6. While reading *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Will and Mary Anne discuss three kinds of fateful choices: "the ones characters make knowing that they can never be undone; the ones they make thinking they can but learn they can't; and the ones they make thinking they can't and only later come to understand, when it's too late, when 'nothing can be undone,' that they could have." (page 41) What kind of choices did Mary Anne make during her cancer treatment? Did she or Will make any of the third type?
7. Mary Anne especially liked a passage from *Gilead* by Marilynne Robinson: "When you encounter another person, when you have dealings with anyone at all, it is as if a question is being put to you. So you must think, What is the Lord asking of me in this moment, in this situation?" (page 96) Why do you think this moved her so much? What did it mean to Will?
8. How does religious belief help Mary Anne? How do you think it might have helped Will?
9. Mary Anne doesn't believe her travels to war-torn countries were brave: "I wanted to go to all those places, so how could that be brave? The people I'm talking about, they did things they didn't want to do because they felt they had to, or because they thought it was the right thing to do." (page 167) In what ways is Mary Anne brave

during her cancer treatments? Does she ever come to think of herself as brave?

10. Will is amazed by his mother's ability to continue her efforts to fund the library in Afghanistan even while facing a death sentence, until he realizes that "she used her emotions to motivate her and help her concentrate. The emphasis for her was always on doing what needed to be done. I had to learn this lesson while she was still there to teach me." (page 194) Did Will learn? What makes you think so?

11. Why did Mary Anne become so intent on certain things happening: Obama's election, David Rohde's safe return? Will talks about his own "magical thinking" several times in the book—what form do you think Mary Anne's took?

12. "We're all in the end-of-our-life book club, whether we acknowledge it or not; each book we read may well be the last, each conversation the final one." (page 281) How did this realization affect Will's final days with his mom?

13. After she dies, Will looks at Mary Anne's copy of *Daily Strength for Daily Needs*, next to the bed. He believes this quote from John Ruskin was the last thing his mother ever read: "If you do not wish for His kingdom, don't pray for it. But if you do, you must do more than pray for it; you must work for it." (page 321) How did Mary Anne work for it throughout her life? Do you think Will found solace in this passage?

14. Several times in the book, Will talks about eBooks versus their physical counterparts. Why does he prefer one to the other? Does Mary Anne agree? If you read this book on an eReader, how do you think it affected your experience?

15. Which of the books discussed by Will and Mary Anne have you read? Which do you most want to read?

(Questions issued by publisher.)

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January 4, 2013

A Long Goodbye

By CHRISTOPHER R. BEHA

THE END OF YOUR LIFE BOOK CLUB

By Will Schwalbe

336 pp. Alfred A. Knopf.
\$25.

After Mary Anne Schwalbe learned she had advanced pancreatic cancer, in 2007, her son Will suggested she start a blog to keep family and friends informed. Schwalbe liked the idea but worried it was “unseemly” to broadcast news about herself, so she asked her son to write it instead. The blog became “Will’s Mary Anne Schwalbe News.” When Mary Anne decided it would be “easier” if she composed the first entry, she dictated in the third person for Will to type and post — a practice that continued until the blog’s, and Mary Anne’s, last days.

This wasn’t the only project mother and son embarked upon together during her illness. Mary Anne, a lifelong reader, and Will, then the editor in chief of a major publishing house, began trading books to discuss when Will accompanied his mother to her chemotherapy sessions. As its title suggests, these discussions are the ostensible subject of Will Schwalbe’s memoir, “The End of Your Life Book Club.” But just as the books themselves served as excuses for Mary Anne and Will to talk of difficult things — particularly mortality — the book club serves here as an excuse for a loving celebration of a mother by a son.

Certainly Mary Anne Schwalbe comes across in these pages as a woman worth celebrating. A Radcliffe graduate, she worked as a theatrical casting agent before taking this skill for talent evaluation to her alma mater’s admissions office. (She eventually became the director of admissions for both Radcliffe and Harvard.) After she and her husband moved their family to New York, Mary Anne held prominent positions at local private schools, first Dalton and then Nightingale-Bamford, before a visit to a refugee camp in Thailand inspired a late-life career change. Schwalbe helped Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, which directed for several years. Her work with the organization bro

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Afghanistan, Liberia and Sudan, among other war-torn places to which she fearlessly traveled. Until the end of her life, she was the kind of woman who, after striking up a conversation with a fellow customer at the pharmacy, finds her way to paying for the medication the woman can't afford. Even in her final months, she seemed less concerned with her own condition than with raising money to start a traveling library in Kabul.

All of this her son outlines in an amiable, conversational style that is often charming but ultimately unsatisfying. The book is chatty not just in its tone — Mary Anne is referred to throughout almost exclusively as “Mom” — but in its form, or rather its essential formlessness. Though each chapter is named after a book, they aren't always books the Schwalbes read together. When they are, the discussions are perfunctory. (In the chapter named for T. S. Eliot's “Murder in the Cathedral,” Schwalbe quotes his mother as saying, simply, “I find the play very inspiring.”) Discussions of Will's childhood or his own late-life career change — he quit his job and started a cooking Web site — mingle with descriptions of his mother's treatments and synopses of popular novels.

At one point, Schwalbe recalls a childhood Christmas when his mother read the Nativity story to him and his siblings by the fire. “So Mom was reading,” Schwalbe writes; “the fireplace was glowing; we three children were all around her. And then one of us started to giggle. I'm not even sure which one of us it was. Well, truthfully I am, but even after all these years it would seem like ratting out a sibling to name a name.”

This is a kind of joke, and yet it gets at another problem with “The End of Your Life Book Club.” Discretion and familial loyalty are fine characteristics, and it may be one more tribute to Mary Anne Schwalbe to say that her son displays them in excess. But these are not qualities that make for a scintillating memoir. To paraphrase Joan Didion, a writer is always ratting somebody out. A great memoirist, even one moved primarily by love and devotion, must possess a certain amount of ruthlessness — toward himself if no one else. Schwalbe's book contains little of the lacerating honesty that marks Didion's recent memoirs of loss.

There is an effort, admirable in theory but regrettable on the page, to credit every person who helped along the way, leading to dutiful but less-than-

thrilling sentences: “Dr. Foley and Nessa work in tandem with Dr. O’Reilly at Memorial Sloan-Kettering and specialize in helping cancer patients and their families with both quality-of-life concerns during treatment and also end-of-life care.” Or, discussing his mother’s work with the International Rescue Committee: “She’d founded the I.R.C.-U.K. a decade earlier, and it now contributed more than £30 million a year to the I.R.C.’s overall budget, as well as having programs of its own.” After reading such sentences, one is hardly surprised to discover that Will’s mother, having learned of his intention to write this book, sent him a series of e-mails urging him to include the story of a young refugee from Sierra Leone or the urgent need for health care reform. “The End of Your Life Book Club” too often reads like “Will’s Mary Anne Schwalbe Book.”

Conversely, the best parts of Schwalbe’s memoir are those that it would not have pleased his mother to read. Occasionally he hints at the hardly surprising fact that having a mother at once so controlling and so extravagantly selfless — one who writes the cards with which she wants her family to respond to condolence notes; one who replies, when asked how she feels after a blood transfusion, “A little guilty to be taking that much blood” — can be infuriating. Schwalbe first learned about mortality, he writes, when his mother donated his beloved stuffed-toy turtle to an orphanage and then told him the turtle had died. The giving away of the turtle might have made for a charming family anecdote; it is the thoughtlessness of the explanation that brings the reader up short. Similarly, the story of the children laughing by the fireplace ends with Schwalbe’s mother slamming the Bible shut and announcing, “Maybe this year there won’t be a Christmas.” Playing the loyal son, Schwalbe finds a lesson in his mother’s threat to cancel Christmas: the written word should be treated with respect. But the more obvious lesson is that Mary Anne Schwalbe, like every other human, sometimes got angry and sometimes hurt the people she loved. These stories do no harm to the woman. Quite the opposite; they honor her by rendering her complete. As a more complicated picture of Mary Anne emerges, her son’s dedication becomes only more poignant.

One of this book’s most moving passages occurs near the end, in a description of Mary Anne’s final days. After almost two years of dictation, Mary Anne is too ill to compose her blog posts. For the first time, Will

himself writes the message that goes out under his name. He shows it to his mother for her approval, and she adds a few lines about President Obama and the need for health care reform. The next day she isn't well enough even to look over Will's post; he must write it entirely without her. "Mom's illness is progressing quickly," it bluntly begins. We are past the point of fund-raising pleas or polite nods to the palliative care staff. Instead we read the words of a man who is losing a person he loves and is helpless to do anything about it. These pages are stirring for all the reasons one might think, but also for the subtle way they hint at what "The End of Your Life Book Club" might have been.

Christopher R. Beha is an associate editor of Harper's Magazine and the author, most recently, of the novel "What Happened to Sophie Wilder."

APPENDIX

An alphabetical listing of the authors, books, plays, poems, and stories discussed or mentioned in *The End of Your Life Book Club*:

Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*

Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*

W. H. Auden, "*Musée des Beaux Arts*," from *Collected Poems*

Jane Austen

Russell Banks, *Continental Drift*

Muriel Barbery, *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*, translated
by Alison Anderson

Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone*

Alan Bennett, *The Uncommon Reader*

The Holy Bible

Elizabeth Bishop

Roberto Bolaño, *The Savage Detectives*, translated
by Natasha Wimmer

The Book of Common Prayer

Geraldine Brooks, *March; People of the Book*

The Buddha, *The Diamond Cutter Sutra*, translated by

Gelong Thubten Tsultrim

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Robert Chapman, *Billy Budd*, play and screenplay, with

Louis O. Coxe

Sindy Cheung, "I Am Sorrow"

Julia Child, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*

Agatha Christie

Karen Connelly, *The Lizard Cage*

Pat Conroy, *The Great Santini*

Colin Cotterill

Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

Patrick Dennis, *Auntie Mame*

Charles Dickens

Joan Didion, *A Book of Common Prayer; The Year of*

Magical Thinking

Siobhan Dowd

Nancy Hatch Dupree

Dave Eggers

T. S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Zelda Fitzgerald

Ian Fleming, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*

Ken Follett, *The Pillars of the Earth*

Esther Forbes, *Paul Revere and the World*

He Lived In; Johnny Tremain

E. M. Forster, *Howards End*

Anne Frank, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*

Erle Stanley Gardner

Nikki Giovanni

William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*
Sue Grafton
Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum*
The Haggadah
David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*
Susan Halpern, *The Etiquette of Illness*
Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*
Patricia Highsmith, *Strangers on a Train*; *The Price of Salt*;
The Talented Mr. Ripley
Andrew Holleran
Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*; *A Thousand Splendid Suns*
Henrik Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*
John Irving, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*
Christopher Isherwood, *The Berlin Stories*; *Christopher
and His Kind*
Jerome K. Jerome, *Three Men in a Boat*
Ben Johnson, *Volpone*
Crockett Johnson, *Harold and the Purple Crayon*
Erica Jong, *Fear of Flying*
Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*; *Wherever You Go,
There You Are*; *Coming to Our Senses*
Walter Kaiser
Mariatu Kamara, *The Bite of the Mango*, with Susan
McClelland
Carolyn Keene, Nancy Drew series
John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage*
Elizabeth T. King
Larry Kramer
Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies*; *The Namesake*;
Unaccustomed Earth
Anne Lamott, *Traveling Mercies*

Stieg Larsson, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, translated
by Reg Keeland

Victor LaValle, *Big Machine*

Munro Leaf, *The Story of Ferdinand*, illustrated by
Robert Lawson

Dennis Lehane

Donna Leon

C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*

Alistair MacLean, *The Guns of Navarone*; *Where Eagles Dare*;
Force 10 from Navarone; *Puppet on a Chain*

Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley*

Thomas Mann, *Tonio Kröger*; *Death in Venice*; *The Magic Mountain*;
Mario and the Magician; *Joseph and His Brothers*, translated by
John E. Woods

Ngaio Marsh

W. Somerset Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*; *The Painted Veil*;
Collected Short Stories, including "The Verger"

James McBride, *The Color of Water*

Val McDermid

Ian McEwan, *On Chesil Beach*

Herman Melville, *Billy Budd*

James Michener

Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*

Rohinton Mistry, *A Fine Balance*

Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With the Wind*

J. R. Moehringer, *The Tender Bar*

Toni Morrison

Daniyal Mueenuddin, *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*

Alice Munro, *Too Much Happiness*

Iris Murdoch

- Nagarjuna, *Seventy Verses on Emptiness*, translated
by Gareth Sparham
- Irène Némirovsky, *Suite Française*, translated by Sandra Smith
- Edith Nesbit, *The Railway Children*
- Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father*
- John O'Hara, *Appointment in Samarra*
- Mary Oliver, *Why I Wake Early*, including "Where Does
the Temple Begin, Where Does It End?"
- Frances Osborne, *The Bolter*
- Sara Paretsky
- Randy Pausch, *The Last Lecture*, with Jeffrey Zaslow
- Susan Pedersen, *Eleanor Rathbone and the Politics of Conscience*
- Harold Pinter, *The Caretaker*
- Reynolds Price, *Feasting the Heart*
- Thomas Pynchon
- Arthur Ransome, *Swallows and Amazons*
- David Reuben, M.D., *Everything You Always Wanted to Know
About Sex: But Were Afraid to Ask*
- David K. Reynolds, *A Handbook for Constructive Living*
- F. W. Robertson
- Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping; Gilead; Home*
- David Rohde
- John Ruskin
- Tim Russert, *Big Russ and Me*
- David Sedaris
- Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are; In the Night Kitchen*
- Peter Shaffer; *Equus; Five Finger Exercise*
- William Shakespeare, *King Lear; Othello*
- George Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan*
- Bernie Siegel, M.D., *Love, Medicine and Miracles*

Alexander McCall Smith, *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*;

The Miracle at Speedy Motors

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*

Natsume Soseki, *Kokoro*, translated by Edwin McClellan

Wallace Stegner, *Crossing to Safety*

Edward Steichen, *The Family of Man*, prologue by

Carl Sandburg

Wallace Stevens

Lydia Stone, *Pink Donkey Brown*, illustrated by Mary E. Dwyer

Elizabeth Strout, *Olive Kitteridge*

Josephine Tey, *Brat Farrar*

William Makepeace Thackeray

Michael Thomas, *Man Gone Down*

Mary Tileston, *Daily Strength for Daily Needs*

Colm Tóibín, *The Story of the Night*; *The Blackwater Lightship*;

The Master; *Brooklyn*

J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*; *The Lord of the Rings*

William Trevor, *Felicia's Journey*

Liv Ullmann

John Updike, *Couples*; *My Father's Tears*

Leon Uris

Marina Vaizey

Sheila Weller, *Girls Like Us*

Elie Wiesel, *Night*

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*

P. G. Wodehouse

Geoffrey Wolff, *The Duke of Deception*

Herman Wouk, *The Caine Mutiny*; *Marjorie Morningstar*;

The Winds of War

About This Book

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Question & Answer

1. Does this book have a central theme? What is it?
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About This Author

Will Schwalbe has worked in publishing (most recently as senior vice president and editor in chief of Hyperion Books); digital media, as the founder and CEO of Cookstr.com; and as a journalist, writing for various publications including *The New York Times* and the *South China Morning Post*. He is on the boards of Yale University Press and the Kingsborough Community College Foundation. He is the coauthor with David Shipley of *Send: Why People Email So Badly and How to Do It Better*.

Suggested Reading

See the book’s appendix for a complete list of the many titles discussed in *The End of Your Life Book Club*.

The End of Your Life Book Club: An Interview with Will Schwalbe

BY EMILY GATLIN

JUL 11, 2013

GET EVERY STORY: FOLLOW BOOK RIOT

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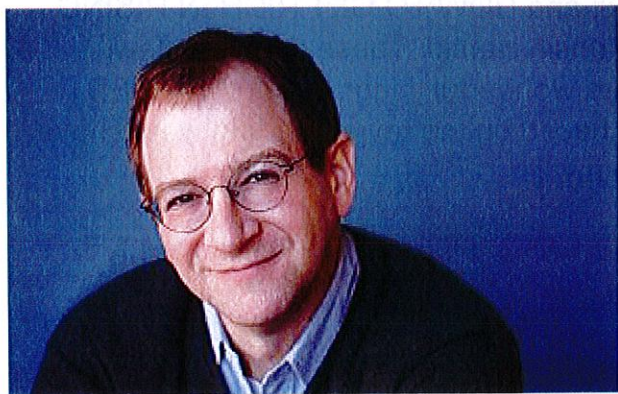
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During her treatment for cancer, Mary Anne Schwalbe and her son Will spent many hours sitting in waiting rooms together. To pass the time, they would talk about the books they were reading. Once, by chance, they read the same book at the same time—and an informal book club of two was born. Through their wide-ranging reading, Will and Mary Anne—and we, their fellow readers—are reminded how books can be comforting, astonishing, and illuminating, changing the way that we feel about and interact with the world around us. A profoundly moving memoir of caregiving, mourning, and love—*The End of Your Life Book Club* is also about the joy of reading, and the ways that joy is multiplied when we share it with others.

Q: Will, you had quite a career in publishing before writing *The End of Your Life Book Club*. Just so our readers know, you were the SVP and Editor in Chief of Hyperion Books and before that, you worked at William Morrow. Growing up, what was your “reading life” like? Did your mother have an impact, and what books did she share with you as a child?



WS: My childhood reading had a huge impact on me, and I think in many ways set me on a course to work in publishing. When my brother and sister and I were little, Mom would read us each our own book every night before sleep (when she wasn't out or traveling for work). Part of the joy of the nighttime reading ritual was selecting and discussing the books with Mom. So it was when I was very little that I started to understand the pleasure that comes not just from reading books, but also from choosing them and talking about

them. And that's really what publishers do – find and spread the word about books they love. My first favorite books were *HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON* by Crockett Johnson and *THE STORY OF FERDINAND* by Munro Leaf, illustrated by Robert Lawson. Then I fell in love with *JOHNNY TREMAIN* by Esther Forbes. And as a pre-teen began racing through Alistair Maclean books like *THE GUNS OF NAVARONE*.

Q: You left Hyperion and founded Cookstr, a website devoted to organizing the world's best cookbooks and making them universally accessible. So not only are you a book lover, YOU'RE A FOODIE! How did Cookstr come about, and what was it like to jump from words to food?

WS: Books and food! They just go together. Cookstr came about because I love food and cookbooks and cookbook authors; I was very excited about exploring digital media; I had acquired and edited *THE LONG TAIL* by Chris Anderson and was really taken with his vision of the future and wanted to be part of it; and I wanted to create a way that chefs and cookbook publishers could share whatever rewards there were on the web. One thing we are really proud of at Cookstr is that we are the only site that shares its income with the people who create the recipes. Because I always published cookbooks and am still involved with books through writing, I don't feel like I've jumped from words to food – only somewhat shifted my focus.

Q: *The End of Your Life Book Club* not only impacted my life and lead me to share more books and have more discussions with my family and friends, it also made my "to read" pile multiply exponentially. Have you heard of any readers adopting your list?

WS: That's the nicest reaction imaginable. Thank you! Yes, I've had quite a few readers say they are adopting the list. And I even saw that one book blogger wrote that she's going to spend a year reading all the books.



Q: What recent releases do you think Mary Anne would have enjoyed?

WS: I keep reading books I think Mom would have loved. *THE UNWINDING* by George Packer; *THE WOMAN UPSTAIRS* by Claire Messud; *TOBY'S ROOM* by Pat Barker; *THE INTERESTINGS* by Meg Wolitzer; *A TALE FOR THE TIME BEING* by Ruth Ozeki; and *HOW TO GET RICH IN RISING ASIA* by Mohsin Hamid. These are just a few.

There are so many terrific books out now. And I've heard wonderful things about *WE NEED NEW NAMES* by NuViolet Bulawayo and suspect that, based on the reviews, Mom would have rushed to the local bookstore to get a copy. It's next on my list.

Q: You're in the middle of your paperback tour. What are some things you do while on the road? Do you buy books on your travels? You're a food guy. What do you like to eat? Local fare?

WS: I have a blast on tour. I buy books everywhere I go – and am particularly drawn to "staff recommends" in the great bookstores I visit. I try to visit libraries and museums whenever I get the chance. I stayed an extra day in Kansas City to visit the great Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and wished I'd stayed at least one day past that so I could go back again, and also visit some of the other museums there. I was livid with myself for being in Houston on a Monday and missing the chance to visit some of the awesome museums there. I bring my running shoes but I never

(as in, never ever) seem to make it to the gym. As for food, I make a bee-line for whatever restaurant is most famous for local fare: I've had insanely delicious Cheese Cones at Skyline in Cincinnati; Cheese Fries at Michael's in Highland Park; Burnt Ends at Jack Stacks in Kansas City – I could go on and on. But I also seek out great local chefs and farm-to-table restaurants. Some recent memorable meals include Curate in Asheville and Local 127 in Cincinnati.

