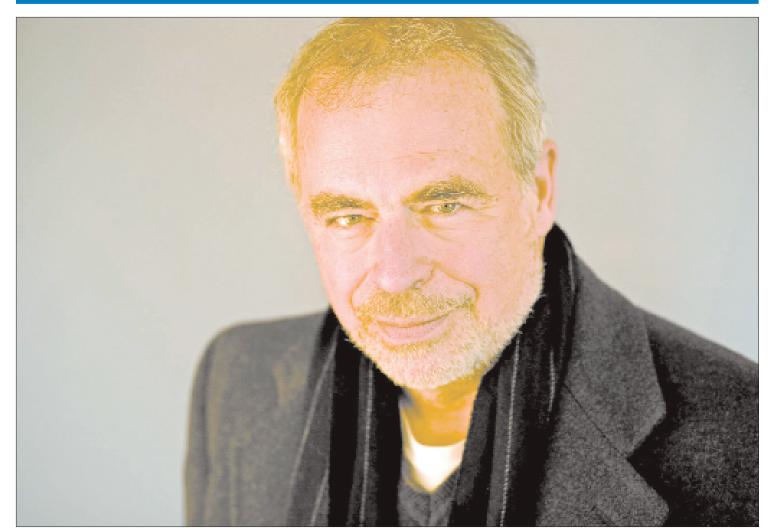
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The Hour



Pulitzer Prize-winning author Richard Russo will be at Wilton Library on Sunday.

Contributed photo/Elena Seibert

Pulitzer-winner Russo 'always working'

WILTON By A.J. O'CONNELL Hour Staff Writer

Pulitzer-winning author Richard Russo is not one of those writers who dreamed of telling stories from a young

Russo, who will be at the Wilton Library this Sunday, did not aspire to write novels, but he did dream of studying them. The young Russo earned his Ph.D. in American Literature at the University of Arizona before he discovered that wasn't the career he

"By the time I'd finished, I realized that I didn't really want to do it," he said.

Russo might have been able to set his jaw and carry on as an American lit professor, but for his university's creative writing department, which was across the hall. Wilton's townwide Wilton comparisons. Everyone in that department seemed to be having a pretty good time, he said.

"You can stand misery as long as there aren't happy people nearby," joked Russo.

So Russo went across the hall, and American literature his field of study — was forever changed. In 1986, he published "Mohawk," the first of seven novels. His 1993 novel "Nobody's Fool" was adapted for a 1994 film, he's penned screenplays, a collection of short stories, and, in 2002, won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

"I probably should have come to it sooner," he said. "I come from a long line of...storytellers. But none of them

did it professionally." "That Old Cape Magic" is Russo's latest book, released last year by Random House.

The novel is the focus of

Reads! program this year.

The novel follows Jack Griffin, a disillusioned screenwriter-turned-collegeprofessor, as he and his wife attend two weddings, one on Cape Cod, a place filled with memories for Griffin. In the course of a year, Griffin deals with disappointments, family and the problems in his own marriage.

The character of Griffin sounds as if he could be a stand-in for Russo, a 61year-old former professor and sometime screenwriter who is a father to two daughters.

"Yes, a lot of my characters are autobiographical, and not just the protagonists," said

Russo admits to autobiographical characters in his work, but cautions readers to look beyond his characters' vital statistics when drawing

He cites one of his short stories, in which an elderly Belgian nun named Sister Ursula enters a writing class taught by a middle-aged professor. Russo has often been asked if he is that professor.

His response is always this: "Why don't you ask me if I'm that nun?"

Sister Ursula's background contains much more autobiographical information, he said, but because the professor is a middle-aged male, people often think the professor is Russo.

Russo's identification with the fictional Sister Ursula runs counter to allegations that Russo is a misogynist. Last August, Newsweek published a piece about "That Old Cape Magic." The writer of the piece accused Russo of

see RUSSO A7

Russo appearance caps 2010 Wilton Reads!

WILTON

By A.J. O'CONNELL Hour Staff Writer

The sixth annual Wilton Reads! program will close with a bang next Sunday, when Pulitzer winner Richard Russo appears to discuss his latest novel, "That Old Cape

Russo's book isat the center of the Wilton Library's sixth annual Wilton Reads! program, which kicked off at the beginning of this month. Free books were distributed to the community on Tuesday, June 1, copies of the book in every format have been circulating at the library, and book discussions were conducted this month by Joanne Ecke, Ph.D. and Susan Boyar.

Ecke reported about 35 participants at her reading group, which is held in the morning.

'They liked it more as the discussion went on," she said of their reaction to the novel.

Ecke compares Richard Russo to both James Joyce and John Steinbeck.

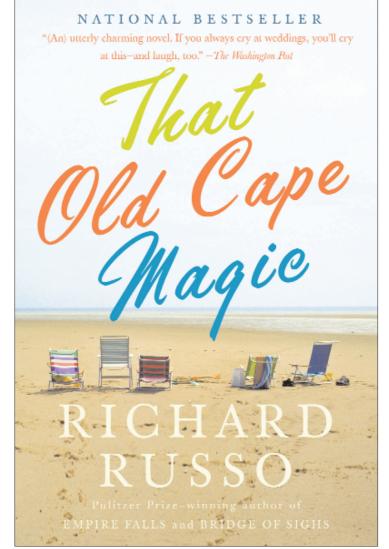
"He takes his time," she said.

In Ecke's group, readers responded to Russo's warmth, to his depiction of the region and to his sense of humor.

Russo is a cross-over author, said Ecke.

"He straddles the line between being a popular artist and being a serious artist," she said.

Russo, interviewed ahead of his appearance in Wilton, says that was a shortcoming



"That Old Cape Magic" by Richard Russo was the choice for Wilton Reads! 2010.

was trying to get published. Publishers didn't know whether to market him as a popular author or a literary

"They had no idea how to sell my book," he said. many people ar Luckily for him, instead of Russo's endings.

in the early days, when he being shunned by both the popular and literary markets, he was embraced by both and his work appeals to a very wide audience.

Boyar, who conducted the evening group, thinks that many people are drawn to

"Happy endings, people are hungry for that," said Boyar, who has been leading discussion group for several years. "I'm often hearing from people, can't you find something a little more upbeat?"

She says that Russo provides "mature happy endings" for most of his books.

Russo agrees. "I think it's an actual assessment of my work," he said. "I'm a cautious opti-

mist.' He says that he doesn't write "all-will-be-well" endings, but he writes endings in which a character's point of view has changed, or in which something has been

salvaged. Russo's visit to Wilton is the climax of this year's townwide reading program. According to library spokeswoman Janet Crystal, close to 300 people are signed up for this Sunday's event.

"We can take 400 to 450,"

she said. While at the library, Russo will become the third recipient of Wilton Library's Grodin Family Fine Writers Award. This year's Wilton Reads! program is made possible by grants from The Wilton Bank and The United Way of Coastal Fairfield County.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Richard Russo will visit the library on Sunday, June 27, from 4 to 6 p.m. To register, visit www.wiltonlibrary.org or call (203) 762-

At the libraries

Fairfield Public Library, 1080 Old Post Road,

Fairfield. (203) 256-3155.

The hours of operation on Saturdays will change on July 1. Both locations of the Fairfield Public Library will be open from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. As in previous years, the main library and the branch library will be closed on Sundays beginning July 4 and continuing until Sept.19.

The Fairfield Public Library is in the process of selecting the next book for One Book One Town. It is requesting the help of the public in selecting the next title. Nominate a book that you think would have an impact on the community by going online to www.fairfieldpublicli-brary.org and complete the form on the website or leave a voice mail for Nicole at (203) 255-7394. Remember they are looking for the book you can't put down.

Each week this summer, the library will highlight and celebrate one genre of fiction or a broad subject area of non-fiction, featuring a lobby display that offers patrons the opportunity to enjoy some old favorites and discover some great new titles. "Sports" is the spotlight genre from June 22-June 28. Stop by and browse the display table. play table - and be sure to register for the adult Summer Reading Game either online or at the reference desk. Once you are registered, you're eligible to enter a weekly random drawing to win a prize, including a gift certificate donated by local business partners. The prize drawing on June 28 will give two winners a gift certificate: one for Rawley's Restaurant, and the other for Soccer and Rugby Imports of Fairfield. There's a new drawing each week, so be sure to drop a ticket in the beach bucket at the circulation desk every time you visit the Main or Woods Branch Library.

Fairfield Woods Branch, 1147 Fairfield Woods Road, Fairfield. (203) 255-7307.

The hours of operation on Saturdays will change on July 1. Both locations of the Fairfield Public Library will be open from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. As in previous years, the main library and the branch library will be closed on Sundays beginning July 4 and continuing until Sept.19.

Be sure to register for the adult Summer Reading Game, either online or at the reference desk. Once you are registered, you're eligible to enter a weekly random drawing to win a prize, including a gift certificate donated by local business partners. The prize drawing on June 28 will give two winners a gift certificate: one for Rawley's Restaurant, and the other for Soccer and Rugby Imports of Fairfield. There's a new drawing each week, so be sure to drop a ticket in the beach bucket at the circulation desk every time you visit the Main or Woods Branch Library.

Wednesday, June 23 — The national bestseller "Cutting for Stone" by Abraham Verghese will be focus of the Woods Book Group at their next meeting 2 p.m. Group leader Claudia Silk welcomes all newcomers and limited copies of the book are available at both library buildings. The group will adjourn for the summer after this meeting, convening again on Sept. 29 to discuss "Brooklyn" by Colm Toibin. Register online or call (203)

Ferguson Library, 1 Public Library Plaza, Stamford. (203) 964-1000.

Thursday, June 24 – French Book Discussion at 6:30 p.m. De la Part de la Princesse Morte" by Kenizé Mourad. Call (203) 351-8236 for more information.

Monday, June 28 — Splish, Splash, Reading Bash! Children's Summer Reading Club Kick-off. Sign up all day at all library locations. Face Painting: 1-2 p.m. Christina

the Strolling Magician: 2 p.m. All ages.
Tuesday, June 29 — Book discussion at 7 p.m. "The Lost City of Z" by David Grann. Facilitator: Patricia Brown. Call (203) 351-8231 for more information.

Harry Bennett Branch Library, 115 Vine Road, Stamford. (203) 351-8291.

Tuesday, June 29 — Dominique Browning, former Stamford resident and Westhill High School alum, will speak about her new book, "Slow Love: How I Lost My Job, Put on My Pajamas and Found Happiness Tuesday, June 29 at noon at the Ferguson Library's Harry Bennett Branch. Dominique Browning is the former editor of House & Garden magazine. Light lunch and book signing. This program is generously supported by the Friends of The Ferguson Library. For more information call 203 351-

New Canaan Library, 151 Main St., New Canaan.

(203) 594-5000 Friday, June 25 — Former New Canaan resident Eric Metaxas, author of "Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy – A Righteous Gentile vs. the Third Reich " will be discussing his book as part of the New Canaan Library Summer Read 2010: World War II and the Holocaust at noon. Books will be available for purchase and signing. .

For more information or to register, call 203-594-5040 or

visit www.newcanaanlibrary.org.

Saturday, June 26 — Take a vacation with your favorite imaginary heroine this summer and join authors David Soman and Jackie Davis at 11 am as they read from their newest book, "Ladybug Girl at the Beach." For children ages 3-5 or those who are young at heart. All programs are free and open to the public. For more information or to register, call 203-594-5040 or visit www.newcanaanlibrary.org. Books will be available for purchase and sign-

Norwalk Public Library, 1 Belden Ave., Norwalk. (203) 899-2780.

Thursday, June 24 — Books Sandwiched In invites you to read "The Crowning Glory of Calla Lily Ponde" by Rebecca Wells and come to its monthly discussion on from noon to 1 p.m. Multiple copies of the book are available at the library. Discussion open to the public. Bring your lunch, share your view. Coffee and beverages pro-

Saturday, June 26 — The Children's Library of the Norwalk Public Library kicks off Make a Splash – READ!, the library system's summer reading program registration on Saturday, June 26 with "The Johnson Girls" live music concert. A drop-in event for all ages. For more information, call (203) 899-2780 ext. 131. Children under nine years of age must be accompanied by an adult.

June 26 - The Friends of the Norwalk Public Library System Community Room on the top level of the South Norwalk Branch Library, 10 Washington Street, South Norwalk, CT. Please call 203-899-2790 x2 for more infor-

Monday, June 28— The Norwalk Public Library System

see AT A7

Russo always has a story to tell

writing two kinds of women: angels and demons.

"I just say, 'Read the books,'" said Russo. "I just tell people to read the books and look at the women in them. Read them and see what you think."

He laughed and added that anyone who accuses him of misogyny would do well to avoid his family.

"My daughters would have something to say about that," he said.
Russo considers himself to be a comic

writer; he loves the work of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain and has taken lessons about humor from the work of each.

"Despite the fact that I'm a comic writer, I like to go to really dark places in my work," he said. "I learned that from Twain."

Interestingly, Russo will be appearing with Twain in Granta Magazine this year. According to Russo, the British quarterly will print Russo's first non-fiction piece in its next issue, along with a previously unpublished excerpt from Twain's autobiography.

Russo's piece, he said, will probably con-



Richard Russo

Russo going to do something never he's

done before: write sequel.

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road,"

"I'm going to revisit some

characters from 'Nobody's Fool,'" he said. Of course, there are other projects as well; film projects and a very long story are in the works, but that seems to be the way things work for Russo.

"Oh," he said. "I'm always working."

AT THE LIBRARIES

from A6

welcomes author Abrendal Austin back for two book reading and signing events of her new book "On a Clear Day You Can See L.A." 3-5

Rowayton Library, 33 Highland Ave., Rowayton. (203) 838-5038.

Thursdays and Fridays — StoryTime for Pre-School Kids 10:30 a.m. Stories and Songs for children ages birth-age 5.

Wednesday June 30 — BookTalk for Adults: The Reader, The Writer, and The Detective: The Eternal Triangle at 7p.m. Discussing Tony Hillerman's "Dance Hall of the Dead." Multiple copies are available at the Library. Dessert, discussion, and discussion leader Marsha Bonsavage.For more information and to make borrow a copy of the book, call (203) 838-5038. This program is free and open to the public.

South End Branch Library, 34 Woodland Ave.. Stamford. (203) 351-8280.

Thursdays, June 24 - 1, 3—LI-BRA-RY! Parent-Playshops 10–11:30 a.m. Activities to foster early childhood development and literacy. Free teen finishes a book (maxiplay music movement stories, books, crafts. Ages 1–3 grand prize — a Flip MinoHD with an adult. Registration video camera gift card. For recommended.

African and African- and Patricia Curran Teen Q and A, book sales and American Authors at 7 p.m. Fund. Swing by the Teen "C.R.E.A.M." by Solomon Room to pick up your pass-Iones.

Monday, June 28 — Splish, Splash, Reading Bash! Children's Summer Reading Club Kick-off. Sign up all day at all library locations. Face Painting: 3-4 p.m. Christina the Strolling Magician: 4 p.m. Frop-in Craft: all day.

Wednesday, June 30 — Make a Splash: Create your Own Ice Cream Float and sign up for summer reading at 3:30 p.m.

South Norwalk Library Branch. 10 Washington St., Norwalk. 899-2780

Saturday, June 26 — The Norwalk Public Library System welcomes author Abrendal Austin back for two book reading and signing events of her new book "On a Clear Day You Can See L.A." noon-2 p.m.

Wilton Library, 137 Old Ridgefield Road, Wilton. (203) 762-3950.

Wednesday, June 23 through Aug. 18 —Teen Summer Reading Program, 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. Teens who finish at least one book each week can come to the Teen Room to add the title to their passport and be entered to win that week's prize. At the end of the summer, receive one entry for each week a mum of 8 entries) for the students entering grades 7-

Thursday, June 24 — Rootin', Tootin' and Readin' Roundup, 1:30-4:30 p.m. Lasso your friends and come on down to the Children's Library's annual summer reading kick-off event. Children can sign-up for the summer reading program as well as enjoy crafts, games, activities, and food. Open to children of all ages. No fee; no registration.

Thursday, June 24 — Have Your Cake and Read It, Too! Child/Adult Book Discussion, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Join Wilton Library's Kids' Book Club for children in grades 3 and up; dessert will be served and adults will be included. Children and their adults will read the book selection and then join the discussion. This month's selection is "The Sign of the Beaver" by Elizabeth George Speare. No program fee, registration is required.

Sunday, June 27 — Wilton Reads 2010: "That Old Cape Magic"-Author Visit with Richard Russo, 4-6 p.m. We encourage all community members to join us this spring as we come together to read, discuss and reflect upon "That Old Cape Magic," an always touching and often hilarious work of fiction by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Richard Russo, culminating in today's appearance at the Wilton Monday, June 28 — 12. Sponsored by the John Library to discuss this work. signing following the talk. No charge. Reservations strongly recommended.

ENTERTAINMENT MINUTE

Actor Robert Downey Jr. honored in Chicago

CHICAGO (AP) — The Gene Siskel Film Center in Chicago has honored actor Robert Downey Jr. with its Renaissance Award.

The Academy Awardnominated actor was in sentative" of his work.

Chicago on Saturday to accept the award. The center says it chose to honor the 45-year-old Downey because he is "one of the most

Downey gave an inter-Phillips, saying three of his movies are the "most repre-

"Tropic Thunder," "Sherlock Holmes" and "Iron Man." He won a Golden Globe for "Sherlock Holmes."

The actor also says he's respected and versatile moved on from drug and actors of his generation."

Downey is to star in the view to director Todd Phillips-directed movie "Due Date" as a first-time dad trying to make it home in time for the birth of his baby.

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BOOK BRIEFS

'Magic Tree House' series released as e-books

NEW YORK (AP) — One of the world's most beloved children's book series, the "Magic Tree House," can now be downloaded.

Random House Children's Books has announced that all 43 of Mary Pope Osborne's adventures through time and space became available as ebooks Tuesday. Osborne's books have sold more than 70 million copies and have been translated into 28 languages.

Rick Riordan plans new series invoking **Greek gods**

NEW YORK (AP) — Rick Riordan is again invoking the Greek gods.

The author of the millionselling "Percy Jackson" children's books is launching a new adventure saga in October.

Jackson's "The Heroes of Olympus" series begins with the "The Lost Hero," set in Percy Jackson's old training ground, Camp Half-Blood, but with new characters.

Riordan's new series was announced Monday by the Disney Book Group's Disney-Hyperion imprint.

In the spring, Riordan started an Egyptian-themed series, Chronicles."

Rick Atkinson wins prize for military writing

NEW YORK (AP) Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and historian Rick Atkinson has received a

Mary Pope Osborne, author of the best selling "Magic Tree House" series children's books, poses for a photograph at her home in Goshen, Conn \$100,000 award for military winners include James

Atkinson has been awarded the 2010 Pritzker Military

Library Literature Award for Lifetime Achievement in Military Writing. Atkinson has

Pulitzers for his book "An Army at Dawn" and for his reporting for The Washington Post. He is currently working on the final volume of his acclaimed World War II "Liberation" trilogy.

The Pritzker announced Monday, was started in 2007. Previous McPherson and Allan Millett.



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