

# A Farewell to Cold Spring: Letters to the Editor

Putnam County News & Recorder

## Couldn't Ask for a Better Launch Into the Working World Than Merritt Books

To The Editor:

I was very sad to hear the news that the Merritt Bookstore is closing its doors. The bookstore was my first job and imagining Main Street without it is hard to believe. I began working there in May of 2005, the end of my freshman year Haldane, my first year at a new school after nine long years at Garrison. Working at the bookstore allowed me to become more acquainted with a town where I was going to be spending my next four years. It allowed me to spend quality time in town rather than just grabbing a slice of pizza, I really got to know a lot of Cold Springers.

I remember how nervous I was, with Kira Culotta at my side, when I went into the bookstore to meet with Scott Meyer for my interview. He began the conversation talking to me about soccer and when he told me I was hired, I was thrilled to get started. The summer was wonderful working there three days a week. But when the school year rolled around my hectic schedule got in the way and I was forced to work just one day a week, Sundays. I would often spend the entire Sunday there by myself, opening and closing the store. I remember how proud I was to call Sunday my day and it taught me a great deal about responsibility.

The bookstore's tranquil setting that I enjoyed on Sundays was short lived, by the afternoon tourists visiting Cold Spring for the day were pervasive on the streets. So I ask myself, where are those people now? The people that were so eager to purchase a new bestseller or a children's story. It is a shame that with all of the loyal customers and familiar faces the bookstore could not stay alive.

The Merritt Bookstore was there when I began high school and it is funny that it is saying goodbye now, just as I am to Cold Spring in a few months. The memories I have at the bookstore will never be forgotten. Eileen, the heart and soul of the bookstore, between the Harry Potter parties and various toddler play-groups, is the reason it thrived for the time I was there.

In the winter of my junior year my schedule got too full to work, but I was happy to know that with my brother now a member of the Merritt Bookstore team I would still be able to visit and spend some quality time amongst its shelves. I couldn't have asked for a better launch into the working world. Once again it is with a heavy heart that I say goodbye to this treasure.

Emily Marsh, Garrison

## Sorry, We're Closed: Farewell in a Cookbook

Dear Editor:

Floor stand bare, shelves empty. Dust surfaces and sneezing echoes through deserted space. The dust around this home, home to books and their readers-has surfaced-at Cold Spring's Merritt Bookstore. But Merritt isn't moving. This Cold Spring location, one of three regional Merritt Bookstores, closed. Its books and furnishings have been moved out of its leased space. Its carved wooden "Welcome" sign won't be greeting the community in the new location. The street side chalkboard announcing local readings and book sales of the week has been wiped clean.

Wide-planked wooden floors, high walls lined with books and displays of work by local authors set Merritt Books apart from the franchises and electronic bookstores. And Merritt's manager Eileen Charbonneau, brought Merritt to life in a way that a fresh spray of flowers enhances the mode modest café. A brilliant novelist, meticulous editor and noted theatrical consultant, among her many talents, even Eileen could not breathe another year of existence into the bookstore that for nearly four years graced a street filled with unique restaurants, friendly pubs, antique shops, and exclusive retail stores. The store's owner, Scott Meyer, had hoped to sell the business as a turnkey transaction. A few lookers showed interest but the prospect of buying a retail operation that wasn't making money drew no buyer. In late January, as I browsed what little remained on the shelves, I knew there was another page-turner in my future. All of the children's *Magic Tree House* books were gone, so my kids were out of luck. But, as one of those customers who will miss the local haunt, I found my farewell volume. I reached for a thick, colorfully striped hardback and thumbed through it. *A New Way to Cook* by Sally Schneider was the last cookbook left on the property. At 4.1 pounds, I sensed this 756 page culinary bible was worth its weight. It was marked at 60% off, shelved with the out-of-print volumes. Eileen gave the book her personal test, opening it and letting the pages randomly fall to determine a good place to start experimenting. Sally Schneider's Desserts chapter appeared. Delicious. Though Merritt could find no recipe for success on Main Street in Cold Spring, I'll remember its farewell in the aroma of good things from the kitchen.

Finally, Eileen posted the "Closing Soon" sign and slashed priced on the store's inventory. During its final days, only a few books remained along with the last of some lost-and-found items. Children's sweaters and small mittens left behind from Merritt's Story Time went unclaimed. The store also offered a box of free books and CDs to show customers appreciation.

One thing is certain. Merritt liked its customers. It just needed more of them.

Mary Ann Ebner, West Point

## Inspired by His Boss's Hard Work and Leadership

Dear Editor:

In May 2006, I returned home after my first year of college unsure of myself. I was beginning to feel the pressures of adulthood. I decided to pick up a second job on top of my position with the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival. My younger sister Emily introduced me to Merritt Books on Main Street, and I was instantly intrigued. After meeting with Manager Eileen Charbonneau and owner Scott Meyer, I was hired.

Being a student at The George Washington University in Washington, DC, within a student body well over the size of Cold Spring, it's often easy to forget that small organizations even exist. Like me, many students spend their time in Congressional offices trying to create a place amidst the sea of collegiate interns. Merritt Books has single-handedly shows me the value of small independent businesses. As the owner and chief overseer of all things Merritt, Scott had his work cut out for him.

Scott is mostly at the Millbrook store, but I feel now as that I know him. It astonishes me how smooth our store ran. So did special events, from author signings, to *Mother Goose* Storytimes, to our *Lemony Snicket* and *Harry Potter* Nights. I know now that Scott was just brilliant at managing all of the madness. Just before finishing up the year of 2006 we had to close down all of our computer systems and tally up the sales for the year. Scott was with me on the phone walking me through step by step how to perform each task. No doubt he had to do the same for the Red Hook and Millbrook stores after hanging up with me.

I hope that my future career path allows me to work for people like Scott. His hard work and leadership inspired us all and it will continue to do so as the former staff of Merritt Books in Cold Spring moves on through life. Eileen Charbonneau, Alison and Scott Meyer have done much for me as well as for the readers of Putnam County over the past three years.

William Marsh, Garrison