

The Meadian



A newsletter published periodically for families, friends and residents of St. Anne's Mead

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Abe Swart

A Tribute to a Dad in Honor of All Others On Father's Day 2015

Q: What do feeding birds, eating crackers and milk, and an incident with blueberry pie all have in common?

A: They each represent something memorable about Azra Martin Swart, a much-loved father who was adored by grandchildren as much as any other family member.



Known affectionally as Gringo by his grandchildren and "Abe" to others, Azra was a model father, and a resident of St. Anne's Mead the past two years.

"Dad had a great sense of humor and humble kindness," said Molly Smyk. "He always said a stranger was simply a friend he hadn't met yet, and he was always cracking jokes and making people laugh, right up to the end," said daughter Mickey. The two remembered their dad during a celebration of his life at St. Anne's Mead in May.

Abe was born in 1929 and he married his high school sweetheart, Mildred "Mickey" Armstrong in 1952. She survives him.

This month, the nation celebrates fatherhood in an observance known as Father's Day. It began as a result of a daughter wanting to honor the self-sacrifice and hardship her father and all others endure in raising families. Sixty two years after it was proposed, President Nixon made it official in 1972.



In tribute to Abe and his life, we honor him this Father's Day by remembering who he was.

He was a veteran of the Korean War. He taught 5th and 6th graders in Beverly Hills, Mich., for 40 years. He was active in St. James Episcopal Church in Birmingham, Mich. He was most "at home" at his family cabin on Lake Superior. Abe adored his grandchildren as well as his daughters and each have special memories that define him:

- Feeding the birds and chipmunks
- Camping with the family
- Listening to Big Band and Classical music
- Being interested in his grandchildren's lives and activities
- Guessing what was in a gift
- Arriving "on time", one hour early

Happy Father's Day, Abe. And to all others, we salute you and honor your part in giving life and love to the world.

Elderspeak

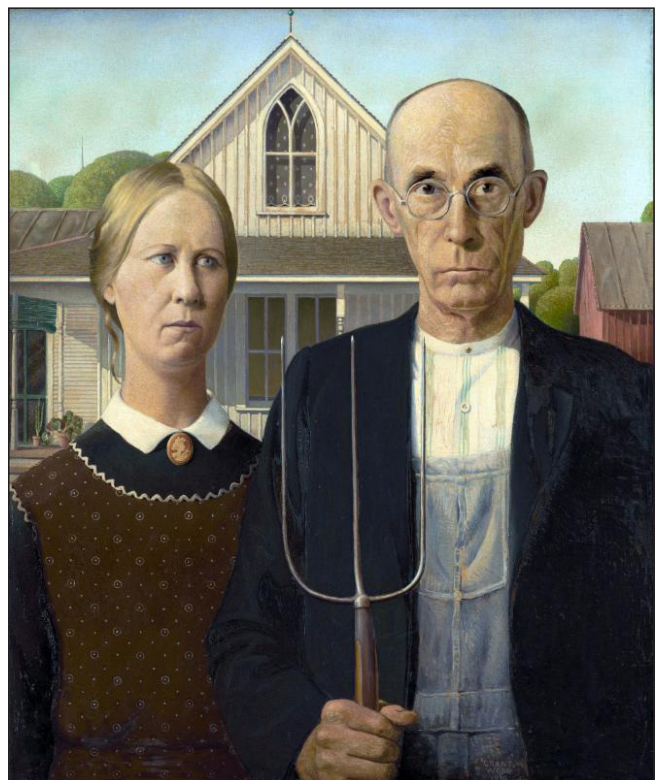
Seems Natural But There Is A Better Way to Converse With Seniors Than Baby Talk

Most of us are guilty of elderspeak at one time or another. Elderspeak occurs when we change our speech patterns when talking to seniors, especially those with hearing or other physical or cognitive deficits.

It's not unlike the cadence and tone we've used to get the attention of an infant: baby talk.

But unlike baby talk which delights the infant and encourages one-on-one engagement, elderspeak is demeaning and discourages social interactions of older adults, especially those with memory disorders. At its worse, it can deepen depression and anger.

According to Michele Mitchell, social worker at St. Anne's Mead in Southfield, those who speak this use shorter sentences, simpler vocabulary, filler words, and fragmented sentences, and they often repeat themselves. Elderspeakers use overly-endearing terms like "honey" or "sweetheart," and



"How are we today, Dad?"

they ask closed questions, use the collective “we”, and tend to speak at a slower rate with more pauses.

Research has shown that both professional and volunteer caregivers who have not been trained in speaking to the elderly, engage in elderspeak and they do so regardless of the ability of the older person to communicate, including those with or without dementia or memory loss.

Elderspeak assumes that older adults are less competent and more grumpy. And, it diminishes the opportunities for elders to communicate fostering

loss of self-esteem and magnifying depression.

Studies also show that few nursing home residents complain when spoken to in this way, because they have come to expect that talk as part of their daily routine. Older adults, in both institutional settings and those receiving home care services, report that as many as 40 percent of their caregivers use speech they perceive as demeaning. Studies show that as many as 75 percent of resident interactions with staff in nursing homes include some form of elderspeak.

Senior Tips

Here are signs of elderspeak mentioned in the article above. Listen hard to yourself and find out if you are guilty. If so, we’ve included some remedial steps you can take to eliminate elderspeak from your dialogue.

Are You Using?

- Terms such as “honey,” “young lady,” or “dear”
- A singsong voice, that changes in pitch and tone
- Exaggerated words
- Very simple sentences
- Slowdown in delivery of words
- Limited vocabulary
- Repeat or paraphrase of what was just said
- Statements that end like questions

Here are some tips from Michele Mitchell to help you avoid using elderspeak:

- Be self-aware when engaged in conversation with a senior. Listen to yourself for the use of an altered pattern, then communicate as you would naturally.
- Use your everyday vocabulary but throw in a new word once in a while as it might spark the interest of the listener.
- Avoid using words like “sweetie,” “honey” or “dearie.”
- Avoid raising pitch or tone; it can distort words.
- Link several simple sentences together to express a complex thought.
- If you have to repeat yourself, say it another way, with different words.

Worth Repeating

Here's what they're saying about St. Anne's Mead

I am a very observant person and I visit a variety of long term care facilities. The first thing I noticed at St. Anne's Mead was how clean and well cared for the building is. The housekeeping staff are excellent and that shouldn't go unmentioned. Secondly, I was struck by how happy and welcoming the residents are. I am not used to seeing that. I also like the fact that the staff are friendly, professional and experienced. St. Anne's must be a great place to live.

--Arnetta Stokes, CAREGiver at Home Instead Senior Care-Birmingham



Be sure to check our Facebook page for photos, videos and comments.

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Our Mission

St. Anne's Mead mission is to provide compassionate and professional health care and supportive services to seniors in a safe, secure, and loving home.

In keeping with our faith-based traditions, we endeavor to serve the unique needs of individuals and their families while preserving dignity and enriching lives.

