If someone were to ask me what book most influenced my life, I would browse through the bookshelf in my room and remember my favorite novel. As I come to the book that captivated me for an entire summer, holding my attention in the car, at home, and in the late hours of the night when one should be asleep, I am reminded of how deeply that book influenced me.

The novel I so fondly speak of is “The Year We Disappeared”, a father-daughter memoir by John and Cylin Busby. The book alternates between narrative accounts from each person’s point of view as they experience the life changing events in the late summer of 1979 in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. This real life drama follows the family as their father, John, a policeman, is shot while on duty. The suspect is thought to be a local mobster trying to derail a trial testimony, who, after the shooting, is still on the loose. After the horrific event, the Busby family must cope with the trauma and a totally new life with an injured patriarch, police guards at school and home, and the total isolation they feel. Soon it is deemed unsafe for John and his family and they are ordered to relocate, cutting all ties with everyone they know.

I was instantly drawn to this book because I can relate to Cylin Busby. Both of my parents are police officers, and I found it particularly relatable when Cylin speaks of having to tip toe around her house in the summer mornings because her father had worked midnights just a few hours before. I read her recollection of that time and I am taken back to my childhood when my siblings and I would have to be careful as to not wake up an exhausted parent. When I first read this book, I was just a few years older than Cylin was when her father was shot. It was the
first time I had read a novel that came from the point of view of someone who is like me. I remember feeling as though she had ripped a page out of my own journal and put it in her book.

As I read the chapters penned by John Busby, I cannot help but to feel as though I were talking to my own father or grandfather. The strength, toughness, stubbornness, and love for family that John is able to portray in his writing is quite moving. As he speaks of unimaginable acts against him, he still keeps his wife and young children as his main focus.

This book taught me the absolute importance of strength and family unity. As a young girl Cylin is put through a whirlwind of emotions and chaos that most people five times her age will never experience. She is dealt a difficult hand with obstacles that follow her for years, even with a new start in a different state. Despite the physical, emotional, and social turbulence that goes on in Cylin’s world, she remains strong. She pushes forward, even when it seems impossible. As I read the pages of her memoir and I related to so much of what she said, I felt that I too can have the inner strength Cylin possesses. I was also moved by the immense strength John had, both physically and psychologically he was able to move past the troubling events that rocked his world.

Also, the Busby family demonstrates how family unity can help people endure the most traumatic of experiences. After a single action causes their world to be flipped upside down, they remained united as one. Although, they were not perfect and they had their moments of difficulties, they always came back together. Without their sense of togetherness, their journey would have been much more difficult, if not impossible.

It is through the riveting words of John and Cylin Busby that I found my own inner strength and need to be one with those most important to me. Together, they opened my eyes to
what is out in the world, to the importance of truly appreciating life, and to the notion that no obstacle is too difficult to conquer.