

North Carolina just got Rich-er

**NOW
 IN OUR
 15th YEAR!**



Pleasant Valley Gardens owner Dr. Rich Bonanno will be handing over the keys to his tractors to other family members, as he has accepted a prestigious position with the University of North Carolina, effective Feb. 1. It will be business as usual at the Merrimack Street farm — minus Rich.

Photo by Steve Whipple



**Residents asked,
 Bower answers**
*DPW head responds
 to trash queries, Page 3*

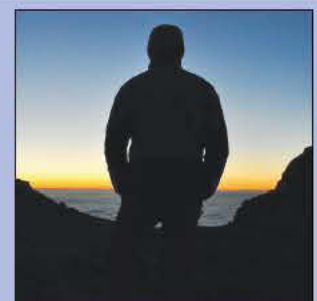


**Food Backback
 program a win-win**
*Need is filled, donors
 feel fulfilled, Page 16*

**I
 N
 S
 I
 D
 E**



**Seniors share
 their artistic side**
*Star in show at
 Methuen Village, Page 6*



**A 'Journey'
 hatched at home**
*Meet modern-day
 'SecretAgentMan,' Page 30*

Local author's SecretAgentMan hatched in Methuen

Methuen-born Richard Saunders recently penned his first novel "The Journey," which is on sale at Barnes & Noble, Andover Bookstore and other book stores under the pen name of Mykl Walsh. MethuenLife conducted a question-and-answer interview with the mysterious Saunders.

What is your connection to Methuen?

I was born here, grew up near the Glen Forest section off Elm Street and lived there until I was 19. The Stephen Barker School remained as a frequent playground throughout my youth. The Methuen ski tow and Forrest Lake were popular destinations, along with Haig's miniature golf and go-carts. I could go on and on about the pleasures I enjoyed in Methuen during those formative years.

Explain briefly what "Journey" represents.

"Journey" is a futuristic short story where astronauts descend upon a desolate planet Earth, devoid of life. They find a time capsule buried in the region that used to be southern New Hampshire. One of the items found in the time capsule is my novel, "SecretAgentMan." So the reader transitions from the futuristic short story into the more current "SecretAgentMan" saga. "Journey" is a literary device employed to introduce SecretAgentMan in a dramatic and unusual fashion. Much of my work breaks literary traditions and is unprecedented. The readers will ultimately decide if my tactics and deviations from norms and expectations are appreciated.

If you are Richard Saunders, who is Mykl Walsh whose name appears as the author?

Mykl Walsh is the pseudonym of a friend who wrote "Journey," which acts as the introduction to my novel. "Journey" is what you see on the cover of the book and "SecretAgent-



Author Richard Saunders

Man" is the novel buried beneath that slightly misleading cover. This is analogous to the fact that "SecretAgentMan" was also found buried (or hidden) in the previously mentioned time capsule. So there are two separate but related works in play and two authors involved. Mr. Walsh also wrote the Forward in "SecretAgentMan" and there he explains how "Journey" came into being.

The book begins as science fiction, then shifts to "fictionalized" history featuring the character Lawrence Ronald Howard whose life mirrors your own. Despite

the different pen names, would you say that much of the book is autobiographical?

What I've done is taken many of the ordinary facts from my ordinary life and used them as a base - a thin skeleton or framework upon which I built the novel. I see the book as a fictional biography and not really autobiographical in the traditional sense. The Howard character is an over-the-top superhero in a supernatural world and I'm just a regular guy with an unusual hobby. During my method-writing escapades, I am essentially "Impersonating" the Howard character in real life, but I view that as "acting" and therefore I am not being myself.

Like a lot of things related to this work, I've turned the previous paradigms upside-down. Due to the fact that I've spent so much time over the course of my life "impersonating" Lawrence Howard, I don't see that character as being based on me, but in a way, you could say that I am loosely based on him. I have pursued interests and obtained certain levels of expertise in so many various things simply because I wanted to write (and perform) this character with some credibility.

How do you identify with SecretAgentMan and what is his mission in life?

I use SecretAgentMan as a one-word superhero name, like Superman or Spiderman. I'm not really sure how I identify with him, per se. One piece of advice that authors often hear is to "write what you know". So despite the fact that I liberally use some of the ordinary facts of my own life and experiences to inform the character and be able to write from a credible perspective, in the final analysis the gap

See AUTHOR, Page 31

FIRESIDE RESTAURANT & PUB
Traditional Homemade American Cuisine

171 PELHAM STREET
METHUEN, MA
(across from Rte. 93, Pelham Street exit)
978-683-2945
www.firesidemethuen.com

Family owned and operated for 60 years



FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY
February 12, 13, 14

At the **FIRESIDE**
we are spreading the LOVE
all weekend long with
VALENTINE SPECIALS!



Free Carnation for the Ladies


Shrimp Caesar Salad




Chicken Saltimbocca

Mon - Tues - 11 am - 9 pm - Wed - Sat - 11 am - 10 pm - Sun - Noon - 9 pm
"Eventually everyone eats at the Fireside"

Puzzled by your insurance?





Home


Auto

Umbrella

Insurance Agency, Inc.
Insuring our friends and neighbors since 1979

978.685.2549 : Main Office

877.233.2275 : Toll Free



Michaudinsurance.com

Author, continued from 30

between the fictional Howard and I is so vast that I don't see much of myself in him. But that's the point of having superheroes, I think—they have extraordinary powers well beyond the rest of us mere mortals. We create them to entertain us and help us hold onto that childhood fantasy that maybe they are out there somewhere and could come to our rescue in times of great need. At the time I first created this fictional superhero as a nine year old, I was the frequent target of neighborhood and schoolyard bullies and I suppose that I possibly subconsciously wanted someone like him to rescue me from that plight. SecretAgentMan's mission in life, "his calling" as he sees it, is to "make the world a better place". He finds out later that God has plans for him that are far beyond anything he believes is within his capabilities or is even possible.

Ron has brushes with fictionalized characters representing former Massachusetts Gov. Bill Weld, the "Da Vinci Code" author Dan Brown and the man in charge of the Columbine Memorial. Did these exchanges all occur in real life?

Because I bill myself as the next "Great Impostor", I can't do that AND claim to have any credibility. I will spend no time trying to convince anyone of what is real and what is fiction in my writing. So my response is to challenge investigative reporters, Internet sleuths and any reader who wishes to take up the challenge, to find out for yourself. If

you can corroborate anything in the book, that's fine - if you can't, then I recommend you treat it as fiction and don't believe it unless someone proves it to be true. A good place to start the investigation is with this file from my website. <http://www.secretagentman.org/PR.pdf>

The final chapters are accounts of Ron's 2007 legal action against Donald Trump and the producers of "The Apprentice" which was ultimately settled out of court. Can you summarize what led to this high-profile showdown with the man who may be our next president?

As a "method-writer", I'm constantly on the lookout for opportunities to create drama in real-life by engaging with interesting people in unusual scenarios that I orchestrate and attempt to control. I saw that Mr. Trump and Mr. Burnett had potentially placed themselves in a highly vulnerable legal position and I attempted to "help them out" with it. I also saw this as an opportunity to check off "Attorney" on my long list of professions that I aspire to engage in as an "Impostor".

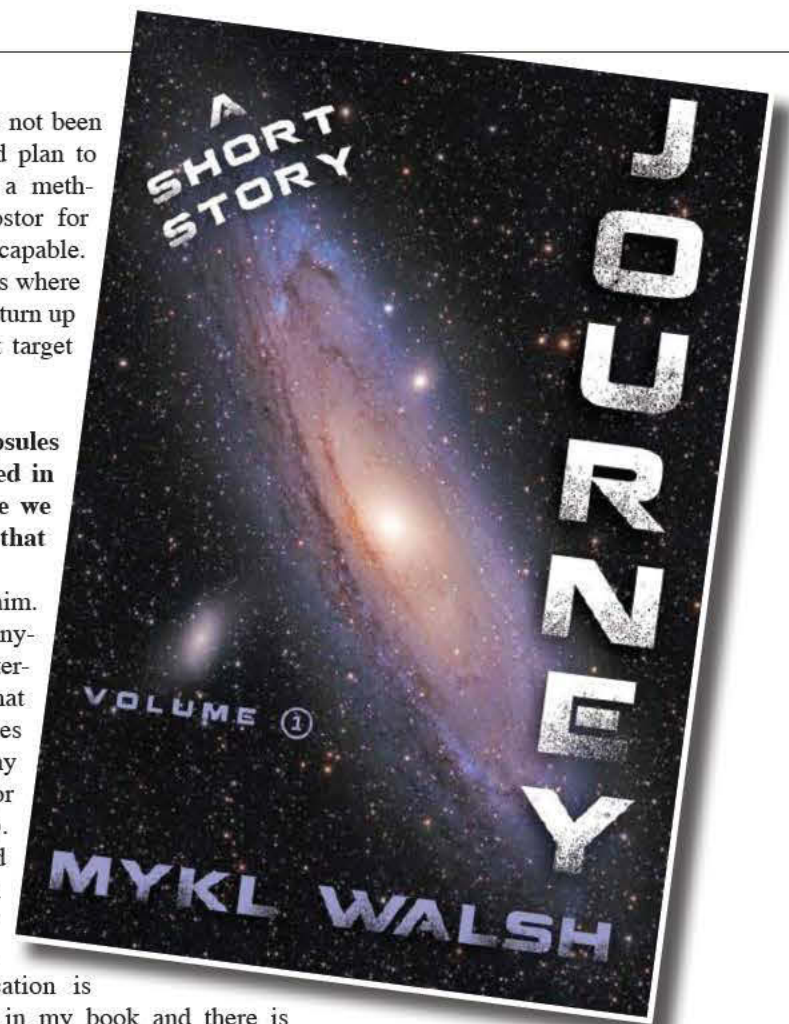
If "Journey" is to be the first of a series of SecretAgentMan novels, would that mean that Ron would need to continuously engage in missions involving high-profile people?

Yes, I have already engaged in many other "method-written" activities with interesting

people that have not been revealed yet and plan to continue to be a method-writing impostor for as long as I am capable. One never knows where or when I might turn up or who my next target could be.

Those time capsules that are featured in "Journey" - are we to understand that they are real?

That is my claim. Again, I urge anyone who is interested to figure that out for themselves and not take my word for it (or anything else). They are buried on public land in southern New Hampshire. This secret location is hidden in code in my book and there is a growing prize fund available for anyone who finds them and surrenders them. Details are available at <http://www.anexpub.com/contest.html>. Readers can engage with me on Facebook (RichFSaunders) and Twitter (RFSaunders).



"Journey" is on sale at Barnes & Noble and the Andover Book Store, and can also be purchased via the website secretagentman.org.

Why GLFHC?

- One of the largest and oldest primary care practices in the Merrimack Valley.
- Over 100 primary care physicians and health professionals, trained in treating patients from pre-natal to geriatric care.
- In house, full-service pharmacies
- 6 convenient locations in Lawrence and Methuen
- A Maternal/Child health program - comprised of family physicians providing maternity and advanced obstetric services.
- Lawrence Family Medicine Residency - training the physicians of tomorrow.



To find out more about why GLFHC should be your healthcare provider, visit us online at glfhc.org or call (978) 686-0090.

