

Notes on a fine writer

Notes from Narberth

By Rosemary McDonough MainLine Times April 9, 2008

Some people leave busy careers and become even busier in retirement. Wynnewood's Bill Frankl, a retired cardiologist, is one of these people. Eight years after leaving the practice of medicine, he's published five works of fiction - three since January. A Philadelphia native, Dr. Frankl's highly distinguished career spanned four decades. Educated at Temple and the University of Pennsylvania, he rose to become chief of cardiology at MCP, director of the cardiac research program at Jefferson, and chief of cardiology and chairman of the department of medicine at Hahnemann, where he was honored with the Lindback Distinguished Teaching Award. His illustrious career helped him develop both invaluable medical expertise and a critical insider's view on the rapidly changing political climate of the medical profession.

Dr. Frankl has published widely: He's co-authored four textbooks, written over 150 scientific articles, and, while president of the Philadelphia County Medical Society, was a monthly columnist. Yet despite his substantial success in academic writing, another muse called out to him - one who urged him to write fiction.

That muse finally got her way when Dr. Frankl retired at age 72. "I wasn't much for golf," he admits, so he enrolled instead in creative writing courses at Penn, Villanova, and Main Line School Night, attended the annual Penn Writers Conference, and joined a writing group or two, including the Radnor Writers Group. And he obeyed the cardinal rule of fiction: Write What You Know.

One look at his latest novel, *The Merger*, and his expertise jumps off the page. Brimming with fast-paced dialogue and realistic characters, *The Merger* tells a story both contemporary and frightening. Part medical thriller, part cautionary tale, it's a riveting view of how patient care and ethics are sacrificed when the powers that be make decisions based only on the bottom line.

But Bill Frankl writes not just about the world he knows, but about the world that is unknowable. His other fine books, *The Cyber Patient*, a novella, and

Nightmare Worlds, a short story collection, are works of science fiction that are both startling and intelligent. *The Cyber Patient*, which I read in one sitting, staying up far past my bedtime, is the tale of a terrorist who bankrolls jihadists from the inviolable safety of a parallel universe. *The Nightmare Worlds* title story explores what it means to be human in a world where mutants, clones and holograms slowly replace human beings in the tasks of everyday life.

Other fine stories in the Nightmare Worlds collection include "The Horror Below," reminiscent of the works of Edgar Allan Poe; "The Deal," which prescribes an eerie cure for writer's block; and "Beams and Cracks," a deeply moving vignette of an elderly woman in a nursing home. Most riveting of all is "Identity Nexus," a masterful tale that gives a new twist to identity theft and takes this crime to an unexpectedly malevolent level.

Bill Frankl is a man of great accomplishment and greater modesty. His keen intelligence shines on every page.

Interested in more? You can learn about all Bill Frankl's books, (published locally by Infinity Publishing) at his Web site: www.booksbyfrankl.com.

But remember: Of he keeps you awake at night, don't say I didn't warn you.