

STARRING IN LENIGH

Local lawyer writes an action packed novel

Author is a fifth generation native of Fort Myers

By TOM WASON
Editor

A Fort Myers lawyer, who grew up in eastern Lee County, has written his first novel.

John D. Mills', a graduate of Riverdale High School, book is Reasonable and Necessary, a fast-paced and lively novel that touches a lot of hot button issues without being preachy.

Mills is a fifth generation native of Fort Myers, who while growing up in Olga, spent weekends on Pine Island fishing.

He graduated from Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, with a degree in finance. He came home for a brief stint in a Fort Myers bank. He then returned to Mercer, graduating from its law school in 1989.

Mills started his legal career as a prosecutor in the office of 20th Judicial Circuit State Attorney Joseph D'Alessandro. In 1990, he went into private practice specializing in criminal defense and personal injury law.

It took a year to write the book, and it was a lot harder than he thought, Mills said.

Early on, he was told no book is written. It is rewritten. Nearly half of the year he devoted to it, was spent in rewrite.

"People told me to write about what I know. I know about criminals, crooked insurance companies, fishing and bad

relationships. So that's what I wrote about," he said.

The story is about Dr. Chad Elsworth, an Atlanta internist, who is sued by lawyer Karen Senard for malpractice because a patient dies after he fails to find a kidney tumor. The reason the diagnosis was botched is because the patient's cost-cutting HMO refused to approve a \$1,500 MRI scan.

Dr. Elsworth has other problems as well.

He let his medical malpractice insurance lapse in order to buy his girlfriend a red Porsche. His wife finds out about his affairs and sues for divorce.

Meanwhile, Elsworth hires Fast Eddie, an Atlanta lawyer with ethical standards below the norm. Eddie in turn sues the HMO claiming corrupt practices under the Georgia RICO statute.

Because Elsworth has no insurance, he agrees through his lawyer to testify on behalf of the family of his deceased patient implicating the HMO.

This prospect puts the top two insurance executives at the HMO into a tizzy. Negotiations are underway with a large insurance company to buy them. They fear that when Fast Eddie brings the lawsuit, and its potential for millions in damages to



John D. Mills

File photo

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the attention of the newspapers, the investors will be scared away.

One of the insurance executives has Mafia connections, and they decide to kill Elsworth to keep him from testifying. The deadly deed is accomplished while the doctor is on a brief fishing vacation at Cabbage Key in Lee County. His boat is blown from the water by a Miami-based assassin.

Afterwards, the lovely dark

haired lawyer, Karen Senard, comes to Lee County and teams up with a local detective to investigate the murder.

About half of the book is set in Atlanta and the other half on Cabbage Key and the waters around Boca Grande.

Mills, in telling this story, makes a few colorful observations. Here's a few excerpts:

"LAMPCO will go ballistic because they don't want their claims procedures exposed. Once Karen Senard realizes that you have no malpractice insurance, she will want to find a deep pocket. If she gets a \$15 million judgment against you and you have no insurance, she knows you'll file bankruptcy, and she won't get nothing. She will go after them for not approving the MRI tests, and you will testify for her," Fast Eddie explained.

"There are also hidden evils of HMOs that most people didn't realize. The insurance industry had discovered how to get doctors to disagree with other doctors. Money talks. Insurance companies would hire doctors as consultants with six figure fees. These company doctors would then make up arbitrary rules denying proper care that would save money for the company."

"Ginger Smith was a 24-year-old R.N. on a mission to marry a doctor. By the time of her 16th birthday, Ginger knew God had blessed her with a rare gift: her body. She was one of the few girls that was not intimidated by a Barbie doll's figure during adolescence."

"Fort Myers, the county seat and largest city in Lee County, has a unique history because it was a Union fort during the Civil War. The Confederacy mostly ignored Southern Florida during the Civil War. The Union soldiers operated Fort Myers, located on the Caloosahatchee River, to help facilitate cattle trade to the northern states. In the 1800s, Fort Myers was part of Monroe County, which covered most of South Florida. Because of a local dispute, Fort Myers successfully petitioned the Legislature in 1887 to make the Fort Myers area into a new county. The proud southerners in Fort Myers tried to atone for their town's dubious history by naming the new county after Confederate General Robert E. Lee."

"North Fort Myers seemed to be a magnet for every fast food restaurant and chain motel in the nation."

The book was published by 1st Books, of Bloomington, Indiana. It is available at local books stores or on line at, <http://www.1stbooks.com>