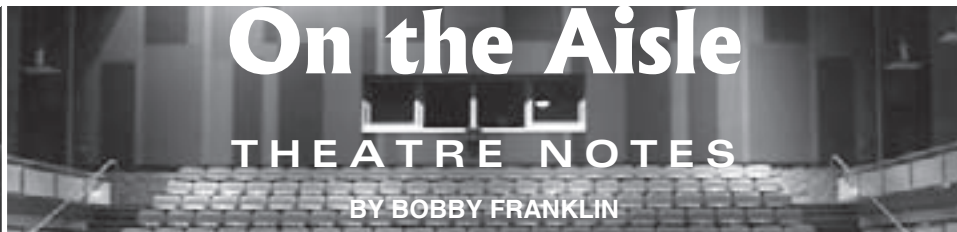




Mrs. Murphy . . . As I See It

Big news! Coronavirus is alleged to be manmade! The White House is investing the allegations ... We've learned that between 2014-2019, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) awarded a portion of \$3.7 million to EcoHealth Alliance, a global environmental health nonprofit organization, helped fund research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China, now believed to have created the coronavirus pandemic. Yes, our taxpayer money went to aid the creation of the coronavirus. According to allegations Doctor Anthony Fauci maneuvered millions of our tax money to China. Fauci, the nation's top infectious expert, again dismissed the idea that a lab in Wuhan was the original source of the virus, and insists the virus originated in an animal and then transmitted to humans. However, he maintained over the years that a pandemic would be coming. The truth is the experimenting for viruses in the Wuhan lab got out of hand. According to sources, scientists in Wuhan were injecting bats with the virus at the Bio-weapons Lab when horseshoe bats got loose, and was never reported. One wonders if this was done intentional to halt our economy. After an investigation President Trump pulled money from the World Health Organization. His next move should be to fire Fauci!!! Wonder why the media hasn't reported this news???? ... The good weather is here, and people will be out in full swing letting down their guard! Continue to be aware of the dangers the virus can bring. Just be mindful and take precautions ... Mother's Day has come and gone without celebration, this quarantine has gone this far!!! People need to let their immune systems kick in ... Our dear Governor Charlie Baker announced he will lift the ban May 18th. Other states sick of restrictions have already opened ... The Mayor of Somerville, Joe Curtatone announced there will be a \$300 fine for anyone caught not wearing a mask. It's surprising to learn the ultra, ultra liberal Mayor of Somerville made this

decision because he was the one that declared his city to be a "Sanctuary City." One can assume Curtatone made this decision because he's aware many of Somerville's illegal population have not been vaccinated making them susceptible to the virus, and passing it on!!! Also the Mayor of Lowell imposed a \$300 fine, another city with mucho illegal people ... Let's revue welfare and food stamp abuse. There are so many people on Welfare allowing their debit cards to be used for anything and everything of pleasure other than what the card is meant to be used. Selling food stamps is popular among recipients of Welfare. What is the taxpayer to do???? Especially when they have to stand by and witness the abuse ... There is plenty of free food donated by different organizations for the needy, elderly, or people stricken with the virus, but like anything else, there are those who don't need the help, but are there in line with their car to cash in on the freebies ... Kudos to The Salvation Army who are always there to help people. Besides the Red Cross, The Salvation Army is one of the best organizations this country has today ... Most complaints from consumers during the pandemic! Not being able to reach vendors during this pandemic? ... Channel 7 investigative reporter reported recently that a lot of organic produce sold at Whole Foods is from China. This brings consumers to realize that we need to read labels and find out where our products are coming from ... Joe Biden's health advisor Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel stated that he doesn't anticipate life fully returning to normal for another 18 months, based on guidance from health professionals in the Trump administration. The kind of normal where we go traveling, we go to restaurants, we go to concerts, we go to religious services, we go on cruises, until we have a vaccine that protects everyone. That's 18 months, it's not going to be sooner," Emanuel told ABC News Chief White House Correspondent Jonathan Karl and Political Director Rick Klein ... *Till next time. Stay Healthy.*



An Interview with Author Len Abram

Hi Len, thank you for speaking with us at *The Boston Post-Gazette*.

Post-Gazette: You have written three novels — *The Medallion*, *Debris*, and your latest, *Empty Doorways*. While *Debris* is a historical novel, how would you describe *The Medallion* and *Empty Doorways*? Is *Empty Doorways* a sequel to *The Medallion*?

Len Abram: Thanks for this opportunity. *Debris*, *A Novel of Love, War and the Lusitania*, required research: from the politics and strategies that shaped World War I, to the ship designs that made the *Lusitania* so fast, to the German submarine U-20 that sunk the ship, killing 1200 passengers and crew. I learned that spies on the New York docks targeted the ship for attack. I fictionalized who those spies were, how they got there, and what happened to them.

The Medallion and its sequel *Empty Doorways* are contemporary detective stories. Like most people, I get my information from reading newspapers or watching TV news about crimes in metropolitan Boston. I did take several courses in gun use and gun safety, how to operate and fire the Glock my detectives carry. A .357 pistol plays a role in *Empty Doorways*. The bullet can go through an engine block. I learned to load and fire one.

Post-Gazette: Is Boston important in your stories because you live in the area and are familiar with it or is there something special about Boston that adds to the flavor of your books?

Len Abram: The cabbie Sasha Denisov gets many of his fares at South Station, one of two major Boston transportation centers. Not far from the station is the Boston Police headquarters at Government Center, where Detectives Schwartz and Di Natale work.

As realtors say, Location, location, location. Like lives, stories have a context. Boston appears in all three books. Even the historical novel *Debris* focuses on a distinguished Boston family of the early 1900s. The Lindseys built the chapel on Newbury Street in memory of their daughter Leslie and her husband Stewart, drowned when the ship sank. To this day, weddings are performed in the chapel.

The Medallion and *Empty Doorways* are set in today's Boston, its neighborhoods, such as Mattapan, and its surrounding cities, such as Cambridge. The two books mention shared events, but can be read in or out of sequence. Major and minor characters reflect the ethnic and cultural varieties that make up the communities of the city — and add vitality and richness to life here.

From the Boston Common, when we look up Beacon Hill at



the State House, we might see its golden dome as our highest ideals we climb to reach. If beyond our grasp, we continue to try.

Post-Gazette: Tell us a little about the characters that are common to both books. How did you come up with the names for them? Their personas?

Len Abram: My three major characters are taxi driver Sasha Denisov and Detectives Ben Schwartz and Al Di Natale of Boston PD Homicide.

Immigrant Sasha Denisov grew up in the Ukraine, as did my parents and cousins. They served in the Russian army like Sasha, but the cabbie was in the Special Forces Spetsnaz, after which he names his cab company. Sasha's name I drew from Ivan Denisovich, the everyman character in Solzhenitsyn's novel of the Gulag, the Soviet Union's concentration camps. Like so many, Sasha fled his native land for a better life.

Ben Schwartz, an outstanding detective, is in his 50s, a couple of decades older than his partner Al Di Natale. Originally from New York, Schwartz is Jewish, not observant like his wife Evie, but each year he goes to a synagogue to pray for a murder victim, one of his cold cases, which he is determined to close in *The Medallion*.

Schwartz's partner Al Di Natale, with the lyrical Italian name, is a former Catholic altar boy from Woburn. Di Natale is a decorated Army combat veteran, who distinguished himself as a patrolman to become a young detective. Di Natale is very handsome, an asset and a curse. His vanity may ruin his marriage.

In *Empty Doorways*, Schwartz and he join the rest of Boston searching for a missing 12-year-old boy from Mattapan.

Post-Gazette: Why this topic, these characters?

Len Abram: Many years ago, I taught eighth grade in an inner-city Boston school. I told one disruptive boy to stay after school as punishment. He couldn't. He had to meet his parole officer. On parents' night, the mother of one of my black students, tall like the missing boy in *Empty Doorways*, said to me, "Mr. Abram, please learn my boy," By that she meant teach and maybe lead or influence her son. I think of all those parents and grandparents, who want the best outcome for their children — and what they are up against

in some of our neighborhoods. I think I speak for them in my writing.

Post-Gazette: Tell us a little about your journey to becoming a novelist.

Len Abram: I love reading stories and I learned that I love telling stories too. I have a PhD in literature and taught for seven years, four of them in the Far East for the U.S. Armed Forces education program. I ended up as a tech writer in computer networks when there were no teaching jobs.

I have always written essays and book reviews, along with my technical writing. One day I left work, which was next to South Station, and I noticed the cabs lined up for fares. I had an idea about a taxi cab driver, an immigrant from the Ukraine, who risks his life while pursuing the American Dream. I wrote a paragraph, and showed it to a friend. "Why don't you do something with this?" he asked. That started me writing novels.

Post-Gazette: Writing is a tough job that takes a lot of discipline. How do you structure your creative time?

Len Abram: I joked to another writer when my third book was published: the victory of tenacity over talent. Some truth in that. One of the characters in *Empty Doorways* is given a saying or motto for his recovery from a severe injury: Never Quit.

I've had many setbacks and many rejections about my writing. I don't know how much talent I have. Someone has said that talent is everywhere. Whatever success is, it takes more than talent.

When I am writing a novel, I work five days a week, three to four hours my limit. Right now, I am in between novels, and just finished a book review. That sharpens my skills while I am thinking of my next project.

Post-Gazette: Will there be another or will you move to another topic?

Len Abram: Whether these two detective books begin a series — we'll have to wait for the next novel on that score. But I am planning one.

Post-Gazette: This seems like something that could work quite well as a TV series. Any plans to adapt it into a screenplay?

Len Abram: An editor and friend is a professional screenwriter. We are talking about a series based upon the cases of Detectives Schwartz and Di Natale.

Post-Gazette: In closing, why will people enjoy reading your *Empty Doorways*?

Len Abram: One of the characters in the novel says that if we cannot protect our kids, none of us is safe. If we cannot protect Gabriel Clay in Mattapan, how safe is any of us anywhere?

The cabbie, the teachers, the parents and grandparents, the clergy, and of course the police, like Schwartz and Di Natale, are fighting to save the kids, in effect, our future. That's worth writing about, and maybe reading.

Thank you, Len Abram.

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