

# When Spies Come Calling

LONG-TIME BARRINGTON RESIDENT THOMAS ERICKSON now calls Marco Island, Fla., home, but he returned to his Barrington roots in a literary sense with “Operation Snowshoe”, an international spy thriller that weaves through Barrington’s gentle horse country before launching into a rousing continental romp. He insists it’s a less jarring departure from his career as a financier in Chicago than you might think. Erickson’s 400-page novel mixes international espionage, murder, organized crime and a suspected cover-up. Quintessential Barrington talked with Erickson about his novel.

**QUINTESSENTIAL BARRINGTON:**

**Offer all the other first-time novelists your best advice on what you would have done differently had you known the task.**

**Thomas Erickson:** The best thing I did without even knowing it was quitting my day job and not having to rely on it for a living. Writing, at least for me, is an arduous task but after spending all of my time doing it, I thank God for getting involved with it. Because this was such a long process for me, I have come to really love it. I can’t imagine there is anything better to do.

**QB: So how did you approach writing from the female point of view?**

**TE:** Patricia Shaver is the one character who faces dilemmas from time to time that also have been part of what I’m about, too. It’s about her character, which was the most fun creating. But from time to time, reading her in the book, I can hear myself in a lot of it. She has a political and ideological bent that’s most aligned with me. But it was never a conscious thing. As a matter of fact, I was trying to create characters that showed the mix of good and bad. Like the Mafia don and his lieutenant. You like them, but then all of sudden they kill people.

**QB: So is “Operation Snowshoe” just the beginning of your writing career? Is Patricia Shaver going to be a recurring “franchise character”, like Bourne or Jack Ryan?**

**TE:** First, I made her an investigative reporter, so maybe she could get away with actions that some people might think are more “male.” But I’m not sure there is a difference in male and female thinking. As for a franchise, I’ve actually been writ-

ing these characters for 15 years and “Operation Snowshoe” is the second of three books with the same characters. They span the century. The three books are actually finished, but whether they all get published probably depends on whether this one is a success. This is a very long process.

**QB: It seems a very big leap to write three complex novels. Where did the basic idea originate?**

**TE:** Well, Patricia is the heroine in all three, but many of the characters get killed off so there have to be flashbacks to the turn of the century. I’ve always been interested in the Middle East and particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict, which of course, has been going on for a very long time. So I began going to the Barrington library and did a lot of research.

**QB: You’re retired and enjoying it, so what drew you to writing?**

**TE:** My background is finance and, despite what some people may say, money in and of itself is not all that terribly interesting. Years ago my wife and I happened to meet a television scriptwriter while we were on vacation in Hawaii and I had the opportunity to read one of his made-for-TV movie scripts. It really didn’t look all that difficult and I got to thinking, “I could do this!” So I did. But then my friend told me that my TV idea really sounded more like the outline for a book than a movie.

**QB: Barrington plays a role as a central location. Was it necessary or just a really fun idea?**

**TE:** The Honey Lake “spy house” in Barrington is the one we lived in for 30 years. I have used the



Operation Snowshoe author Thomas Erickson.

names of several people I know here, with their permission of course, that I’m sure people will recognize. Whenever I watched TV, I was most interested in characters that were set in places you know about.

**QB: Without spoiling the ending, tell us what the central dramatic focus of the plot is.**

**TE:** The scenes in all three books keep coming back to a recurring theme. And that is, do the ends justify the means? But at the end, the answer to the question of ends and means may not be possible. I don’t know the answer.

“Operation Snowshoe” was released December 1. It is published by Durban House Press, and is available online from Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Borders. U