

SWAPPING SCALPELS FOR PENS



*Former Bellevue
surgeon writes
chilling medical thrillers*

BY DANA NEUTS

What do a cardiac surgeon and an author have in common? A meticulous attention to detail, the ability to focus for long periods of time and Richard Van Anderson of Bellevue.

Former cardiac surgeon Van Anderson, 54, of Bellevue recently released his first book, *The Organ Takers*, a novel of surgical suspense. *The Organ Takers* is the first in a trilogy of medical thrillers featuring Dr. David McBride, a former surgical resident, who is blackmailed into harvesting organs from unwilling victims in order to protect his pregnant wife.

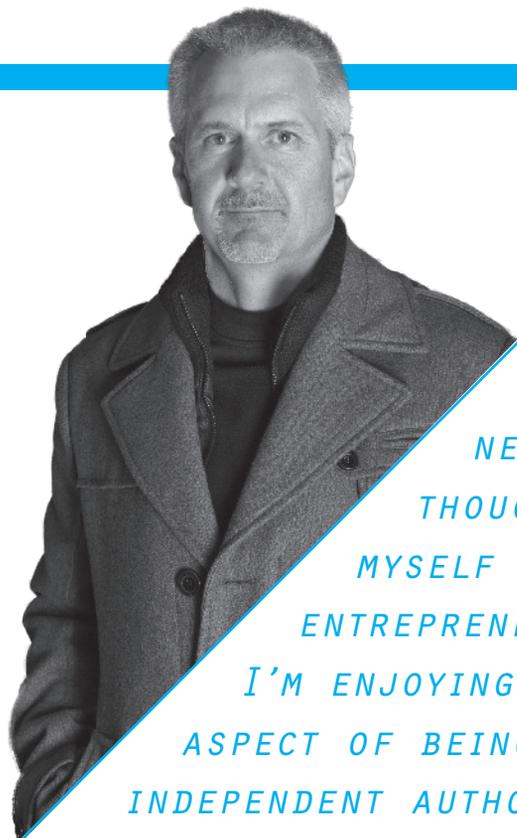
So how exactly does a talented, highly skilled cardiac surgeon become an author? Van Anderson's desire to write began with an urban legend in the early 1990s, when the author was a general surgery resident. As the Internet tale goes, a man in a Las Vegas casino would drink too much and return to his room with a seductive woman. He'd wake up the next morning in a bathtub full of ice, with a note scrawled in lipstick

across his chest advising him to call 9-1-1 because one of his kidneys had been stolen. Though the myth was ridiculous and debunked by several police departments, it fascinated Van Anderson and stuck with him.

"I wanted to bring the urban legend to life," Van Anderson says.

Though he enjoyed a successful surgical career that eventually led him to Washington, Van Anderson developed a desire to write creatively. To fuel that desire, he began taking online writing courses and attending night classes at the University of Washington. During one of the classes, he discovered that one of his favorite authors, Dennis Lehane of *Mystic River* fame, was one of the founders of the Master of Fine Arts program at Pine Manor College in Boston, and Van Anderson yearned to learn from one of the best crime writers of our time.

Because of the program's structure, Van Anderson was able to spend 10 days at the beginning of each >>



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—RICHARD VAN ANDERSON



semester in Boston studying, while keeping his day job and taking writing classes in his off hours. Lehane was among Van Anderson’s mentors, helping him with the four Ds — depth of story, depth of character, depth of insight and depth of language — to hone his novel.

“Two years later I had a master’s degree in creative writing, a finished manuscript, a number of solid ideas for follow-up novels, and the confidence to eventually leave my day job to build a career as a fiction writer,” Van Anderson says.

In 2004, Van Anderson retired to become a full-time writer. Following a daily visit to the gym, Van Anderson is in his home office by 9:30 or 10 each day, working until 5 or 5:30. When his boys, now 10 and 8, were younger or home from school, he had a nanny to help so he could concentrate on his work. Van Anderson’s wife, an oral surgeon, and the boys understood that while dad was home, he was working.

Van Anderson quickly learned that becoming an author is much more than just writing. In addition to making time to research and write, Van Anderson has had to learn the business end of things, including how the

publishing industry works and how to market his book and build a fan base.

“I never thought of myself as an entrepreneur. I’m enjoying that aspect of being an independent author,” Van Anderson says. “I am bringing my left and right brain together, and I am enjoying sharing that part of my life.”

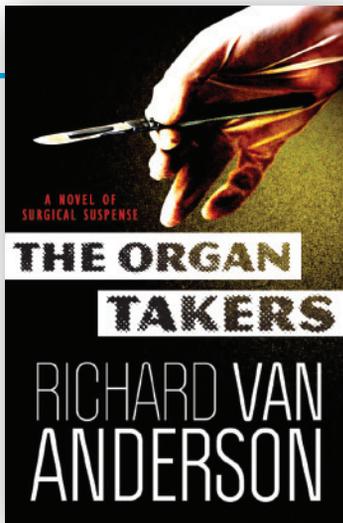
Though Van Anderson has retired from being a surgeon, some of his skills transferred to his writing career. For example, as a surgeon, he was required to have a meticulous attention to detail and focus for long periods of time, with surgery often taking four to six hours.

The key difference with surgery is that Van Anderson had control over his destiny if he didn’t do anything wrong. If he worked hard, he was rewarded. As a writer, however, the gatekeepers — publishers and fans — have all the control. Anderson could be an exceptional writer, but if his books don’t get into the hands of potential fans, he won’t be successful.

That hasn’t deterred Van Anderson, though. He loves his work and is already working on *The Organ Growers*, the second book in the Dr. McBride trilogy. He hopes to have the book completed and on sale by the end of July.

THE ORGAN TAKERS

Set in New York City, *The Organ Takers* is the first medical thriller in a trilogy featuring Dr. David McBride, a former surgical resident, who lost his residency for failing to disclose the unethical behavior of his mentor, Dr. Andrew Turnbull, a transplant surgeon and biomedical researcher. Finally getting a second chance to prove his capability and above-board ethics, McBride is offered a surgical residency, only to have it jeopardized when Turnbull blackmails McBride into performing illegal transplant operations. Though *The Organ Takers* is not for the squeamish, it will delight readers who enjoy a good thriller with believable characters and enough plot twists and turns to keep them fascinated from the first page to the last. 



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To learn more about Van Anderson, watch the book trailer, or purchase his book, visit rvananderson.com.