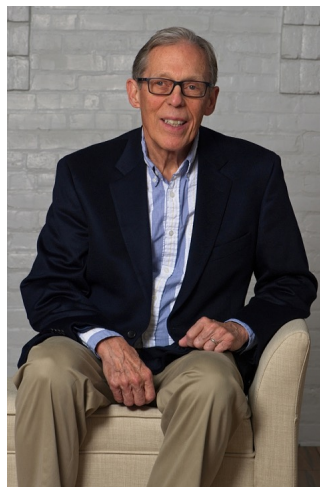


BY CHIP JONES

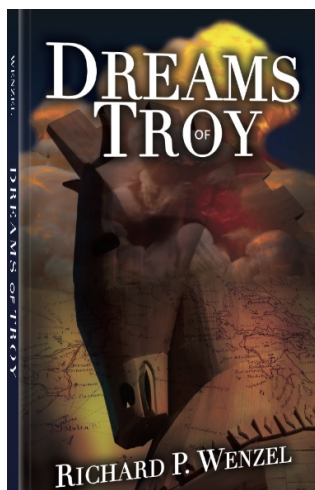


Longtime RAM member Dr. Richard P. Wenzel recently shared excerpts from his new novel, “Dreams of Troy.” This book follows “Stalking Microbes,” a nonfiction exploration of the interaction of people and microbes, and “Labyrinth of Terror,” his first novel which serves as a prequel to “Dreams of Troy.”

Wenzel is a VCU professor emeritus and former chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine, where he still teaches. During his tenure as chairman, he edited “Between Rounds,” an annual volume of poetry, short stories and photography. An internationally recognized expert in infectious diseases and epidemiology, he has been editor-at-large of *The New England Journal of Medicine* since 2001.

Wenzel has a history of interacting with the arts, beginning with his performance of an Argentine tango in Richmond’s first “Dancing With the Stars” fundraising event. He then appeared at Richmond CenterStage in two TheatreVCU productions, first as Vince Fontaine in “Grease” and then as Andrew Makepeace Ladd III in “Love Letters.”

In his unrelenting tale, “Dreams of Troy,” Wenzel explores the epic themes of loyalty and passion, deception and vendettas, truth and secrecy.



hover text

An explosion at the main railway station in Barcelona rattles the city, the first strike in a complex and increasingly devastating terror plot. When scores of patients with no physical trauma require hospitalization, MI-5 agent Elizabeth Foster turns to trusted colleagues Jake Evans, a Stanford University epidemiologist, and Christopher Rose, an Oxford microbiologist and information technology expert, to reveal the true nature of the threat: cyber terror. The team of experts chases clues and conspirators through Barcelona’s beaches and back alleys.

Unique malware targets medical devices such as pacemakers and insulin pumps, radiology imaging machines and key hospital programs supporting laboratories, operating rooms, pharmacies and other medical functions. A romantic entanglement between the epidemiologist and MI-5 agent complicates the investigation and immediately threatens the lives of their accompanying spouses.

Greek mythology and culture, Middle East politics and current separatist movements in Spain and France figure prominently in Wenzel’s gripping tale of international terror.

The villains are two brilliant women who have dark secrets and are bent on creating a new world order. They are complicated characters with a passion for Greek poetry mythology, and each other. In their nefarious quest they are aided by international hackers and local criminals. The plot races at a frenetic pace, culminating at the Barcelona airport where visiting foreign dignitaries, villains, law enforcement personnel and innocent travelers converge in a harrowing conclusion.

And then there is the restaurant scene in which the aging fathers of the villains reflect briefly on their own legacy of terror:

*“In my 9th decade now, Panos, each day is a treasure. One never knows when the sun will cease to offer*

*its light on life's path. I like to think that my efforts have made a difference, that the oppressed have been offered some hope at times.*

*"I don't believe in the unexamined life. I recognize that important trade-offs were made in my time, especially those affecting my family." A slight rasp took command of his voice, and Amer swallowed a sip of the aperitif before continuing.*

*"I like to think that I have been witness to reality, responding nobly, not seeing merely the shadows of life on the wall of a cave, Panos."*

In another scene, two cyber anti-terror security experts, known colloquially as Batman and Robin, explore the horrifying outcomes of a successful dismantling of the healthcare system:

*Clasping his fingers behind his head and leaning back in his chair, Batman mused, "Imagine no first responders, no police, no firemen, no ambulances, no exchange of medical information including results of X-rays, heart monitoring in ICUs, oxygen delivery systems. Then, no radiology to treat cancer, no pharmacy checks on drugs or drug interactions. No ability to stop dangerous heart rhythms with defibrillators. It could get serious fast...."*

*"Imagine the wrong dose of a drug, the wrong drug, an erroneous and lethal radiation dose for a tumor, a spuriously high reading on oxygenation and failure to recognize that more is needed."*

## **High praise**

Eric Perakslis, healthcare cybersecurity expert, senior vice president and head, Takeda Data Source Institute, says "Beyond the current headlines of ransomware disabling hospital systems, deeper threats exist that have the potential to disable, hijack or interrupt critical medical delivery systems. In "Dreams of Troy," Richard Wenzel probes into the real cyber-attack surface of medicine, while weaving an exciting and engaging page turner."

Dean King, author of "Skeletons on the Zahara" and "The Feud: The Hatfields and McCoys: The True Story," says "Richard Wenzel has done it again. In "Dreams of Troy," his characters MI-5 agent Elizabeth Foster and American infectious diseases expert Jake Evans face another ingenious international terrorist plot. Who knew that computer malware introduced into the world's medical systems could topple governments? Dr. Wenzel did, and his well-crafted thriller—this time unfolding in Spain with implications across the Mediterranean—keeps you riveted at every plot twist."

*Wenzel's works are available in print and for e-readers on Amazon.*

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