

Your Neighbor

Tales of two cities

Somers author balances transatlantic lifestyle while publishing first novel

BY GABRIELLE BILIK
STAFF WRITER

After living in the United States for 28 years, Lars Bolin, international banker-turned-consultant/life coach, has returned to his native country of Sweden where he will publish his first suspense novel, "A Mindful Death."

He put writing on the back burner to pursue his career in banking after he graduated high school, despite the positive feedback he received from his teachers.

"I enjoyed writing," he said. "But you know how life always comes in between everything else."

Set in Cold Spring, Bolin's story begins when Harry Anderson, a photojournalist, stumbles upon a photograph of an Italian family circa 1945. His curiosity is piqued and, after doing some research, he discovers the family moved from Italy to France under mysterious circumstances during WWII. The story unfolds into an international suspense thriller that spans continents and generations.

Less concerned with the book's reception and revenue, he said he relishes the fact that there is even a book for others to read.

"Of course it would be very nice if people read it and if they like it," he said.

Bolin moved to the United States in 1987, when he was transferred from Sweden to New York for work. At the time, he worked for SEB, a Scandinavian bank. He met his wife in New York City and by 1995 they had settled in Yorktown.

Though content with the area and delighted by his children, Lylia and Lynnea, by 2001, Bolin needed a career change. To grow within the company, Bolin would



PHOTO COURTESY OF LARS BOLIN

Lars Bolin

be required to work at company headquarters in Sweden. He neither wanted to stall his career nor uproot his family, so he decided to leave the company.

It was then that he began consulting; however, he ultimately decided that he wanted to be home raising his daughters. Being "Mr. Mom" is something, he said, he feels lucky that his family could afford to do.

In 2012, Bolin and his wife divorced. It was then that he began consulting again. He also picked

up shifts at Macy's, working as a salesperson.

"That was kind of very rewarding," He said. "At the time I kind of half-jokingly called it paid therapy because when you go through a personal challenge, [it is] nice to kind of be with other people."

Though he considers himself a city person at heart, he said he loves towns such as Katonah, where he moved after he divorced. He particularly loves Cold Spring, which inspired

much of his novel.

He added that although he wrote his characters into places that actually exist, they are not reminiscent of the real people that live and work there.

His fictional characters did in some ways take on a life of their own though when, despite his best efforts to outline his book in detail prior to writing it, characters strayed from the plans. Bolin learned to step back and allow the characters to determine the path they would take along the way to his predetermined ending.

"The characters decide where you're going to go," Bolin said. "You live with your characters, you are there with them and they do guide you."

Filled with New York City transplants, Cold Spring is similar to his hometown of Malmö, which, he said, offers a lot of cultural diversity. He sees even more similarities between Malmö and New York City since his return Malmö last year after 29 years in the states.

Of Malmö's 320,000 residents, nearly half of those residents are foreign nationals. He compares it to New York City, where a third of its residents are born outside of the United States and 170 languages are spoken. While Malmö doesn't quite match that scale, he said 170 countries are represented.

"You see some similarities when it comes to population and the integration and the problems that of course [brings]," he said.

Since 2006, he has maintained dual citizenship in both countries, but after nearly 30 years spent in the United States, Bolin, now in his mid-50s, said he feels more at home here. He moved to Sweden last year to further his job-coaching career. There, he conducts

workshops and trains immigrants to assimilate into the Swedish work force.

His experiences in his "two homes" offer him a unique perspective on current events, such as the most recent national election, because he can look at the issues, like the travel ban or Syrian refugee crisis from many perspectives.

His characters also explore the constructs of national and personal identity with fluidity rather than being confined to one demographic or stereotype, a theme that pops up in his own life repeatedly.

Even when he moved from Yorktown to Katonah after his divorce, his new home straddled Katonah and Somers. So while he maintained a Katonah address, he belonged to the Somers Central School District and the Somers Library. It was there that he joined Linda Spears' writing group in 2014.

Now, his book release and first reading are slated for May 5 in Sweden. Bolin is self-publishing and said he plans to host a reading in Cold Spring on Sept. 28. Additionally, he has two more books on the docket for the Harry Anderson Series: "A Swedish Chameleon" and "Death on the Highline."

Bolin is not sure how long he will remain in Sweden, but plans to continue consulting and writing. His advice to anyone putting a dream on hold is to "just do it."

"When I started to write I felt like it was such a great therapy," he said. "I really, really enjoyed it and I have to say that I found something that I know I will continue to do for the rest of my life. Even if I only write for myself and a few others it's fine. I am happy with that."



Gary Forbes
The Forbes Insurance Team



Chris Radding



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