

The Arts

Periodontist publishes his first novel, with setting in Livingston

By Michelle Weiss

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Dr Alan A Winter of New York City has filled a cavity in his life with pen and paper

The former Livingston resident, d periodontist by trade, is having his first novel, titled *Someone Else's Son*, published in June by MasterMedia Ltd in New York City

The idea for the book, which discusses ethics, morals and consequences concerning what would happen if a family found out that their child had been switched at birth and the child they reared was not biologically theirs, came about from Winter's patients, he says

Many of his patients, noting the photographs of his sons on his office walls, told Winter that he had handsome sons, however, they didn't look like brothers

"If you have some anxieties, you begin to think," says Winter. "I created a challenge for myself. Could I write a story that would take a parent's real fear and make it reality?"

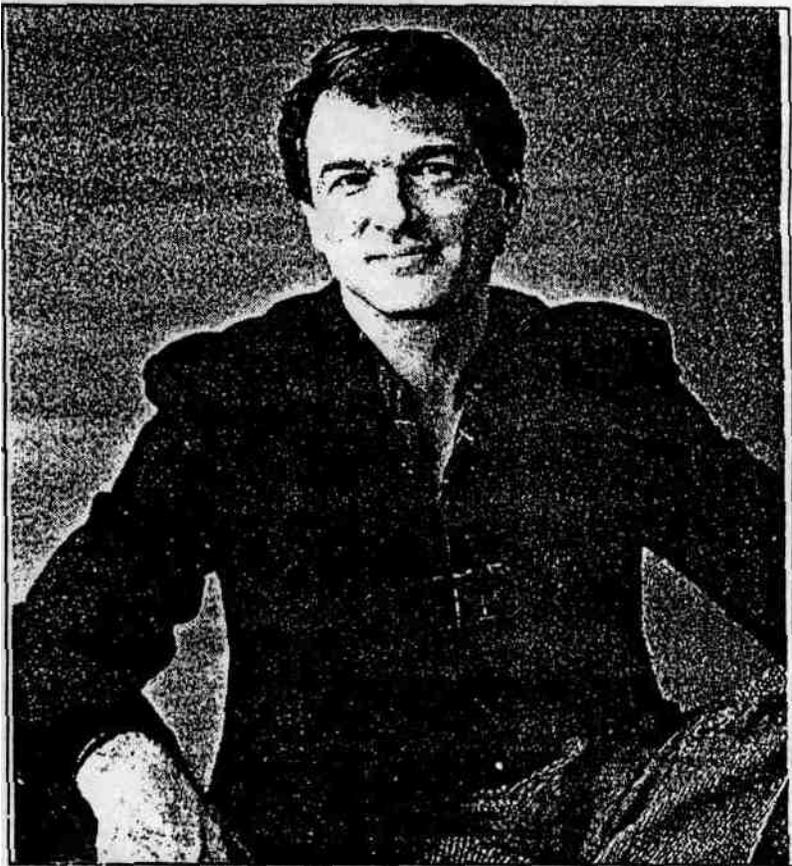
Although the book is fictitious, Winter explains that some of the background information is based on his own life. For example, the babies are switched at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center and the novel is set in Livingston

"A writer should always write about what they know, and you should write about the truth, your own experiences," he says.

A graduate of Livingston High School, Winter also graduated from Rutgers University in New Brunswick, where he received a degree in history, and from New York University College of Dentistry, New York City, where he received a DDS

Winter, who grew up in Newark, says his family dentist served as his mentor. "He was a positive role model. I grew up with the concept of parents who said to be a professional and get an education. Seeing children of professionals [in Newark] and having this role model, it just sort of clicked," he explains

As for his writing career, the



Dr. Alan A Winter

dentist says that he is unsure of how it progressed "I've been doing this for years," he says, recalling the papers he wrote.

One of the final pushes to write came from one of his dental patients who encouraged him to pen a science fiction piece he had been discussing.

Following that persuasion, Winter met with a screen writer and the two wrote a movie synopsis, later sending it to movie companies. Although nothing ever came of the treatment, Winter says, "From that point on I began to have other ideas and the story that I actually wrote.

"I wrote as an outlet and I enjoyed it. It was also coupled with a divorce and it was a catharsis," he states.

Taking almost seven years to complete, with many rewrites, Winter says that *Someone Else's Son* started with him sitting down and writing by hand, on legal sized paper during the summer of 1985.

Although one literary agent rejected the piece, he comments

that that particular agent did him a favor by meeting with him. "Literary agents don't give you the time of day, but she sat me down and said, 'You may think you're a dentist but you're really a writer. Rather than becoming frustrated by constant rejections, Winter says that he began to understand the difference between story telling and writing.

Hiring a writing teacher from Columbia University in New York City, who met with Winter and reviewed his manuscript, is what made a difference in his writing career, Winter asserts.

Finally getting the manuscript accepted. Winter says, "All you need is one to like it. Part of this whole mess is perseverance. "Writing is a craft. There are tricks and techniques. You have to read and read and read. You begin to learn style from people who have learned their craft well, and you can study from them," he says. "The end result is that I feel that I'm painting

with words."

Winter has also completed a second novel, titled *Recovery*, which he says has not yet been accepted by a publisher. *Recovery* traces the story of a professional who is thrown into the world of singles after 16 years of marriage. Through this experience, the professional "learns about relationships and himself and the umbilical cords that he has to sever to get on with his life," explains Winter.

While he has completed these novels, Winter says he is not giving up now, nor will he ever leave his dental practice for full-time writing.

"I'm not going to give up my practice; I'm not doing this because I dislike dentistry," Winter says, adding, "I'm a dedicated clinician who just found [writing] to be a passion.

"I love it, so why not have two careers?"

Although he is pleased to have one of his works accepted for publication, he explains that obtaining a book contract was not his motivation. "I got so many wonderful benefits from the process that I didn't care if I was never published. My life has been made better from the process."