

St. Marys man pens historical/science fiction book

Andy Diffenderfer

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For Stephen Robbins, the route to becoming an author involved a lack of sleep.

The semi-retired St. Marys resident said he would tell himself stories to fall asleep. His wife, Lynn, encouraged him to write a book, and after several years, those nighttime thoughts coalesced into his first novel, "The Healer's Miraculous Discovery," a blend of historical fiction and science fiction published in November.

"Finally, I retired or semi-retired a couple years ago, and she goes, 'You have to write that book now,'" he said. "She got on my case. I sat down and started writing, thinking I'll never finish this."

The fictional, semi-autobiographical narrative follows Steve, who grows up in a racially sensitive neighborhood in 1960s Cleveland, Ohio, and finds an object which gives him a mysterious ability and points him on a spiritual path he couldn't have predicted. Ultimately, that leads to a following and a growing congregation.

"What I wanted to achieve with the book, and what is really the intent, is to get people to think," he said. "I don't care what you believe. I don't care what you think, as long as you think and what you're thinking doesn't hurt others

... I wanted to be able to say the message without offending anybody. That was a difficult line to walk."

Robbins wants to encourage readers to not force their opinions on others, but to give them the space and respect to form their own conclusions.

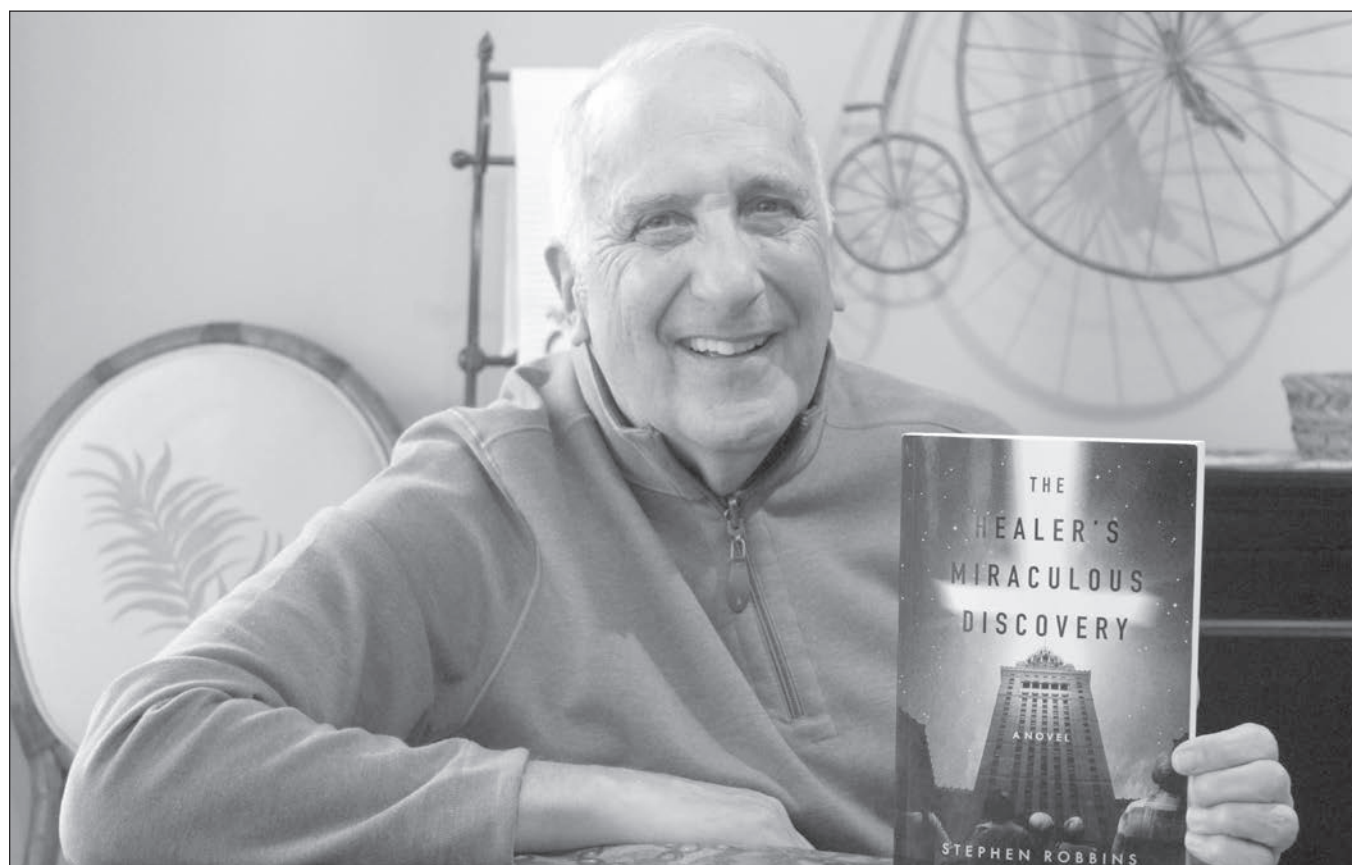
"If I get you to think, not change your mind, but question, think about life, think about death, think about how you relate to other people, especially in a time right now when American society is so divided," he said. "Maybe that's an important message today."

Robbins said he knew where the book would start because he had a story. He also had the ending, which left him the task of finding a connection.

"I had no idea what was in the middle," he said. "I sat down and started writing the beginning. I got that out on paper, and then every night I would write. Every night I would go, 'OK, what happened last night? So what happens to them today?' Every day, it evolved. I never really knew where it was going."

Originally from Cleveland, Robbins had a front-row seat for the turbulent times he illustrates in the book. Events and characters are based on past experiences.

"By the time I hit college,



Andy Diffenderfer | Tribune & Georgian

St. Marys' Stephen Robbins has written a book, "The Healer's Miraculous Discovery," a blend of historical fiction and science fiction.

I admittedly thought I had all the answers," he said. "Well, everybody should think like me. That thinking was surrounded by where I grew up."

The city, he said, was an odd place to grow up. His father ran a family hardware store started in the 1920s, and Robbins worked there from the time he was 11 or 12. He witnessed the transformation of his hometown, as people flocked there for jobs and bit-

ter prejudice reared its ugly head.

"My family had that hardware store in the Hough area," he said. "That whole scenario surrounding the race riots there, and the dilemmas that Cleveland faced, that was all true. Obviously, there's a story behind it that's fiction."

Early in his life, Robbins said he didn't enjoy writing and went through high school "never having written more

than maybe a page at most."

Robbins was an undergraduate accounting major, with work in hospital administration and a brief law practice. He was also an examiner for the Ohio Division of Securities, and founded Healthplex Associates, a consulting and outsourcing firm with operations in eight states.

"I was the last person in the world who would ever do a book," he said.

Robbins said "The Healer's Miraculous Discovery" is available through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Goodreads and Book Baby. He has a sequel in mind, which should be far less autobiographical.

"I know where that sequel starts," he said. "I know where it ends. What I'm going to do is to see whether or not I can actually fill in the gaps like I did before."

Georgia bases land priority projects in national defense bill

Dave Williams

Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA – President Joe Biden signed the \$858 billion National Defense Authorization Act Friday, legislation that approves fiscal 2023 funding requests for Georgia military bases from St. Marys to Marietta.

The annual defense bill represents a 10% increase over what the Pentagon received during the last federal fiscal year and 5% more than the Biden administration sought from Congress.

While many items on Georgia's military wish list

moved through the authorization process smoothly, the state's congressional delegation had to mount a lobbying campaign to save the Combat Readiness Training Center in Savannah, an Air National Guard facility for military pilots the administration was threatening to close. It received full funding for the coming year.

"I strongly opposed the Biden administration's plans to downgrade or close the Combat Readiness Training Center, and I brought Republicans and Democrats together to protect it," said U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff, D-Ga.,

who worked with fellow Georgia Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock and U.S. Rep. Buddy Carter, R-Savannah, to save the center. "It is vital to our national defense, and it's a very important military asset of the state of Georgia."

Other Georgia-based programs earmarked for funding included A-10 fighter aircraft and HH-60W helicopters at Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, C-130 aircraft at Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Marietta, the new Columbia-class submarines likely to be stationed at Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base in St.

Marys, hosting of the new Advanced Battle Management System at Robins Air Force Base in Warner Robins, and strengthening the power grid at the Army's Fort Stewart in Hinesville.

The defense bill also includes a 4.6% pay raise for the troops and a provision allowing the Pentagon to adjust the basic allowance for housing rates in areas where housing costs are high.

"I hear from Georgia military families often about how stressful and costly it can be to find adequate base housing or relocate to another base community," Warnock said.

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