

## Stamford writer hits his stride at 82

BY KAREN SACKOWITZ

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When retired U.S. Army Intelligence Officer Harris Kligman of North Stamford finally decided to pen the tales of espionage and suspense he had collected over 35 years of blended civilian-military life, he poured a decade of work into the project.

"My dad is a very dynamic man who's seen a lot and experienced a lot. As a kid I would bug him to give me a little more



The Kligman family at their North Stamford home.

insight into who he was and what he'd done," said his son Rob Kligman. "Through writing, he's been able to put a lot of these experiences into words; getting to see sort of how his mind works has been so compelling and interesting to me."

There's no shortage of material, given Harris' extensive global travels.

"I was rarely home. I was always on an airplane going someplace," Harris recalled. "My sphere of influence was primarily the Far East, Africa and South America. I lived in South Korea for more than four years; at one point I was going back and forth from

Brazil like a yo-yo."

During countless hours in the air, Harris would write notes on his travels, his interactions and myriad of characters he met along the way. He also penned children's stories for his sons so that during his rare stints at home, their time together would be spent reading and talking about the stories.

When Harris retired to full-time civilian life, he began recalling his experiences, including the many personalities from the military, political entities and business sectors in the many countries he traveled to with the goal of writing a novel. In the end, he wrote 12 and set them aside with no intention of publishing them. That changed with the onset of the Wuhan virus when his son, Rob, thought that it might be a good idea to get several of these published. The novels might give those readers an opportunity to deflect from the concerns of the virus and enjoy a good story.

"When I sat down to write, I was able to see the characters again. The people that I used to do business with, their names slightly changed because of the story and some of the things that I experienced," he said.

Kligman's family would print out his stories at a copy shop, handing them out to

their circle of friends to enjoy. But when the pandemic hit last spring, and the Kligman family found themselves home with time on their hands, Rob convinced his dad to publish his work.

"Picture the three of us at a small kitchen table in North Stamford," Rob said, recalling the months working together as a team. "Mom's on one side with her notes, Dad's on the other end and me with my computer, literally spending hours going through it and editing together, having dialogue on what word should be used in a particular section."

Harris Kligman's first novel, "The Profession," appeared on Amazon this past November. His second, "The Shaolin Covenant," will be out this week, followed by the March release of "Her Father's Daughter."

With a year's worth of debuts lined up for 2021, Harris said he's just happy his novels can offer readers an entertaining escape during a tough time. Rob said he can't put down 2020, given the gift he received from it.

"It was a great year because it brought all of us even closer and we've accomplished something that brought real excitement," he said. "These are memories that will last me forever. It's just been an awesome ride."

## Impact FFC Announces New Partnership Program

BY KAREN SACKOWITZ

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Fairfield County's top all-female giving circle is about to go beyond grant funding to develop a knowledgeable, driven army of change agents, with the help of area corporations.

"We have all of these women, our members, who participate in the grant-making process, hearing and seeing the various needs within the community and really understanding social issues at a much deeper level," Impact FFC's co-President Katharine Lumby said.

"So not only are we putting a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand or more dollars back into the community every year to drive change, we are igniting passion within our membership to do the work."

Impact FFC launched in 2015 with an initial goal of gathering at least 100 women across the county to pool con-

tributions and make significant philanthropic investments. Today, they are 243 members strong with an impressive track record: over \$1 million in grant funding over the last five years, including eight \$100,000 grants to area organizations.

This year, Lumby and her co-President, Steviann Martines, wanted to explore how to build upon that success by bringing in members who may not otherwise know of them or seek them out.

"We've had a very organic growth for five years, and it's very much word of mouth. We don't advertise, we don't market; it's been friends of friends," Martines said. "This year, we wanted to expand that to include people from every single town, of every race and all ages to join us."

To reach more women in an active way, the organization's leadership team created the Impact FFC Partnership Program, kicking off for 2021. Corporate partners in the new program can choose



Impact FFC Co-President Katharine Lumby.

from three investment levels: \$1,500 to sponsor one employee, \$5,000 for up to three, and \$10,000 for up to eight.

"The concept allowed us to have some level of marketing to companies that wanted to sponsor women," Martines says. "On the sponsor side, these women can take advantage of leadership development opportunities and enjoy a great learning experience, working alongside professional women from all over Fairfield County with all different types of backgrounds."

Among the organizations who have benefited from Impact FFC's grant programs over the last five years are All Our Kin, an organization that trains, sup-



Impact FFC Co-President Steviann Martines.

ports and sustains community child care providers in Danbury; Career Resources, a program that helps youth and adults develop skills needed in the workforce; and Building One Community, a group that works to advance the successful integration of immigrants and their families in Stamford.

Lumby said with the support of new corporate partners, her organization is excited to grow and make even more of an impact.

"We know the work we do and we've seen the outcomes, it's just a matter of getting it in front of people," she said. "Most of the time when people hear about it, they want in."

## Bankruptcy trustee sues mom, family of Westchester funeral home director in fraud case

BY BILL HELTZEL

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A U.S. bankruptcy trustee has accused the family of Westchester funeral home director Joseph Balsamo of helping him dodge creditors.

Balsamo, with the cooperation and assistance of his family "structured his financial affairs to insulate himself from ... the debts owed to the IRS and other creditors," the trustee claims, "and engaged in a fraudulent scheme to divert and conceal income."

Marianne T. O'Toole, the trustee, sued Balsamo's mother, Melinda Balsamo of the Bronx, brother John Balsamo of Ridgefield, Connecticut, and the family's funeral home business, Jan. 6 in U.S. Bankruptcy Court, White Plains.

Balsamo's bankruptcy attorney, Joseph Reilly of Goshen, did not respond to an email request for comment.

The family business includes Harrison Funeral Home, Harrison; Balsamo-Cordovano Funeral Home, Carmel; Balsamo Funeral Home, the Bronx; and 15 Church St. LLC, a holding company that owns the Carmel property.

Balsamo, of Ardsley, petitioned for Chapter 7 liquidation two years ago, declaring \$5,230 in assets and \$1,135,721 in liabilities.

He owed \$518,978 in federal and state taxes, \$319,113 to several companies that won a court judgment against a defunct Bronx produce company he owned, and \$290,350 to Santander Bank.

He was employed as director of Balsamo Funeral Home in the Bronx, according to the petition, where he worked for 30 years and where he made \$85,800 in 2017.

But when he testified in 2019 at a creditors meeting, he said he never held any shares in Balsamo Funeral Home, he did not have a bank account and he did not receive a paycheck.

Instead, according to the lawsuit, he said he received a weekly cash allowance from the family funeral homes, the businesses paid support payments to his estranged wife and he used his mother's debit card for personal expenses.

Balsamo conceded at the meeting that



he structured his financial affairs this way "in part by a desire to avoid the collection efforts of creditors, including the IRS," according to the lawsuit.

Before he filed for bankruptcy, O'Toole says, Joseph Balsamo was 50% owner of 15 Church St. LLC.

Balsamo claimed that his interest in 15 Church St. had been assigned to his mother. O'Toole argues that there is no proof of a transfer or of Balsamo receiving any consideration for his interest in the company.

After Balsamo filed for bankruptcy, his mother and brother refinanced business loans for \$2.9 million, on which they owed \$217,000. Some of the funds they received were used to pay debts unrelated to Balsamo or 15 Church St., including \$84,471 that his mother and brother owed in federal and state taxes.

O'Toole accuses Melinda and John Balsamo of fraudulently transferring Joseph Balsamo's interest in 15 Church St. as part of a scheme to conceal his assets from creditors. She also charges them with aiding and abetting fraud, for contributing to Balsamo's "fraudulent conduct," and unjust enrichment.

The trustee is asking the court to reverse the transfer to Balsamo's mother of his interest in 15 Church St., direct his mother and brother to account for all proceeds from refinancing the family businesses, and order them to turn over Balsamo's portion of the refinance funds to his bankruptcy estate.

Granite Springs attorney William F. Macreery represents O'Toole.

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