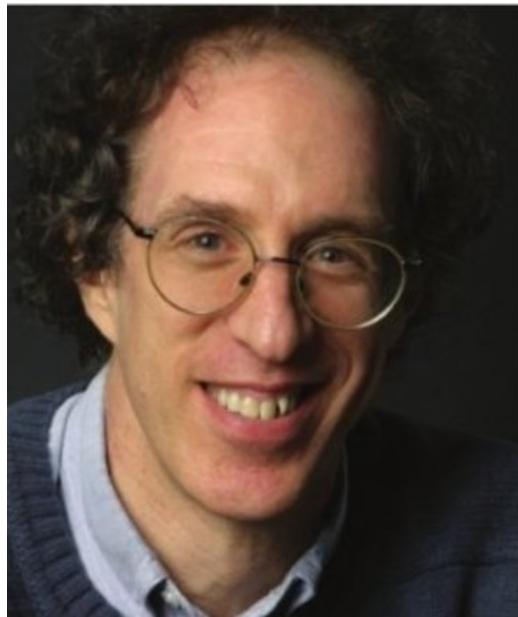


CITYPULSE

Spilling secrets

By Bill Castanier



Two Michigan authors write about opening up

What's your family secret —the one you want no one else to know, the one you'll take to your grave? Most families have secrets held from even other family members. Maybe it's a child out of wedlock, a half brother in a faraway country fathered by a G.I. in WWII or a love child with an unnamed father. The secret is kept until death, and only then the story emerges as the survivors go through the deceased's papers.

That's exactly what happened to Detroit native Steve Luxenberg, author of "Annie's Ghosts: A Journey Into a Family Secret," which has been selected as the Great Michigan Read for 2013 by the Michigan Humanities Council.

"As the story emerged I grasped the enormity of what my mom did," he said. "Since I was trained as a journalist, I reacted more analytical and never felt any revulsion."

Luxenberg said he decided to tell what he calls "a universal story," one that many believe is "better off left unwritten." He said he firmly believes that every family has a secret that needs to be aired.

"The consequences of secrecy roll down into subsequent generations," he said. He said since his mother's death, he saw no downside to revealing his family secret. He hopes that by writing about his journey to explore the secret and its roots that other secret keepers will release what they have been hiding. He also said he wanted to shine a light on the shame of mental illness that we still carry more than six decades after his aunt was sent to a mental institution to be forgotten.

"Annie's Ghost" is more than a memoir; it is an investigation into the mental health system and how Luxenberg's aunt ended up institutionalized. It is also about how, in the name of secrecy, it is nearly impossible to delve into the process that saw her end up

at Eloise.

Luxenberg launches a statewide tour in Lansing at the Michigan Historical Center at 7 p.m. Tuesday. He will be joined by another Michigan author, Mardi Jo Link, whose new book, "Bootstrapper: From Broke to Badass on a Northern Michigan Farm," tells about her life as a divorced single mom raising three boys. Link admits to writing about what might be called "family secrets," but she's quick to point out that she let her boys read the manuscript before publication.

"The Great Read program is a unique opportunity to get Michiganders reading the same book at the same time, discussing important social topics like mental health, interacting with Michigan authors, and considering our shared ideas of what it means to be part of this great state," said Erik Nordberg, executive director of the Michigan Humanities Council.

Self-analysis

"What should an actor be thinking onstage?" That's the central question behind "Inner Monologue in Acting," a new book by Rob Roznowski, associate professor of Acting at MSU.

"It seems like a basic phenomenon as an actor that you have to think like the character, but in most acting texts, there's very little mention of it," Roznowski said. To fill that void, he collaborated with Chris Hopwood, assistant professor of psychology at MSU, to solidify a psychoanalytical approach to acting. "It's taking the clues from

the playwright and then becoming this armchair psychologist to think in the way of the character," Roznowski said. "In psychology, they call it 'projecting,' or thinking like another person. How you project and inhabit at the same time?" Although the book is a required text for his acting classes, Roznowski said the principles explored are accessible and applicable even to non-actors

"It's becoming more aware of how to tame the bad thought process that distracts rather than focuses," he said. "You know (how when) you go to bed at night and (your) inner monologue just incessantly goes until you finally go to sleep? This is one of those things that helps give you control over it.

"Annie's Ghosts"

Author talk by Steve Luxenberg, part of the Great Michigan Read 7 p.m. Tuesday Michigan Historical Center, 717 W. Allegan St., Lansing FREE, but registration required at michiganhumanities.org

"Inner Monologue in Acting"

Author talk by Rob Roznowski 7 p.m. Monday Schuler Books & Music, 2820 Towne Center Blvd., Lansing FREE
schulerbooks.com