

Review

Mariemont native Rusty McClure points to the blue-and-white striped flag with an eagle blowing in the wind on the Fountain Square flagpole.

"Nobody knows it's there. They never taught us about it," says McClure, a 1968 Mariemont High School graduate.

Anyone who reads McClure's new book will know a lot more about the flag of the Washington-based Society of the Cincinnati, founded in 1783 by Continental Army veterans. McClure's "National Treasure"-like novel, "Cincinnatus: The Secret Plot to Save America" (Ternary Publishing; \$24) is out now.

McClure is also the author of the 2006 "Crosley," a book about his grandfather and great-uncle, Lewis and Powel Crosley Jr. He set much of his new thriller here.

In the book, assistant U.S. district attorney Esperanza Harper traces millions won on fixed golf tournaments to the little-known Society of Cincinnati, the nation's oldest patriotic organization.

With help from her father, an anti-terrorism expert in the Los Angeles FBI office, she uncovers a right-wing conspiracy of international consequences that takes she and her father to South Florida and the private Bahamas island of Cat Cay.

And all over Cincinnati. Fountain Square, One Lytle Place, Union Terminal, Camp Washington Chili, Montgomery Inn Boathouse and the Sawyer Point statue of Roman general Cincinnatus also figure into the story.

So do the Crosley brothers, the radio makers and WLW-AM owners, whose love of electronics plays a plausible role in the fiction. Powel Crosley Jr. also built the Twin Beaches mansion on Cat Cay, which figures in the book.

"I tell people about the Society of Cincinnati and Cat Cay. It's really cool stuff that nobody in Washington or Cincinnati knows about. And I didn't make them up," says McClure, who has a Harvard MBA and a divinity degree from Emory University.

For most of his adult life, McClure has lived in the Columbus suburb of Dublin. He's an investor in a dozen companies and teaches an entrepreneurial course at Ohio Wesleyan University.

McClure also has been a PGA scoring observer for the Memorial Golf Tournament at Dublin's Muirfield Village Golf Club for 20 years. That experience inspired the book's subplot about fixing golf rounds.

"I've been thinking of this plot for 20 years," says McClure, an avid reader of Tom Clancy, Robert Ludlum, Ian Fleming and John Grisham mysteries.

But first, as one of the few surviving Crosley descendants, he wrote "Crosley: Two Brothers and a Business Empire That Transformed the Nation" with David Stern ("Blair Witch Project: A Dossier") and Oxford author Michael A. Banks.

When "Crosley" hit the New York Times best-seller list, he told Stern about his idea for a novel. It took them 18 months to assemble the 500-page story.

As with "Crosley," McClure will promote the book on billboards around town. One will say, "Call Harper" with a phone number from the novel. Those who dial the number will hear main character "Espy" Harper give clues on how someone could win \$5,000.

Another will promote "Cincinnatus" as a Christmas gift by showing Santa Claus reading it. Stern, who has written a dozen "Star Trek," "Blair Witch" and "Tomb Raider" novels, already has envisioned how "Cincinnatus" could be converted into a screenplay, McClure says.

"The first book I did as part of my stewardship. Now I'm doing this for fun and profit," he says.

~John Kiesewetter, Kentucky Enquirer, November 1, 2009