

The writer

Glenn Ickler is an eighty-three year-old author from Hopedale who has written thirteen books. Jan Lewis is the affable and chatty host of a talk show called “Be My Guest,” which she conducts from a small community-access studio situated above the library in the town of Upton.

During a recent appearance on Ms. Lewis’s show (not his first), Mr. Ickler talked at some length about his latest novel. The idea for *A Domsday Killing*, he said, came “from an obit of a woman who ran a religious cult.” His character predicts that “the rapture will occur in two weeks on Easter Sunday.” She ends up “with a silver bullet in her head and a wooden stake in her heart, then two more people rise and claim to be her successor.” Downtown St. Paul (Minnesota, where he is from) “becomes a scene of chaos.”

It does not take long for a viewer of *Be My Guest* to realize that Mr. Ickler, like Leonard Elmore and Robert B. Parker (two mystery writers whose work he admires), has a fertile imagination; also—it can be easily discerned from the merriment and mischievousness that dances in his eyes—an active sense of humor. Ms. Lewis, an avid reader and a big fan of Mr. Ickler’s books, confirmed this

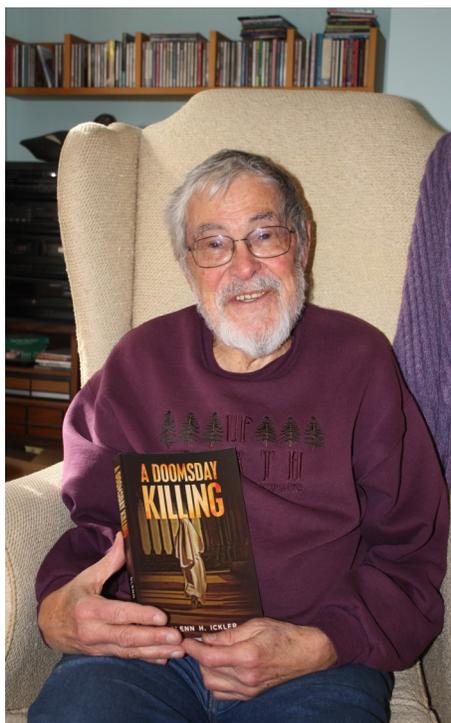
when she said “as you age you get funnier and funnier!”

Further verification came a few seconds later in the conversation when Mr. Ickler told Ms. Lewis “I’ve only met two criminals in my life. One was Richard Nixon” (at a reception in Chicago). To which Ms. Lewis quickly responded “well, another one may be” surfacing soon—her implication apparent.

MR. ICKLER lives in a comfortable development on Laurelwood Drive in Hopedale. There, he is on “Page 170” of his new book *Arsenic and Old Men*, he said the afternoon of March 5th when we dropped by for a visit. “It’s going slow,” he added.

Set on Martha’s Vineyard, *Arsenic* continues the adventures of a journalist, Warren “Mitch” Mitchell, a photographer, Alan Jeffrey, and a cartoonist, David Jerome. When the men and their wives get to the island “they discover that what they thought was a heart attack turned out to be poison. I was looking for a way to get them back to the island,” Mr. Ickler, who has been to Martha’s Vineyard, explained.

Do not be surprised, he hinted to Ms.



Lewis when discussing *Arsenic* on her show, if a “naked lawyer” surfaces in the book. Martha’s Vineyard, after all, he said with a twinkle of obvious delight, “has a nudist beach.”

Ms. Lewis, slightly aghast, but laughing, said “I don’t know what’s next, coming from you!”

HIS FIRST book, Mr. Ickler said on March 5th, was inspired by a newspaper story “involving patients of a doctor who treated people in nursing homes and the elderly were dying at a high rate.”

His urge to write, however, surfaced much earlier.

“My mother got me started reading before I started school (first grade, no kindergarten) and I was reading adult novels such as *My Friend Flicka* when I was nine,” he said in a subsequent email.

“I started telling stories when I was in the fourth grade. I went to a one-room country school, grades 1-8, and walked (and later biked) two miles to school and back. I had the biggest collection of comic books for miles around and I could read a comic story and remember it verbatim, so I started spouting them during lunch hour and all the other kids (and the teacher) would listen (I wish I had that kind of memory now).

“I began making up my own stories somewhere along the way and wrote some of them down.

“In high school, my best buddy and I published an occasional sheet called *The Peculiar Press*, in which we wrote about weird stuff happening in the school and crazy things other students did (some of which were highly exaggerated). Nowadays we’d

be sued for libel but even some of the teachers asked for copies of *The Peculiar Press*.

“The *St. Paul Dispatch* had a humor columnist who published squibs from readers and my high school buddy and I were regular contributors under the names ‘Dick & Ick’ (we also performed at school and community programs, and on a Twin Cities TV talent show as Dick & Ick, pantomiming Spike Jones recordings; my mother made outrageous costumes for us).

“In college (Hamline University in St. Paul) I was sports editor of the weekly campus newspaper for two years. I wrote funny stuff for the literary magazine that was published twice a year and eventually became the editor. This turned out to be a very good job because I met the wonderful woman I would marry when she contributed a poem to the magazine.”

Mr. Ickler arrived in Massachusetts in 1983, was editorial-page editor of the *Middlesex News* and has written for the *MetroWest Daily News*.

He hopes to have *Arsenic* finished by June.

He self-publishes, a common practice today, even for name writers.

As for himself, though his novels feature a compelling story line, “I’m not getting rich,” he said.

His readers, on the contrary, are.

At the Expo

A main motivation for attending any trade show is to come into contact with people, products and services that could change one’s life. Visitors to the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce’s 11th annual Home & Business Expo at Northbridge High School on March 3rd certainly found that to be true in encountering Tim Hare who was touting the merits of the Action Trackchair (an all-terrain wheelchair) and Devon Kurtz who was on hand to talk about the Blackstone Heritage Corridor’s Junior Ranger program.

Mr. Hare made his name selling cars and
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