

## PETER HOGENKAMP, MD '93

## A Novel Turn

As a young writer, Peter Hogenkamp, MD '93, received his first rejection letter from *The New Yorker* magazine when he was in the fourth grade. Forty-five years later, he received the letter he'd long been hoping for: a two-book deal from Bookature, an imprint of Hachette Book Group.

In 2019, Dr. Hogenkamp submitted a manuscript to an annual writing competition sponsored by the Killer Nashville International Writers' Conference. His selection as a finalist brought significant attention to his work. "Every author dreams of being picked up by one of the five big publishers," he says.

As luck would have it, another publisher was taking notice of chapters Hogenkamp had posted on a popular writing website that chronicled his training experiences decades earlier at St. Joseph's Hospital. Those chapters formed *The Intern*, which was published by TouchPoint Press in 2020.

With the affirmation of two published books in one year, Hogenkamp hasn't slowed down. He's now the author of five published works, most of them thrillers who have physicians as their main character.

"I read a lot of thrillers, and the characters tend to be very homogenous, usually ex-CIA agents or drunk FBI agents," he says. "I wanted to create a completely different kind of character."

He's currently working on the third book of his Jade Stryker series. The protagonist is a surgeon who ends up on death row. "Readers like series because they become invested in the characters," he says.

Hogenkamp wrote his first novel at 13, a thriller about a guy trying to steal nuclear weapons to end the world.

With his father steering him toward a stable career choice, Hogenkamp went to College of the Holy Cross as a pre-med major. As a senior, his pre-med advisor suggested he take time off before applying to medical school and helped him get a position teaching chemistry at an international preparatory school in Salzburg, Austria. He spent three wonderful years there before matriculating at Upstate.

Despite an initial interest in orthopedic surgery, Hogenkamp repeatedly received feedback that his strengths were in diagnosis and in connecting with patients and turned his focus to primary care.

In his second year, Hogenkamp met Lisa Sayles '94, and the two married after his graduation. They both trained in family medicine at St. Joseph's Hospital and then looked to establish a practice in Vermont.

"Living in the Alps left a big imprint on me," says Hogenkamp. They chose Rutland, in the center of the state, both for its proximity to ski mountains and the community's need for primary care physicians. "We started out working for the local hospital and when Lisa wanted to open our own clinic, they actually helped us build our office."



Peter '93 and Lisa '94 Hogenkamp

As the couple built the practice and raised their growing family, Lisa worked part time while serving as the practice business manager. Hogenkamp saw patients full time, and for years, also provided hospital and nursing home coverage.

He started writing again at 39 after reading that John Grisham wrote his first book by getting up at 4:30 am. "I would write from 4:30 to 6:30 and then start my day," he says.

He's now living his dream life. He and Lisa both see patients two days a week (their practice also includes two nurse practitioners and two PAs), allowing him more time to write. He also hosts a monthly medical show on Vermont public access television that's available on YouTube.

Although he's always been able to connect well with patients, Hogenkamp says writing has improved that skill. "I'm good at explaining things but I've gotten better at it with the practice of communicating ideas in a clear and concise fashion," he says.

And living in a small town, he's just as accessible as ever, even if he's in the office less. "A guy showed me a melanoma on his lower back in between aisles five and six at the Grand Union," Hogenkamp says. "True story."

—Renée Gearhart Levy

