

Writer draws inspiration from life's quirks

By Pasha Carroll
Neighbor Newspapers Staff Writer

When the weather turns colder, there is no place better than curled up under the covers or by the fireplace with a spooky book.

One Northsider is just in time to take a stab at a murder mystery. Alan Goldsmith's series of books is about a cartoonist, Constable Toole, who is an amateur sleuth. He solves crimes with the help of a walrus and the hen that sits on his head. The first of the series, "Waldo Chicken Wakes the Dead," is an unconventional read. The characters were created in the mind of a 9 to 5 advertising copywriter drone.

"The walrus and the chicken was created back then as a means of keeping my sanity," Goldsmith said.

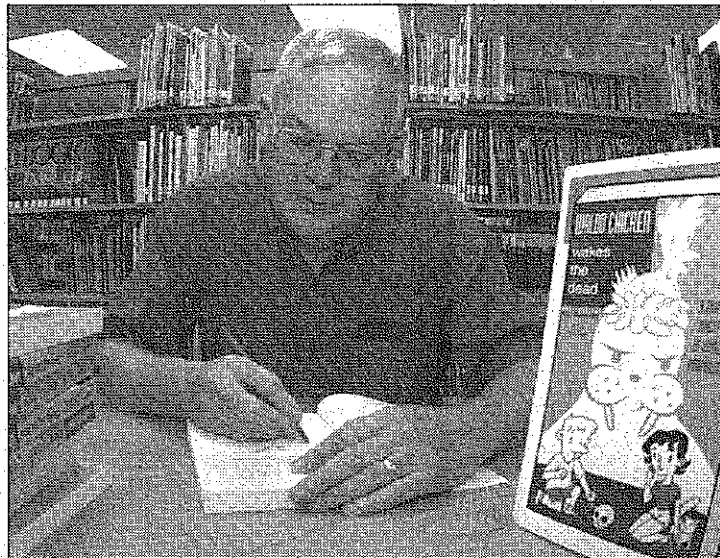
He said he would leave notes from the quirky characters at coworker's desks. The characters and a life long dream of writing novels and reading murder mysteries, prompted the 63-year-old retiree to write the book. In "Waldo Chicken Wakes the Dead," O'Toole initially solves minor mysteries, such as what happened to a neighborhood cat. But soon into the novel, the characters find a human skull and the real mystery begins.

Goldsmith drew upon aspects of his own life, which was lived in Northside, to create the neighborhoods and characters in the book.

The eccentric neighborhood is very much like the Club Drive neighborhood in which Goldsmith lives. Another prominent character, Mr. Woo the cat who appears randomly throughout the book is much like the cat he had growing up.

Goldsmith's wife insists that O'Toole's wife is not molded after her image, but Goldsmith said they do share some similar characteristics.

"Nobody is linked directly," Goldsmith said. "But it is a



Nathan Self/Staff

Alan Goldsmith, author of 'Waldo Chicken Wakes the Dead,' will host a book signing at the Brookhaven Library on Oct. 28 from 1 to 3 p.m. and Oct. 29 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

combination of characters knew growing up."

Some of the characteristic of the murder-mystery genre books were derived from Goldsmith's favorites, Nero Wolfe and Agatha Christie.

"[In those books] everyone knew everyone and murder was always in the midst," he said. "I drew upon that as I wrote."

Goldsmith is now working on the second book in the series. The idea of humor mixed with murder mystery is catching on and has gained acclaim from the Library Journal and New Mystery Reader Magazine.

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