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Upping the Ante

Local Author Ronald S. Barak's Latest Novel "JK's Code" Is a Political Page Turner

By STEVE GALLUZZO
Sports Editor

Asked to describe his literary technique, Palisadian Ron Barak called himself a “pantser”—that is, he writes by the seat of his pants and goes wherever his characters take him.

Not a proponent of outlines—he would probably be afflicted with writer’s block—he said that he is always pushing the envelope. He wants to make every fictional piece he creates better than his last.

Has he succeeded?

Well, in the case of his timely new book, “JK’s Code,” Barak is content to let the glowing positive reviews speak for him.

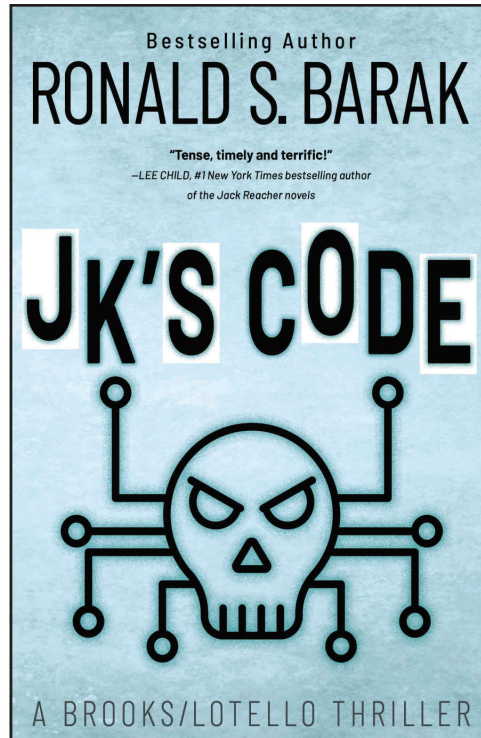
A gripping novel about election fraud and the technology behind it, “JK’s Code” is 448 pages in length, and a cross between an Agatha Christie whodunit and a Lee Child thriller.

“I started out wanting to write a story about cyber currency and the dark web, but after purchasing an anonymous laptop computer and visiting and interacting with various dark web characters, it occurred to me that with everything going on regarding 2020 politics in general and the 2020 election in particular, a novel about election fraud would be far more timely and interesting,” Barak explained. “‘JK’s Code’ is a figment of my imagination. Any resemblance between any of the characters and real-world figures is a figment of your imagination and is purely coincidental.”

“JK’s Code” is the fourth in Barak’s popular Brooks/Lotello series, which started on a dare from some friends with “The Amendment Killer” (2017), followed by a prequel novel “The Puppet Master” (2018) and then a sequel “Payback” (2020).

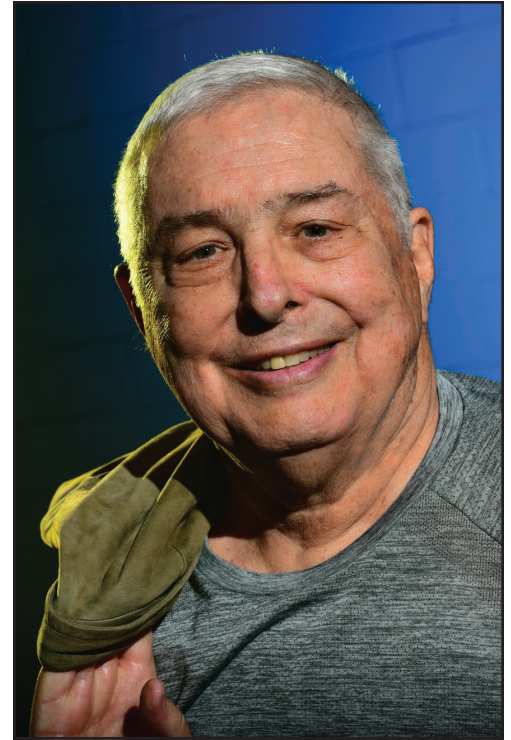
The suspense-filled plot centers around 20-year-old computer genius Jake Klein (known to his friends as JK), who drops out of college to pursue fortune and fame in the field of cybersecurity. Discovering and upending a conspiracy between the presidents of Russia and America to manipulate the results of the 2020 U.S. presidential election, JK finds himself in a deadly game of cat and mouse with the heads of state of two of the world’s most powerful countries. In the process he learns that revealing the truth to the world comes with a price.

“All of the Brooks/Lotello novels relate to timely political and legal issues in the United



The book

Photo courtesy of Ronald Barak



The author

Rich Schmitt/Staff Photographer

States,” Barak explained. “In ‘JK’s Code’ I’ve done my best to make the focus on the social and political issues of 2020. To be sure, these issues began before 2020 and, unfortunately, they’ll likely continue well beyond 2020. As for the main character, Jake Klein is slightly younger and slightly braver than I am.”

Barak won the 1964 NCAA All-Around Gymnastics Championships as a senior at USC and competed in eight events that summer at the Tokyo Olympics. He later attended law school and became a local real estate attorney and experienced courtroom lawyer.

He grew up in West LA and went to Hamilton High, where he met his wife Barbie. They have been married 56 years and live in Castellammare with their British shorthair cat Macabee and their Havanese puppy Ryder. They have two adult children, Jennifer and Mark, and four grandchildren: Quinn, Madison, Oliver and Peyton.

Can readers expect another Brooks/Lotello novel in the future?

“Yes, but I haven’t figured out what it is yet,” Barak admitted. “That’s one advantage of being a pantser. I just start writing whenever something in the news catches my interest and lights my creative juices on fire. You can talk to the wife (also affectionately known as Goose), but you have to take anything she says with a grain of salt or, as she would put it, with a spoonful of sugar.”

Barak’s extensive legal background and in-

sight allow him to mix his fiction and today’s political reality. One question Barak gets asked quite a bit is what inspires him to write, and the 20-year Palisadian said that he never tires of answering it.

“I write because it forces me to think—a lot,” he shared. “I might not otherwise think so much. That’s scary. At least to me it is.”

Barak said that he feels writing makes him the best person he can be.

“It makes me grow, just hopefully not in my waist,” he joked. “I may not be the smartest person on the planet. Obviously, I’m not, but second isn’t bad. It means I have room to improve, to be better, to try harder.”

He said he also writes for readers who want to read a good story, to be entertained and to be encouraged to think a little.

“Of course, it’d be nice to recoup the cost of publishing and promoting what I write,” he continued, “but the real reason is I love to connect with people, to engage, to interact. In my opinion, a tree that falls in the forest without anyone to hear it doesn’t make any noise. A writer without readers isn’t a writer. I want to make noise.”

Released in mid-December by Gander House Publishers, “JK’s Code” is now available on Amazon in hardbound, paperback, Kindle or audiobook format. To learn more about the author or sign up to read his blogs, visit Barak’s website ronaldsbarak.com, Twitter: @RonBarakAuthor or Instagram @RonBarakAuthor.