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**Doctor Pens Third Medical Thriller - Feature in THE CLARION LEDGER**

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Darden North keeps a list of people he plans to invite to the premiere party when Hollywood turns one of his novels into a movie.

"If you're going to do what it takes to write books, you might as well dream big," says North, a Jackson ob-gyn for the past 23 years who has just released his third medical mystery thriller, *Fresh Frozen* (Ponder House Press, \$26.95).

North, 52, has chosen to publish his books through independent sources, which used to mean certain death for a book. That has changed, in part, because of the success of books that were originally self-published.

Examples: *The Bridges of Madison County* by Robert James Waller and *The Celestine Prophecy* by James Redfield. Both have sold millions. Both were turned into major motion pictures.

North's first two novels, *House Call* and *Points of Origin*, have sold about 15,000 copies, he says. That may pale when compared to best-sellers such as John Grisham and Tom Clancy. But the average book sells fewer than 2,000 copies, according to Publishing Associates. By their scale - 7,000 or more copies sold - North is labeled "a star."

*House Call* and *Points of Origin* were nominated for awards by the Mississippi Institute for Arts and Letters and by the Southern Independent Book Association.

North, who has delivered "about 4,000" babies, became interested during the mid-1990s in collecting first-edition copies of Mississippi authors.

"Grisham, Nevada Barr, Martin Hegwood, Greg Iles," he says. "I would read their books at night for relaxation after a long day at the office.

"The more I read, the more I said to myself 'I can do this.'"

North began writing in his spare time. And he discovered something: "Writing was hard. But I still believed I could do it if I stuck to it."

It took him nearly 10 years to complete his first novel, *House Call*, which was released in 2005. He followed that in 2006 with *Points of Origin*.

"And I stuck to what I know - medicine and Mississippi," says North, who grew up in in the Delta town of Cleveland. "Then you throw in a murder here, a murder there and suddenly you've got a story that people want to read."

*Fresh Frozen* follows the same path as his first two, combining a Hollywood star, a mysterious death and the heist of freshly frozen human embryos from a Mississippi fertility clinic.

"I've been a fan since his first book," says Claire Aiken of Jackson. "I read the first page, and I was hooked."

Says Lee Ann Denton, 44, of Clinton: "Two things I like about Darden's books are that he really makes you feel like you know the characters personally, and the other is he captures the essence of Mississippi in the way he describes things."

*To comment on this story, call Billy Watkins at (601) 961-7282.*