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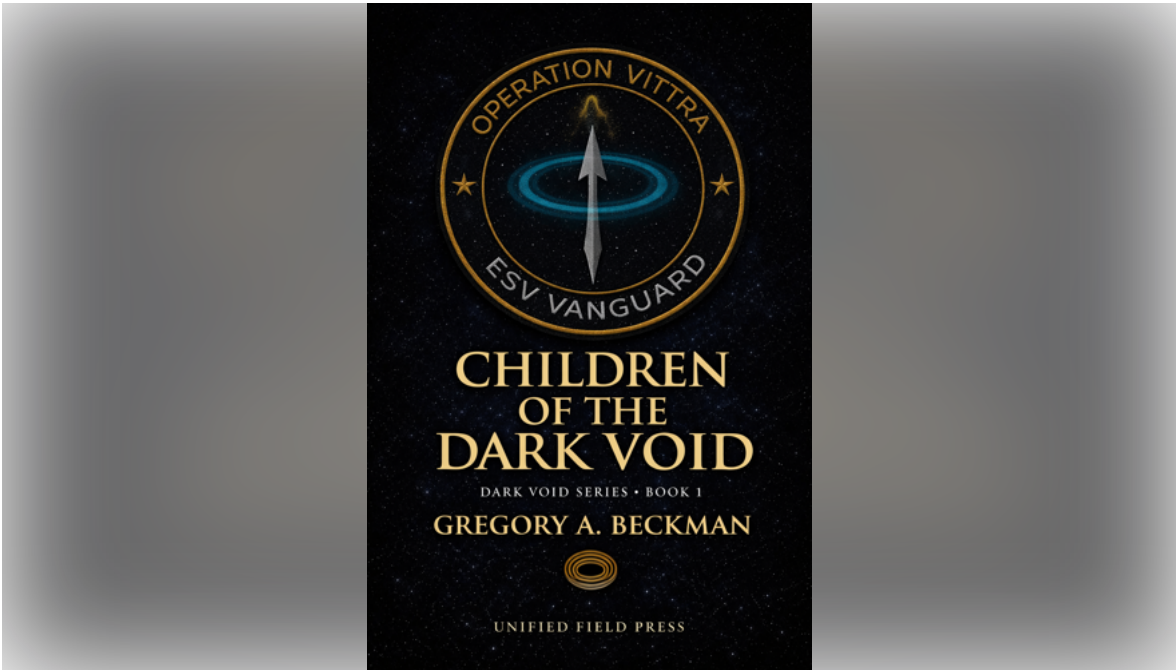
Curiosity about the universe results in books by area native

by Brenda Ruggiero EDITOR
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Beckman
Submitted photo



"Children of the Dark Void" cover.
Submitted photo

PERRYSBURG, N.Y. — Garrett County native Gregory A. Beckman has written two books that stemmed from his curiosity about the universe and a desire to question what one thinks one knows from first principles.

"I'm not trying to replace existing science or claim that current models are wrong," he said. "Instead, I'm offering a different way of looking at the same observational data, one that connects ideas across disciplines that are often treated separately. The goal is to encourage exploration and critical thinking, to step back and ask why certain assumptions exist and whether alternative frameworks might reveal patterns we've overlooked. Whether through nonfiction or fiction, the common thread is curiosity and the willingness to re-examine familiar ideas from a fresh perspective."

Beckman's "The Shape of Everything" is a nonfiction book that explores the universe from first principles, focusing on how structure, motion, and information arise when we examine electromagnetic behavior and geometry.

"Rather than proposing new particles or replacing existing physics, the book reframes observational data across disciplines, including astronomy, plasma physics, and systems theory, to show how complex behavior can emerge from familiar physics when viewed through a different lens," he said. "It is written to be accessible, building ideas progressively so readers can engage at their own pace regardless of background."

"Children of the Dark Void" is a science-fiction novel centered on a deep-space mission that begins to encounter a phenomena that do not behave as expected.

"While the story is fictional, it is grounded in real physics, operational realism, and the psychological pressures faced by crews operating far from help," Beckman said. "The book focuses less on spectacle and more on uncertainty, judgment, and how people respond when familiar assumptions about space, time, and communication begin to fail. Like the nonfiction, it is written to be accessible, allowing readers to build understanding naturally as the story unfolds."

Beckman explained that he was born and raised in Garrett County, where he attended local grade school and high school and spent much of his time involved in sports, including wrestling, football, and track.

"My family has long had deep roots in the community, and growing up here strongly shaped how I see teamwork, responsibility, and problem-solving," he said. "Over the years, I worked a variety of local jobs, including at Bill's Marina, Wisp Resort, Smileys, Pine Lodge and volunteered regularly with the Special Olympics. Garrett County has always been a place where people wear many hats and support one another, and that mindset carried with me into both my military career and my writing."

Beckman said he spent 20 years in the U.S. Coast Guard before retiring, serving primarily as an Operations Specialist. His work focused on tactical communications, mission planning, and coordinating responses to time-critical, life-and-death situations.

"Much of the job involved making decisions with incomplete information, directing assets in real time, and coordinating across multiple teams and agencies," he said.

Over the course of his career, Beckman worked at units across the country, including Petaluma, California; Cape May, New Jersey; Chincoteague, Virginia; Sitka, Alaska; Key West, Florida; Cape Cod, Massachusetts; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Buffalo, New York, where he retired from active service. Today, he lives in Perrysburg, New York, where his children attend school and he focuses on writing and research.

"Over my twenty-year career in the U.S. Coast Guard, I always carried a question in the back of my mind: What is space, really?" Beckman said. "Much of my work involved systems thinking, making inferences from incomplete information, and making decisions in life-and-death situations where waiting for perfect data wasn't an option. That way of thinking naturally shaped how I approached larger questions as well."

Beckman said he didn't start out trying to be a writer. He spent years building a framework for understanding how systems behave, refining it through observation, discussion, and exposure to people from many technical and scientific backgrounds.

"Writing came later as a way to organize those ideas and share them," he explained. "'Children of the Dark Void' grew out of that same mindset, set inside the broader framework that eventually became 'The Shape of Everything.'"

Beckman noted that he wants readers to come away with the sense that there is still so much to learn about the universe.

"Our assumptions aren't set in stone, and curiosity has always been what drives real discovery forward," he said. "If the books encourage people to question, to explore ideas from first principles, and to discuss what they think they're seeing, then they've done what I hoped they would do."

Today, Beckman said he continues to work on both sides of the project. On the nonfiction side, he's expanding the ideas introduced in "The Shape of Everything," including a follow-up book titled "The Speed of Everything," which focuses more deeply on information, propagation, and observation.

On the fiction side, "Children of the Dark Void" is the beginning of a longer series.

"I'm currently working on 'Echoes of Eventide,' the next installment, along with additional stories set in the same universe," Beckman said. "The goal is to let the science and the storytelling evolve together over time, each informing the other, while building the ideas carefully rather than rushing them."

Beckman and his wife, Jackie have three boys, Briar, Charles, and Ezra.

"Family life is central to everything I do, and writing happens around that, not instead of it," he said. "Balancing family, work, and long-term creative projects keeps everything grounded and provides perspective on why curiosity and exploration matter in the first place."

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