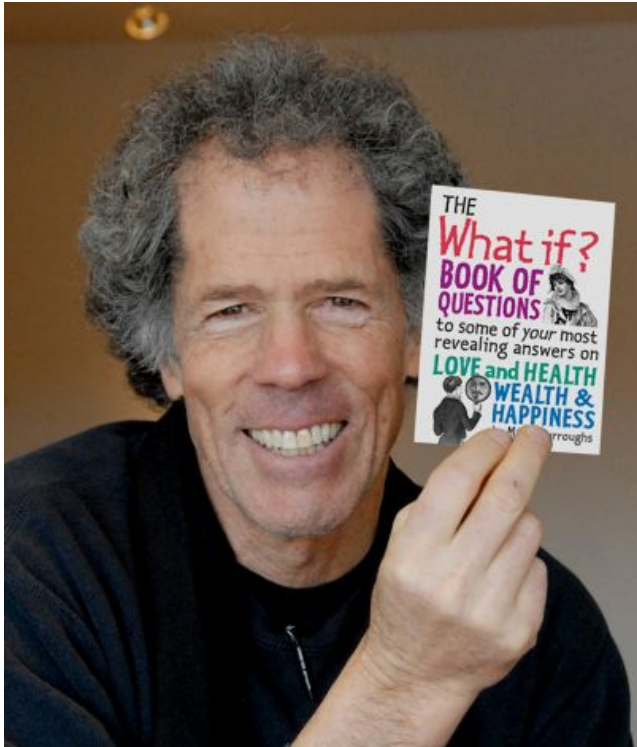


Burroughs 'what-if' questions keep life in perspective

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Miggs Burroughs will sign his book at Stew Leonard's Nov. 3. Photo: Contributed Photo / CT

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It's a common feeling to be faced with a situation -- maybe a loss of a job or a divorce -- and feel totally dismantled by it, with an inability to move forward in life. Miggs Burroughs knows that feeling all too well.

Eighteen years ago, Burroughs experienced his marriage of 23 years unraveling. Finding himself a divorced father of one, the self-employed graphic artist felt overwhelmed with worry that led him to seek counseling. The therapist guided Burroughs into a scenario of questions so that he could get a better perspective on his life and move forward.

From this experience has come "The What If? Book of Questions to Some of Your Most Revealing Answers on Love and Health, Wealth and Happiness," published by [Easton Studio Press](#), a small press based in Westport.

Burroughs will sign copies of his book Saturday from noon to 2 p.m. at [Stew Leonard's](#), 100 Westport Ave., Norwalk.

During a recent interview in his studio adjacent to his Westport home, where he has lived since the mid-1970s, Burroughs recalled how the therapist gave him a homework assignment to write down questions addressing his worst fears: What if I lose my biggest client? What if I lose my house? What if the phone never rings?

The exercise prompted Burroughs to "brainstorm" his options and see that they could be manageable. The exercise triggered the lifelong Westport resident and owner of [Miggs B Design](#), a graphic design company, to compile a list of "What If?" questions, which took a year to complete.

The project gave him a focus and helped Burroughs channel his energies into something positive, a book of "What If?" questions, which Burroughs first unsuccessfully tried to sell to mainstream publishers, including Simon & Schuster. In rejecting the book, they said it was "very cute, but ... also very small."

Burroughs did what other rejected writers often do: he squirreled the book away in one of his filing cabinets until recently when he took another look at the book and then shared it with publisher [David Wilk](#), of Easton Studio Press.

The book's purpose, Burroughs said, "is to help people overcome their own fears and anxieties." He offers no solutions, just questions: "What if the most important moment in your life is this one? Can you handle the power it gives you to choose how you will spend the next one? What if you have only one more day to create a positive change in your life? What are you waiting for? What if certain people make you feel guilty or angry or worthless? Who gave them this awesome power and who can take it away?"

The book is small in size, only 5 by 7 inches, with the questions complemented with Victorian clip art.

"It's not about tweeting. It's not about the Internet," said Burroughs, who refers to the book as "a little Victorian treasure. ... It's an intermission from all of that."

However, he admits there's a little contradiction here. The book, which sells for \$9.95 is available as an e-book on iTunes, as well as hardcover, on Amazon.com.

One fan of the book is [Al DiGuido](#), founder of Westport-based Al's Angels, which provides holiday meals and gifts to children and families suffering with life-threatening cancer and rare blood diseases.

Burroughs gave DiGuido his very first copy of the book, "because he always asks 'What if?' questions when he speaks of the terminally ill children that his organization help," Burroughs said. "For example: 'What if this was your child?' "

On his website, DiGuido asks the "What if?" questions: "What if it was you? What if it was your child? I have been haunted by these thoughts from my first contact with a child suffering and dying from cancer. ... What if it was me?"

Responding to an email question, DiGuido said, "So many of us will admit that there are extended periods of our life where we are 'sleepwalking' ... not really thinking clearly and deeply about the big issues that guide our path. Miggs has tapped into a series of questions that open the door in our brains and spirits where the answers to these thought-provoking questions reside.

"It was my sense from the first page I turned that the questions were a 'wake-up' call for the reader to pay attention and think more deeply about what we all really believe and think. ... We all need to think more deeply about the 'what if?' questions. There is too much reacting going on ... and action without thought."

DiGuido bought 100 copies of Burroughs' book to give to friends, and has recommended the book to the 3,000 people on his mailing list.

"I want to spread this wake-up call to as many people as I can and whom I love," he said. "It's not too late for any of us to think more profoundly."

DiGuido even wrote a review of the book on Amazon.com in which he says Burroughs' questions "open that shut door in our minds and hearts to a new level of exploration and investigation.

"When you reach moments in life when you understand that we are all members of the human family and each of us is sacred ... you come from a perspective of `what if it were me? When you see your actions in the perspective of how another sees you ... there is tremendous learning that happens. The book is a must read for all who are passionate about living a life ... fully awake and aware."

Stew Leonard Jr. agrees. During a recent telephone interview, the supermarket entrepreneur said that Burroughs' questions help people bring a perspective and a balance to their lives. He said these are questions that people may not have asked themselves, but they should ask themselves.

"I looked through that book and I can relate to every single one of (the questions),"said Leonard, acknowledging how work responsibilities can create imbalance with one's personal life. "I tell my four daughters all the time, `It's perspective. Keep life in perspective.' "

Leonard suggests that Burroughs' next book should be one where he gives the answers.

"I want the answers," he said.

With his book, Burroughs can now add "author" to his long list of credentials that, in addition to graphic design, includes photography and web design. Most recently, he has won much acclaim for his work with lenticular imagery, an art form that originated in the late 1700s, which displays two pieces of art within one frame.

Burroughs merges two digital photos in one and allows the viewer's eye to move across the photograph and see one image transform into another. One of his most popular lenticular photos is that of his mother, Esta, well known in the greater Westport community for her many years employed at the Remarkable Book Store that had a prominent position on Main Street for many decades. The lenticular image shows his mother's youthful face turning into her image now in her senior years.

At times, Burroughs is bemused by the positive response to his book and downplays its place in book publishing today. In a self-deprecating manner, he said, " `What If?' is to literature what pet rocks are to Mount Rushmore."

In addition to his book-signing at Stew Leonard's Saturday, he will give a talk and book-signing at the Westport Library Dec. 10 from 7 to 9 p.m.

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