

# BOOKS: AUTHORS & NEWS

## Sink your teeth into this author's adventure

■ Disciplined dentist combines his loves to write 'Portal,' which has won audiences, an award and Hollywood's interest

By Myles Knapp  
TIMES CORRESPONDENT

**C**LIVE CUSSLER fans take note — Walnut Creek dentist and first-time author Keith White is the closest thing you will find to a Clive Cussler clone. What, you say? Impossible, you say? Clive Cussler and Dirk Pitt are practically living gods, you say?

Well, of course you wouldn't say that. Cussler's good, but he ain't no John D. Macdonald! And Dirk Pitt ain't Travis McGee.

However, if you are looking for a book with all the entertainment, story and character values that make Cussler a perennial best seller, grab your pogo stick, "boing" on down to the bookstore and pick up a copy of "The Portal." What Cussler's Dirk Pitt novels do for maritime adventure, White's "The Portal" does for pilots.

Combining James Bond-style international adventures and Pitt-like derring-do, the book achieves that rare and unique blend: intriguing characters, painlessly educational facts and an imaginative story.

I interviewed the author/adventurer/dentist/resident of Danville sitting on an oil drum at Concord's Buchanan Field near his Cessna 182. White loves to fly as much as Clive Cussler loves classic cars. Cussler has an amazing collection of cool, classic cars, and it is my bet that White hopes one day the Cessna will be just one of several planes in his collection.

### A busy man's secrets

At rare times during your life, you will meet someone who seems to get more out of a day than is humanly possible. Keith White is one of those guys. Well-known, successful dentist. Private pilot. Real estate developer. Moroccan adventurer. Aftarian fisher in Baja. Husband. Climber who rappels down canyons. Father. Canoeist in Venezuela. Grandfather. Plus, a couple of times a year he helps out for a week or two at a free Rotary Club-sponsored dental clinic in Mexico. And he is the author of a very good first novel.

During the interview White revealed several of his secrets. He reads good books and watches movies to learn about story lines and characters. He admires and finds inspiration in characters such as Bond and Indiana Jones, in stories as entertaining as "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and in authors such as Robert Ludlum,



BOB PEPPING/TIMES

KEITH WHITE, of Danville, author of "The Portal," is a dentist who loves flying. His first book does for pilots what Clive Cussler's Dirk Pitt novels do for maritime adventure.



MYLES KNAPP  
Grit Lit

### PROFILE

■ **WHO:** Keith White

■ **WHAT:** Author of "The Portal" (Little Moose Press, \$23.95, 444 pages)

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### EXCERPT

End of September, 1943

Under heavy wind shear and driving rain, the small, single engine Ballanca floatplane appeared lost — dwarfed beneath the tempest moroselessly tossing from above and between the jagged cliffs threatening on both sides. The granite walls precariously funneled any advance toward the canyon's end, hidden in the mist ahead. Pushing eastward through the dark sky, the pilot struggled against the violent conditions in the gorge, the aircraft

was something. But it only took about 10 minutes to get started. And lots of mornings when 7 a.m. arrived, I was really disappointed that I had to quit."

So, in addition to discipline, White's other key motivation is "HAVE FUN!" He points to his



strained to the limit.

A bolt of lightning shot across the sky, the jagged shape striking a nearby cliff, then came the thunder-

ous crack as the brilliant flash instantly changed the sky to blinding white. The Ballanca's cockpit and two faces inside the craft instantly lit up, their expressions frozen in time.

Ray Dobbs had flown this route many times in all kinds of weather and marshaled a cautious respect for the mountaintops imbedded in the clouds around him. He also knew his plane's limitations, limitations that had been exceeded long ago. At any moment he expected the storm to deliver a final blow, a pummeling strong enough to snap the plane's wings clean off. He averted forward, unable to tell the fog on the windshield from the clouds outside.

Excerpted from "The Portal" (Little Moose Press), copyright © 2005 Keith T. White. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

As a successful dentist, White found that ironic.

### Combining loves

A third strategy that works for White is combining things he loves. He loves his wife, kids, grandkids, dentistry, adventure,

real estate, writing and flying. So he flies with his family to exciting places. He writes adventure books that are inspired by places to which he's flown. And he gives back by flying to his native Mexico and offering his dental services to the less fortunate.

All of this discipline, fun and combining is working out. White's latest book reading at Walnut Creek's Barnes & Noble was a big success, with more than 100 attendees — huge for any author, especially a new one. "The Portal" sold out, and eager readers signed up on a waiting list. There is interest in turning "Portal" into a movie. And "Portal" won the USA Book News contest for "Best Books — Fiction."

And it has won this year's Grit Lit award for best book I wish I had written.

Grit Lit columnist Myles Knapp took a break from his usual reviewer's mode this month to meet and interview an author. Grit Lit will return the fourth Sunday of next month. Reach Myles Knapp at PO Box 197, Oakley, CA 94561 or [myles@grit-lit.com](mailto:myles@grit-lit.com).