

BY DAN EMERSON
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as featured in
LakeMinnetonka
OUR COMMUNITY / OUR MAGAZINE



Smooth Sailing

Deephaven's Jay White turns a hobby into a hardcover.

DEEPHAVEN RESIDENT JAY WHITE'S NEWLY PUBLISHED NOVEL, *Every Boat Turns South*, is the product of two, intersecting passions (an overused word, perhaps, but apropos here): sailing and fiction-writing.

White, whose penname is J.P., boasts a first novel partially inspired by a lifetime spent sailing the world's waters, including Lake Minnetonka. It was published in late September by the Sag Harbor, N.Y.-based Permanent Press.

An Ohio native who grew up sailing on Lake Erie, White is the son of a boat-builder who crafted 40-foot, wood sailboats. After his junior year in high school, the family moved to Fort Lauderdale, traveling there by sailboat across Lake Erie, down the Hudson River and south to Florida.

For a couple of years in his 20s, White made a living delivering sailboats along the Eastern Seaboard and in the Bahamas and Caribbean, an experience that provided fodder for his fiction.

Another experience he drew on was the death of a cousin, a Blue Angel pilot killed in a plane crash, which "threw that part of our family into a depression."

Part of the *Every Boat Turns South* story is the protagonist's struggle with guilt over the death of his favorite son. White sums up the plot as "part family drama, part Caribbean-noir," revolving around the theft of \$2 million worth of cocaine.

White has been a writer and fiction reader for much of his 57 years; Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner, two of his favorite novelists, served as role models when he began writing the novel about 10 years ago. He was a Vermont-based freelance writer back in 1982, when a client brought him to the Twin Cities for "a week-long job that turned into full-time."

He's also a principal in Institute for Vibrant Living, an Arizona-based nutritional supplement company co-founded by one of his former writing clients.

After beginning his first novel, White spent three years writing it and two more finding an agent. "She couldn't sell it. So I pulled back, and rewrote it twice. Eventually, he realized "I had done everything the wrong way," he recalls. "I thought that, since I had read a thousand novels, I would know how to write one. But I didn't understand a lot of the mechanics of storytelling; so there were lots of stops and starts."

That breakthrough came after he posted on elance.com to find an experienced screenwriter to turn his novel into a script;

White met two experienced screenwriters, one located in New York and one in Los Angeles. Based on their experience in writing and selling screenplays, the two helped him focus on the importance of telling a story. "They helped me get beyond the language and get on with the story," he says.

White owns the screen rights to his book and hopes to sell the screenplay with the help of its writer, Alan Katz, a Miramax-produced screenwriter. "I am the de facto producer of my own screenplay."

White and his family live in Deephaven, where they moved four years ago. His wife, Betty Bright, is an art historian and curator who founded the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. They have one daughter, Vera, a student at Southview Middle School in Edina.

Sailing not only provided background material for the novel, it's also the way White recharges his writing "batteries."

He's still a sailing addict, mooring a 25-foot Cape Dory sailboat on Minnetonka's St. Louis Bay, which he refers to as "the sweetest little harbor on the entire lake," due to its classic, New England feel. "My boat is a classic, full-keel sloop trimmed out in teak wood," he says proudly. "It's the kind of boat my father used to make. There's no other boat like it on the lake."

White has no illusions about impending Hollywood fame. But, as he says, "hope springs eternal. We're in the 1 percent category; we're ahead of about 99 percent of people who embark on such a wild dream. I do know it's being read by some of the biggest and best production companies out there. Of the scripts that are sold, less than half are turned into movies. But that's all you can really ask for—the chance to get up to bat and take a swing."

He's also putting his improved fiction writing skills to work on two novels-in-progress. "They are going much more smoothly than the first one," he reports. "I did learn a lot on the first one. Hopefully, the next one will be easier to write and easier to publish." //



Find Jay White's new novel, *Every Boat Turns South*, locally at The Bookcase in Wayzata and Magers & Quinn in Minneapolis. Contact him at jpwhite@mchsi.com or visit www.jpwhite.net