

A CONVERSATION WITH PHILIP DONLAY about *Aftershock*

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF, HOW AND WHEN YOU STARTED WRITING.

I started writing in High School. An English teacher encouraged me to keep writing and I did. At eighteen I had an article published in a national aviation magazine and while still a teenager, I vowed to write a novel one day.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE YOUR NOVEL?

Aftershock became a concept the day I landed a private jet in Guatemala City and could see a venting Volcano from my hotel. It was remarkable.

HOW DID YOU USE YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCE OR PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND TO ENRICH YOUR STORY?

Of course, there's my aviation background which not only brings the reader inside a jet, but I put them in the cockpit and place their hands on the controls. With all of my travel I've typically been to each place I write. I feel like the less you have to invent, the better the story. I also take great pride in how much research I do when I do have to make something up—like the *Scimitar*. It doesn't exist, but it could.

ANYTHING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL IN YOUR NOVEL?

You bet. I've taken little bits of myself and sprinkled them here and there; it's one of the joys of being the novelist. There's the love of flying, BMWs and Canadian whisky. The travel, the interesting people, the complex logistics, they all come from my life as a professional pilot.

ARE ANY CHARACTERS BASED ON PEOPLE YOU KNOW?

Yes, some know, some don't. Some think they are but aren't. It's great fun and it's all better left secret. Be forewarned, if you do know me, everything you do or say is fair game for my books.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE OR MOST SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

Donovan Nash is always my favorite, simply because he's the strongest, yet most damaged character in all of my books. In *Aftershock*, I loved writing Eva, followed by Montero and Lauren. I think they evolved the most during the telling of the story and it was very gratifying peeling back their layers.

WHO IS YOUR LEAST SYMPATHIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

La Serpiente—he was evil simply out of greed.

WHAT PART OF WRITING YOUR BOOK DID YOU FIND THE MOST CHALLENGING?

It's always the logistics. Once that's settled, it's then the relationship between Donovan and Lauren. They've come a very long way since the opening scene of *Category Five*, to the epilogue of *Aftershock*.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE THAT READERS WILL TAKE AWAY FROM YOU BOOK?

My mission is always the same—to entertain. In this book I deal with loyalty and truth, as well as love, both past and present. There are life and death situations, sacrifice, and finally questions about revenge, friendship, and courage. All wrapped up in a fast-paced, action-filled story featuring airplanes and volcanoes. Take your pick as to what resonated--but above all, be entertained.

WHAT WRITERS HAVE INSPIRED YOU?

Ernest K. Gann, Richard Bach, Wilbur Smith, Martin Caidin, Alistair MacLean, Clive Cussler, Tom Clancy, Vince Flynn, William Kent Krueger, David L. Robbins. The list could go on for a very long time.

WHAT IS THE WRITING PROCESS LIKE FOR YOU?

It changes all the time. I used to write in great, inspired chunks, lasting 2-3 days at a time, and then be spent. Now I chip away, writing nearly every day when a book is taking shape. Sometimes it's easy, other days it feels impossible. In the end, there is a sense of accomplishment that rivals anything I've ever experienced.

WHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT WRITING THAT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

Stop for the day when you know exactly what the next sentence is going to be.

WHAT IS THE WORST PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT WRITING THAT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

That a writer should write every day, even if you don't feel like writing.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU? ANY NEW BOOKS IN THE PIPELINE?

Of course, Donovan and company can't stay out of trouble for very long.

ANY FINAL WORDS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY ABOUT YOURSELF, YOUR NOVEL, OR LIFE IN GENERAL?

I want to thank my readers. You're my biggest joy. You're the best!