

# HOORAH PATCH PRESS

Media Information on Bill Keeton's

***A Boy Called Combustion:  
Growing Up in 1940s Mississippi***

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\*For Jackson, MS area and Atlanta area press releases,  
author photos and book cover art,  
or to arrange an interview or author event,  
please visit <http://www.billkeeton.com/MediaKit.html>

# PUBLICATION DETAILS FOR A BOY CALLED COMBUSTION

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## Synopsis

Dr. Bill Keeton's new memoir, *A Boy Called Combustion*, celebrates the adventures of childhood, the bonds of family, and the joys of life in the 1940s South. Both heartwarming and hilarious, the book's linked stories savor the vivid imagination behind a child's comic exploits, the wisdom gained in the aftermath, and the colorful family and friends who shared both the lessons and the fun.

*A Boy Called Combustion* is a memoir deeply rooted in the Mississippi of the 1940s, where folks never cook from prepared mixes and kids have a weekly date with the movie serials. Yet it is also a timeless American story of life, love, laughter, maturation, and the gifts of family strength. Anyone who has ever planned a childhood prank...suffered the punishment that followed...experienced the delights and challenges of a large extended family...or looked back with gratitude at the influence of remarkable role models, will enjoy and be inspired to relive their own pasts through its pages.

A native of Jackson, MS, and a graduate of the University of Mississippi School of Medicine, Bill Keeton is an anesthesiologist and expert on the treatment of chronic pain who practices with Pain Consultants of Atlanta.

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Trade Paperback & Kindle E-book  
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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: NEW MEMOIR CELEBRATES A “COMBUSTIBLE” SOUTHERN CHILDHOOD**

**ATLANTA/JANUARY 23, 2014:** A large, loving, and colorful family. A unique Southern town. A slower-paced, warmer-hearted America. And the kid who nearly destroyed them all.

That’s the story of longtime Atlanta resident Dr. Bill Keeton’s new memoir, *A Boy Called Combustion*. Published this January and ranked #1 in its category on Amazon on its January launch, the book celebrates the joys of childhood amid a close family in the deep South.

Nicknamed “Combustion” for reasons readers will immediately understand, young Bill Keeton grew up as part of the large Fondren family in the Jackson, MS community named after his grandfather, D.F. Fondren. Accidentally knocking down his grandparents’ garage, “helping” neighbors paint their house, and denting his mother’s brand new stove with his BB gun, “Combustion” constantly surprised all who knew him. The book’s 31 linked stories, ranging in time from the author’s early childhood through his years in college, savor the rambunctious energy behind a child’s comic exploits, the wisdom gained in the aftermath, and the colorful family and friends who shared both the lessons and the fun.

“Bill Keeton’s memoir is chock-full of wit and homespun wisdom, a modern-day Mark Twain recalling his youth in 1940s Mississippi. Through Keeton’s vibrant prose and charming stories we see how the values of a large and loving Southern family shaped a rascal channeling Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn into an insightful doctor who has served his community for over 40 years,” comments Larry Kahn, the author of *The Jinx* and *King of Paine*.

Darden North, winner of the 2011 IPPY Award for Southern fiction, calls the book “a downright funny, while poignant, tale of family survival and patience told by a masterful storyteller—a unique coming of age for a young man in Mississippi that will reach readers well beyond the Deep South,” adding, “Dennis the Menace ain’t got nothing on Billy Keeton.”

Featuring 20 pages of vintage photographs and beautifully designed by CJ Madigan of Shoebox Stories, the 189-page book retails for \$13.95 in trade paperback and \$3.99 in Kindle e-book.

Dr. Keeton has lived in Atlanta since 1971. The Chief of Anesthesia at the DeKalb Medical Center for 16 years, he has also served as president of the DeKalb Medical Society and the Greater Atlanta Society of Anesthesia. *A Boy Called Combustion* is his first book. Dr. Keeton is available for phone and email interviews, talks and signings. Complete media kit, author biography, Q/A, and image slideshow are available on the [media kit page](#) at [www.billkeeton.com](http://www.billkeeton.com).

# PRAISE FOR A BOY CALLED COMBUSTION

“A *Boy Called Combustion* is a downright funny, while poignant, tale of family survival and patience told by a masterful storyteller—a unique coming of age for a young man in Mississippi that will reach readers well beyond the Deep South. Dennis the Menace ain’t got nothing on Billy Keeton.” —**DARDEN NORTH**, *winner of the Independent Publishers Book Association award for Southern Fiction and author of Wiggle Room*

“Bill Keeton’s memoir is chock full of wit and homespun wisdom, a modern-day Mark Twain recalling his youth in 1940s Mississippi. Through Keeton’s vibrant prose and charming stories we see how the values of a large and loving Southern family shaped a rascal channeling Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn into an insightful doctor who has served his community for over 40 years. *A Boy Called Combustion* will leave you yearning for a time when families lived next door and the Saturday double-feature was the only babysitter you ever needed.” —**LARRY KAHN**, *author of The Jinx and King of Paine*

At any given moment in these stories, the reader isn’t sure that young Billy, i.e. “Combustion,” will live through his exploits to adulthood. The fact that he does is clearly due in part to luck and in part to the wisdom and strength of his family. From Mama and Papa all the way to “Daddy Bogue,” the Fondrens and Keetons emerge vividly from these pages, as do their neighbors and friends; we see both their unique, colorful personalities and the deep values they lived. “A Boy Called Combustion” has a playful tone, a high energy level, and a deep appreciation for a given moment in time—here, the Mississippi of the mid-twentieth century. I enjoyed reading about the particular delights of that time and place, from butter molds to home-made pies to afternoons at the movie serials. But I also enjoyed the timelessness of the stories. Even though I grew up in a later decade and a more northern location, I immediately identified with the events and people in the book. “Little Billy” is uniquely himself—but he’s also every little boy, past and present, who ever had a “brilliant” idea that involved mayhem. “Mama” and “Daddy” are memorable personalities, but they’re also every parent who has tried to control the mischief of a young scamp without ruining his zest for life. —**LINDA GORDON HENGERER**, *author, Co-Chair of Mystery Writers of America—Florida Chapter convention, Sleuthfest 2014*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR: BILL KEETON M.D.

Bill Keeton was born in 1940 and raised in the Fondren community of Jackson, Mississippi. Now a vibrant part of North Jackson, Fondren was named for Bill's grandfather, D.F. Fondren, who bought land near the site of a former insane asylum and later built both a family home and a grocery store there.

One of four children, Bill was raised as part of the large Fondren clan. As his stories relate, his boyish imagination and penchant for experimentation with everything from cars to BB guns often threatened the family's safety and sanity. Luckily, no permanent damage was done (at least to anything but inanimate objects) and the wisdom of Bill's immediate and extended family helped shape a youthful rascal into a sensible and law-abiding citizen.

Bill earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Mississippi and went on to receive his medical degree from the University of Mississippi School of Medicine. His honors there included an award for Most Outstanding Intern. (He hastens to add that he was *not* the only intern in the running for the prize.) Among his mentors in medicine were Dr. Burnell Brown and Dr. Janet Travell, personal physician to President John F. Kennedy.

Anesthesiology and the treatment of pain have been the focus of Bill's work in medicine. During the Vietnam War years, he proudly served in the US Air Force as Chief of Anesthesia at the USAF base in Westover, MA. He worked as an anesthesiologist in Atlanta, GA for several decades; in 1997, Bill left the field of anesthesiology and began to work full time in pain management. He was the founder and director of the DeKalb Pain Center until 2007, when he joined Pain Consultants of Atlanta.

A frequent lecturer on the management of chronic intractable pain and the appropriate use of opioid medications in its treatment, Bill is currently working on the development of an educational program for patients requiring daily doses of those medications for pain. In addition to that program and *A Boy Called Combustion*, Bill has created a web-based program called *Learn to Tell Time in No Time with Doctor Bill*.

Bill lives with Dee, his wife of twenty years, and is the proud father of three daughters. Anne is a grief counselor and lives in nearby Norcross, GA; Beth lives in St. Petersburg, FL and has her own consulting company; and Molly, a psychologist, who lives in Atlanta. His four grandchildren remind him happily of the joys of his own childhood, but fortunately, none inherited their grandfather's mischievous nature. In the little spare time he has left after work, family, and writing, he can occasionally be found on the golf course. While no one has ever accused him of being a golfer, he does like to try.

For more on Bill's medical background and qualifications, visit Bill's LinkedIn page here: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/billkeetonmd>.

# INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR: BILL KEETON M.D.

*Q. What was inspiration for writing these stories?*

**A.** Many of the stories in the book have been told by me and my family for as long as I can remember. They always seemed to be well received. Reading Robert Fulgham's *All I really Needed to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten* was inspiring for me. I really enjoyed his life's stories and decided I would write some of my own. I wrote them as they came to mind over the next few years.

To my astonishment, I really enjoyed writing. This was quite a surprise, as I had always avoided it like the plague. As a matter of fact, the chapter of *A Boy Called Combustion* called "Freshman Year" tells how I conned a classmate (I won't mention his name, but his initials were Charles Alexander) into writing the essays required for my Freshman English class.

I was also inspired by reading the letters that my father wrote. Daddy neither finished school nor read fine literature. But he spoke very well, and wrote many excellent letters. I decided if he could write so excellently without the benefit of the education he ensured that I had, I should be able to do so as well.

*Q. Are the stories true?*

**A.** These stories are all true—and despite what you may think, none are even exaggerated to any significant degree. Yes, I really did get into all those scrapes as a kid, even the most unlikely ones. As my cousin Dave Montgomery said to his niece Jennifer, "I can assure you, all of these stories are absolutely true and he didn't even tell some of the worst ones!" And as my cousin Ken Goodrich wrote in his foreword to the book (we decided to call it the "Forewarning," which seemed more apt), "You just can't make this stuff up."

*Q. You're now a longtime resident of Atlanta. How does life there compare to your earlier days in Mississippi?*

**A.** Atlanta is certainly much larger than my hometown of Jackson, Mississippi, but the people are just as friendly. Interestingly, even folks that come to Atlanta from the "nawth" seem to quickly acquire the easier lifestyle and friendliness that are Southern hallmarks. Atlanta offers "the best of both worlds." It's a cosmopolitan city with vibrant artistic and business sectors, yet also a warm community with rich tradition and a wonderful quality of life.

*Q. What was it like growing up in a big close-knit family like the one the book describes?*

**A.** I was surrounded by not only my immediate family, but also by all of my aunts, uncles and cousins. I had cousins who were almost as old as my mother, as well as many close to my own age. I loved and respected each and every one of them—they all had a big impact on my life in one way or

another. To say that the Fondren family was close-knit is one of the greatest understatements I can think of. Its warmth created a wonderful, safe and nurturing environment in which to grow up.

The Fondren family keeps growing. The five or six generations that I know of since my grandparents are spread out all over the country. The last family reunion was in 1985, as far as I can recall. People today are so busy, it's hard to get so many of them together. But I'd love to go to another reunion, and see both familiar faces and new family members.

*Q. You're a medical doctor. Which was harder, dissecting bodies or writing the book?*

*A.* Dissecting bodies wasn't really hard. It required learning anatomy, which is no different than learning history or anything else. You just study it until you have it clearly in your mind. For me, the biggest problem was getting around the smell of the formaldehyde used to preserve the cadavers. After getting on your hands it stayed with you, despite multiple washings. It was especially noticeable while eating your evening meal.

Getting through medical school required reading and learning large volumes of information. Most of the material was highly technical and much of it was, indeed, boring. However, it was probably more time-consuming than difficult. If you were willing to put in the necessary hours, mastery of it could be achieved.

Writing is entirely different. You may have to study to learn the background information necessary to write a particular piece, but the story has to come from within. In fact, people may be right when they say that the story actually comes from beyond the writer, who is only a conduit through which it is channeled.

I was surprised by much of the writing that emerged once I started the project. The wording of my stories, for example, didn't sound like my ordinary way of writing or talking. I'm sure that if I were to rewrite the same story a year later, the action would be the same, but the words would be entirely different. The unpredictability was part of the fun of writing the book. Being surprised by the memories and ideas that arose kept the process interesting.

*Q. Fondren, MS is described often in the book. What was it like when you were growing up?*

*A.* When I was a young child growing up there, Fondren Grocery—which I describe in the book—seemed to be the center of things in its part of Jackson. There wasn't much else around except a service station a block or so away, a hardware store, the Pix movie theater, and three churches.

While we considered ourselves "city folks," ours was a small community. And of course, this was in the 1940s. As a five-year-old, I could walk by myself to the store; by the time I was eight or nine, I would take a city bus downtown to go to a movie. I would come home after school, get on my bike, and stay out until it was time for supper. Everybody pretty much knew everybody. So while I may have been out of my mother's sight, there was always someone around who knew where I was and what I was doing. The luxury of this totally safe environment is something most parents today don't have.



*Q. What is Fondren like today?*

*A.* Fondren was originally far enough from Jackson, MS, that it showed up on maps as a separate place. Later, it became incorporated into Jackson proper.

Fondren today is entirely different than it was in my childhood. It's now a vibrant community with a real spirit and life of its own. People enthusiastically want to be part of it. Its population is nationally, ethnically and racially diverse, and it is home to all ages from the very young to the very old. I suspect that very few of its residents have ever heard of my grandfather, D. F. Fondren, who gave the place its name. But I think he'd be pleased by how much people love living there, as well as surprised by the size and complexity of modern-day Jackson. ■