

Eloping 101

7:34 AM PDT, March 28, 2008

Friday, March 28, 2008 (or so it is here where I am, on a crusieship ploughing its way through the Arabian Sea on its way to Salalah, Oman).

Now that I've gone and done it, I seem to recall that as a youngster I had a fascination with the idea of eloping. It seemed dramatic and mysterious and truly romantic. Last Tuesday, as we headed for the airport, we deposited a collection of invites to a Honeymoon Brunch to be held the day after we return, and then made off and got married in another city. The next day we headed for Paris where we spent a few days in the glorious George V Hotel and eating wonderous meals and drinking even more wonderous wines and walking about Montmartre and the Marais. And the adventure was only beginning.

We then flew to Dubai. Imagine an Arabian fairy tale wonderland and that is Dubai. Astounding place. Perhaps a bit on the plastic versus authentic side - but hey, don't we all need and love plastic sometimes? After a few days during which we toured the city, saw what will become the tallest building in the world, got henna tatoos, smoked a shisha pipe, rode camels, went dune crashing in the desert, and learned some Arabic, we boarded a crusie ship heading around the Arabian Peninsula.

It floors me that I can sit here in my suite, with the Arabian Sea rushing by my balcony, and communicate this to you with the ease of punching a few buttons.

So far we've been to Fujairah, UAE and are now heading to Salalah, Oman. What a fantastic, diverse world there is out there. So much to see and learn and understand and be part of of - even if just for a short while. And doing it all as a newly married man just makes it so much sweeter. So much newness to get acquainted with...

A Lammie Nod for Stain!

4:53 PM PDT, March 15, 2008

Finalists Announced

for the 20th Annual

Lambda Literary Awards

March 14, 2008--Finalists were announced today for the upcoming 20th Annual Lambda Literary Awards to be held Thursday, May 29, in West Hollywood, CA.

Over 80 judges -- writers, journalists, booksellers, librarians, professors -- chose 107 finalists in 21 categories, and the winners will be announced at a gala ceremony in the Silver Screen Theatre at the Pacific Design Center (tickets are now on sale), on May 29, at 7:30 pm.

And on the list in the category for Best Men's Mystery....

Double Abduction, Chris Beakey (J. Boylston/ ibooks, Inc.)

Stain of the Berry, Anthony Bidulka (Insomniac Press)

Pierce, Roberto Ferrari (Haworth)

Murder in the Rue Chartres, Greg Herren (Alyson Books)

Mahu Surfer, Neil Plakcy (Alyson Books)

Drag Queen in the Court of Death, Caro Soles (Haworth)

I'm so happy about this for so many reasons.

And I'm thrilled for my co-nominees. Many of them are friends and wonderful colleagues. I have toured with both Neil www.mahubooks.com and Caro www.carosoles.com . And soon doing an event with Chris www.chrisbeakey.com . And I always see my good friend Greg www.scottynola.livejournal.com at Saints & Sinners in New Orleans. I look forward to getting to know Roberto's work. I so admire these people and their work. It's a win-win situation as far as I'm concerned. And in other categories, the wonderful Ellen Hart www.ellenhart.com and Wayne Gunn and William Maltese www.williammaltese.com . Wonderful.

LA, here we come!

Climbing Snow Mountains

7:44 AM PDT, March 14, 2008

March 15, 2008 - in the category 'in the day of the life of....', I was recently kindly selected to be featured for a cover article for a magazine called Acreage Life. I've lived on a 12-acre acreage for the past decade or more and love it. Still close enough to the city to have the amenities, but far enough away to have the peace and quiet and space to walk in that I enjoy as a former farm boy.

The issue won't appear until November, but they shoot covers far in advance. Because of our early spring, they realized they needed to get an outdoor acreage pic with snow in it fast. So yesterday, me and the mag's super photographer, Mike, crawled over fences and traipsed over the fields behind my home. We braved what was a deceptively chilly wind to climb snow mountains that had thawed just enough to send us falling through every few steps or so.

What I learned from Mike, is that photos taken in cold weather are often kind to the subject, as it gives the skin great tone and colour. Go figure.

So, come next November, look for me on the cover of Acreage Life and see if you can spot the runny nose, but great skin tone.

Now I'm off to pack for my next trip - a long one this time. After a few days in Paris, we'll be flying to Dubai. There we'll gawk in awe at all the super structures most everyone has probably seen on one of the ubiquitous emails going around about what is happening in Dubai. We're dining in an underwater restaurant, we'll check out the indoor ski hill, ride camels, and breakfast with shieks in the desert. Then we're getting on a ship to sail around the Arabian Peninsula, with stops in exotic sounding locales like Fujairah, UAE; Salalah, Oman; Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Safaga and Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt; Aqaba, Jordan; then through the Suez Canal. After a couple days in Athens, it'll be time to come home...at which time I have high hopes that all the snow mountains in my back yard will have disappeared.

Need more time to read.....

6:57 AM PDT, March 11, 2008

March 11, 2008 - I'm now back from Denver where I attended the Left Coast Crime conference. I found weather here at home to be much like Denver, little cool, crisp and sunny. Unlike some of my eastern colleagues, some of whom arrived at the airport to find their flights cancelled due to the winter storms. I only bring this up because, as a Saskatchewanian, we rarely have the opportunity to crow about our good winter weather. Forgive me.

Both a great gift and a heavy burden of attending a conference like LCC, are the wonderful authors I get to meet. A great gift, because so many of them are not only immensely talented writers from whom I learn alot, but darn nice people too. The burden comes along because I want to read all their books and my 'to read' pile already grows taller than some of the new hotels being built in Dubai.

If you're looking for some good reading, and a fair bit of variety, here are some of my new favourites (along with some old standbys):

Lori Armstrong www.loriarmstrong.com

Jeff Buick www.jeffbuick.com

Vicki Delany www.vickidelany.com

Christine Goff www.christinegoff.com (Christine was also a major organizer of LCC - great job!)

Carolyn Hart www.carolynhart.com

Tim Maleeny www.timmaleeny.com

Rick Mofina www.rickmofina.com

Neil Plakcy www.mahubooks.com

Penny Warner www.pennywarner.com

Betty Webb www.bettywebb-mystery.com

Mark Zubro www.markzubro.com

Jim Mitchell www.jamescmitchell.net

Mario Acevedo www.marioacevedo.com

Okay, get ready, set.....READ!

Left Coast Crime Convention

8:34 AM PST, March 8, 2008

March 8, 2008, Denver, CO - This is my second day at the annual Left Coast Crime convention where writers and readers and all others involved in or in love with crime fiction have gathered in beautiful Denver, CO to talk about a whole range of topics.

Thus far I have been to sessions that discussed how mysteries handle touchy issues, the baggage that goes along with being a modern vs traditional detective (which I moderated), sex & violence - is too much ever enough?, thrills & chills, and this morning a panel on writing opposite sex characters.

There have been some fun social events too, like the Mystery Writers of America cocktail party last night, after which I had a succulent duck with a nice Haute Medoc at Bistro Vendome in Larimer Square.

Denver is cooperating with lovely sunny days just touched with chill.

More to follow today.

READ

8:50 AM PST, March 2, 2008

March 2, 2008 - A few months ago I was asked to put together a package for READ Saskatoon (a local literacy organization - www.nald.ca/readsask) celebrity auction. My package was a full, signed set of Russell Quant mysteries, a bottle of wine from the five countries Russell has visited, and an evening with moi! I would come to your home (or wherever) and give a private reading for you and your friends/family.

The package was generously purchased by Kris and Ken. Last night they hosted the reading event in their beautiful home on an acreage just outside of the city. They even had wines, appetizers and desserts from all the five countries. There was a splendid crowd, kindly attentive and who laughed at the right spots (pewh!). Between each reading, I gave away prizes relating to the books, and other prizes donated by READ Saskatoon which had a couple of representatives in attendance too.

For some, it was their first reading, and many had no idea what to expect. I love that. All in all a pretty terrific evening of fun in support of a good cause. Doesn't get better than that.

And today we're off to visit my mother on her farm homestead, where we'll eat borscht and lots more of her incredible cooking and play kinasta and yatze. Fun.

Mile High City

11:01 AM PST, March 1, 2008

March 1, 2008 - I'm off to Denver, Colorado. Denver is called the "Mile High City" because it sits at an elevation of 5,280 feet. My prairie hometown of Saskatoon is only at around 1,600 feet above sea level - so I suppose a bit of adjustment will be necessary.

I'll be attending Left Coast Crime writers conference:

Mar 6th, 2008 (Thu) -- Mar 9th, 2008 (Sun)

Attendance at Left Coast Crime Conference
Denver, CO

Adam's Mark Denver Hotel
1550 Court Place, Denver, CO 80202

Moderator for panel: "Dicks with baggage: The Modern PI"

Friday, March 7, 2008
9:45 am - 10:30 am

With author panelists:
Lori G. Armstrong
Parnell Hall
Tim Maleeney
James C. Mitchell

Plus I'll be hanging with my colleagues and friends Neil Plakcy and Mark Richard Zubro, and heading out for dinner with fellow Canadian mystery writer, the talented and wonderful Mary Jane Maffini www.maryjanemaffini.ca .

Should be great fun.

The Trenches

7:31 AM PST, February 15, 2008

February 15, 2008 - At a recent event somewhere, a reader came up to me and said, "What glamorous lives writers must have, always travelling, meeting people, being asked to attend fun-filled events". And yes, all that is true. :) But those days are not every day. Or every second day. Writers too, can be in the trenches. Like now. I'm feeling behind in my work because I've been away a lot and am working on several other non-writing projects and community related activities. And I'm at the stage in this new book where I'm doing extremely heavy re-writes - the kind that can change the essence of a book, the kind that make you question every word, every character you created. The kind that makes you question your skill as a writer. The kind that makes you think you stink.

Yet I know from experience, the other side of every trench is a wonderful euphoria, where you come up with just the right phrasing or newly invigorated climax, or perfect quirk in a character's make-up, that makes you sit back and think, wow, I don't stink so much today.

A young fellow I know who is currently backpacking through Europe - oh to be young and carefree - reminded me in an email from Lucca that Proust once wrote something about a bottle of cheap wine being a fine companion. I bet he wrote that when in the trenches.

Or maybe not.

Despite all this, for me, even the trenches in the career of a writer are a delight. Because I get to write. I get to call myself a writer. It's my job every day. And I love it. It's important to reaffirm that. Especially when in the trenches. :)

Points of View

6:47 AM PST, January 31, 2008

January 31, 2008 - Last night I attended a local book club meeting. They've been kind enough to have me back three times over the course of the Russell Quant

series. This time they were discussing Sundowner Ubuntu. They're a wonderful group, always lots of laughs, good conversation, and killer food and wine.

At one point we were discussing some of the series' return characters. It struck me how two people can have wildly different points of view on who a character is, what their overriding characteristics are, and whether they like the character or not. The characters who kept coming up were Errall, Anthony and Sereena.

In terms of Errall, most agreed that she was a rather cold, blunt, oftentimes harsh person. But one side of the table saw a subtle shift in Errall in the latest book; a human-ness, a vulnerability showing through. The other side disliked her, never had warmed to her, and didn't think they ever would. Some saw her as tall, strong, beautiful, whereas others thought she was tough/butchy looking with severely cropped hair. I've always quite enjoyed writing Errall. I like the fact that she is a bit of a tough nut, hard to pigeonhole. She's not a yes-man to Russell, she challenges him, and ultimately they respect one another and have a deeper bond than what might seem readily apparent on the surface of their relationship.

Anthony was another of Russell's friends who the book-clubbers weren't in agreement over. At one extreme was the opinion that he was this old pervert who was snooty and opinionated and heavily affected. Others see a kinder, gentler underbelly to his confident exterior. Some see a gentlemanly, elegant Brit type character, who is a true mentor to Russell and cares about him deeply. One keen book clubber said something I thought was right on, which was that if he truly was as distasteful a character as some thought, he wouldn't be friends with Russell. I agree whole heartedly with that.

It never fails to fascinate me - the divergence in opinions - even among what I might have thought to be like-minded people. I find that exciting. One of the really cool things about reading and talking about what you've read. Many say that in reading, people look for themselves or for who they think they are (or want to be). A book-clubber who disliked Errall and Anthony, quite enjoyed the character of Sereena. And we wondered if it was because they share some of the same qualities. Next time you and a friend or family member read the same book, have a good talk about the characters - I think the discussion can say just as much about the reader as it does the fictional character.

Many thanks to the wonderful book club members - especially Lorraine who hosted the event in her lovely home - you're terrific. Happy reading all.

Russell Quant Interviewed

3:03 PM PST, January 21, 2008

January 21, 2008 - Recently, PI Russell Quant sat down with Neil Plakcy, author of the successful Mahu / Hawai'in mystery series, and gave what may be his first public interview. Neil covered a lot of bases, so if there are things you wanted to know about Russell Quant but were afraid to ask, maybe this is your chance get some answers. Check it out at:

<http://alexbeecroft.wordpress.com/2008/01/04/russe-ll-quant-gay-private-investigator>

And if you get a chance, leave a response, comment, and/or question of your own.

Cheers.

Dicks With Baggage: The Modern PI

3:51 PM PST, January 20, 2008

January 20, 2008 - As an attendee at this year's Left Coast Crime Mystery Writers Convention in Denver, CO in March, I've been given the terrific opportunity to moderate a panel called: Dicks with Baggage: The Modern PI.

And what's even better, is that my panel of writers is excellent:

Lori G. Armstrong <http://www.loriarmstrong.com>

Parnell Hall <http://www.parnellhall.com>

Tim Maleeney <http://www.timmaleeny.com>

James C. Mitchell <http://www.jamescmitchell.net>

Check them out.

Suspicion

8:56 AM PST, January 18, 2008

January 18, 2008 - In the midst of working on my new book, I've also been fitting in bouts of plotting for what may become the sixth Russell Quant mystery. As I sat on a beach last week, getting a bit of R&R and doing what I could to stabilize the Mexican tequila economy, my mind at times wandered to murder. I had previously come up with a concept for who I wanted to die and why. Now I had to find a way to best make it happen. Which led me to call on my various medical and criminal justice contacts.

I wanted to know about heroin. With its fine traits of being more toxic than morphine and leaving no discernable signs in autopsy unless a blood analysis is done - it was fast becoming a favourable murder weapon for my cause. Interestingly, I'd first considered the good old down a bunch of sleeping pills with booze thing - but research informed me that the sexy barbituates of the Marilyn-Monroe-Valley-of-the-Dolls days are long gone. Designed to be safer (although they can still do horrible damage), the sleeping pills of today won't necessarily kill you.

So, back to heroin. How much would it take to kill someone? Apparently there is a lot of disagreement in the industry about how much will kill an addict versus a non-addict. Then - where does one get it? Especially in a small prairie city. And, how much would I pay?

I put these questions, under the title of how to best kill someone without being found out, to some of my contacts. As usual, when I put out a question, I was so thrilled with the response, and admiring of the knowledge that people have (and I sorely lack) and are willing to share. At the same time, a few wiseacres couldn't help but question my motives and (with a sly e-wink) ask if everything was okay between me and my spouse. Ha! Is it kind of morbid that I'm having to know all this stuff?

Perspective

6:56 AM PST, January 12, 2008

January 12, 2008 - Getting perspective in Puerto Vallarta where the temp is hot during the day, refreshingly cool at night, and the margaritas are always fine.