

Book Clubs, Wine & Cheese Signings & Curried Prawns, Oh My

10:12 AM PDT, September 28, 2007

September 28, 2007 - It struck me today that my fifth Russell Quant book, *Sundowner Ubuntu*, will likely be in my hands in a couple of weeks, and I'll be hosting my hometown launch in less than a month. This has got to be one of the most exciting times in a writer's life - the period immediately leading up to and following the release of a new book. It's a time with no shortage of celebrations. For any of you who've read this blog for a while or some of the articles I've written about the writing life, you'll know I'm a big supporter of writers learning to celebrate milestones - big and small. Of course, a new book is about as big as they get.

Part of the excitement for me, is coming up with new and innovative ways to promote the book and share the fun with my readers. As part of my hometown launch, I like to create an atmosphere tied to where Russell is travelling in the new book. This time it is Africa. And so, last week I had the wonderful opportunity to have a taste test at the Saskatoon McNally Robinson bookstore, the host of my hometown launches, for what we might serve our guests on October 25th. New head chef, Kelly, created a sumptuous spread that included South African Peanut Soup, Curried Prawns, and Ethiopian Beef Stew. This was all served - by manager Dawn - alongside some superb South African wines. (It was impossible to go back to work after that!). Accompanying me was Events Coordinator Allison Fairbairn, and together we had a most delightful afternoon. All in the pursuit of greater literary accomplishment, right? I think this was the writer's version of the businessman's two-martini power lunch.

In Vancouver in November I'm hosting a wine & cheese signing, which will feature South African wines and will entail a chance to win a spectacular wine basket with five wines representing the five countries visited by Russell Quant over the past five books. Over the next couple of weeks, I'll be announcing other similar type promotions (Canada only for now, I'm afraid - book comes out spring '08 in the USA). If you're interested if something is happening near you, details will be posted in the Events section of the website.

Just a reminder, for any of you in book clubs, see the details on the website about the Book Club contest which runs to November 15, 2007.

A Farewell for Dick

10:22 AM PDT, September 23, 2007

September 23, 2007 - My friend Dick suffered a catastrophic stroke only a couple of months after marrying his sweetheart of 26 years. That was two years ago. He passed away this summer. That's it for the bad news.

I am, as I type this, in an airport lounge on the way home from Ottawa where I attended a get together for Dick. He didn't want a funeral. He wanted... a jaunty wine & cheese! It would have been his 64th birthday. Too young by far to no longer be with us, for sure. But the send off was, I think, exactly what he would have wanted it to be. He liked nothing better than a really good wine & cheese.

The day, which was forecast to be overcast and rainy, turned to brilliant sunshine and hot, as we began to gather yesterday afternoon in the the lovely home of friends who live in an area of Ottawa called The Glebe. (Never one to miss a chance to learn something new - apparently Glebe is a word that refers to an area that surrounds and belongs to a church - go figure). We came from all over - Tennessee, Palm Springs, Saskatchewan and many other similarly famed and exotic locales. Aside from a digital photo show and an urn, one might never have known someone had be taken from us. Even the grieving spouse, always the generous host, disappeared from guest's view to an upstairs room when things became a little too emotional. The rest of us drank wine, dined from a sumptous buffet, migrated throughout the home - inside and out - and met each other (for many of us did not know one another) - we talked, told tales and laughed.

Events such as this always make me - and I'm betting many of you - consider what I would want for my own 'farewell'. Is it to be steeped in religion and family tradition, or is it to be something quite opposite from that. And it begs the question: who is it really for? Is it to honour the deceased? Is it for them? Is it for those left behind? And if it's for those left behind, is it for the mother, the spouse, the siblings, the friends? That answer, I'm guessing, is different for everyone.

I want a party. But I want people to be appropriately sad too. I have nothing against a good cry. A crying party? Maybe. I love laughter. A laughing crying party? Better. With lots of stories told. And music. And good food. And pictures. And people from the many varied parts of my life. I want writers and accountants and farmers and artists and bakers and bankers and candlestick makers. Laughing and crying. Yup. Not bad. Need to think about his more. Maybe write it down. Hopefully I've got lots of time to get it just right.

But for now, good journey, Dick. I'm sure you're on one heck of an amazing golf course right now, sun shining down on your elegant, smiling face.

Quant TV?

7:54 AM PDT, September 19, 2007

September 19, 2007 - I have been on this road for quite some time now, but every so often the scenery becomes much more interesting. In short: A couple of years ago, Flight of Aquavit (the second book in the Russell Quant series) was optioned by an award -winning production company out of Toronto, ON: Breakthrough Films. Soon after, Amuse Bouche (the first in the series) was also optioned.

Having your books optioned is an terribly thrilling and wonderful thing, mostly in that it is some kind of sign that someone out there who knows something, thinks your work might transfer nicely onto screen. Almost from the start, readers have been telling me that they could see the Russell Quant books on TV or in a movie, that the writing had a good visual quality. And indeed, seeing things in my head does influence my writing a great deal. Having your books optioned however, does not guarantee that they will ever make it to screen. It basically means someone is paying you to keep them on reserve should an opportunity arrive for them to adapt them onto film of some sort (TV, movie, mini-series, whatever). So, I have thought of being optioned as a generous helping of gravy. And who doesn't like gravy?

However, talks began rather quickly on how and who and what a Russell Quant film project might be. Eventually (I'm skipping a lot of time here) we reached a point where Breakthrough decided to option the entire series. This made sense.

And, to Russell Quant's credit, I had gotten more than a couple initiating contacts from other producers inquiring about option rights. All this led into another long process which finally, joyfully, concluded late this summer with an agreement between all parties concerned.

Now that we are agreed, plans are unfolding. Breakthrough Films had joined forces with Verite Films of Regina, SK (of Corner Gas fame - a wildly successful half-hour comedy set in Saskatchewan). It has been hinted at for months now, that they had a 'big' broadcaster interested in this project, and that broadcaster has now been revealed to be the biggest of bigs in Canada: CTV. We have a development deal with CTV. That is a definite wow.

On Breakthrough Film's website, they have announced the following as one of their projects in development:

Quant features a uniquely original detective, Russell Quant, who handles often-perilous cases with comic flair and his trademark sense of style. Set in Saskatoon, Quant turns the prairies a lighter shade of noir. Quant is a co-production with Vérité Films. Thirteen one-hour episodes are being developed.

This is turning me many shades of excited. Of course, I have learned this is a hurry-up-and-wait kind of business, and things happen either at light speed or very slowly. I can understand that. But it's still darn exciting.

As a one-hour drama, as opposed to a movie or mini-series, Quant will likely be based more on the character and sensibility of the books rather than actual content. It will likely be several months - or longer- before an outline is developed for how a one hour show might roll out, and, assuming it is good and acceptable to CTV, months longer before production...but again...who doesn't like gravy!

This whole experience has been rewarding, interesting, and definitely a learning experience. I'm so grateful to Breakthrough and Verite for their vision. I'd say they have excellent taste! :) Could Russell Quant lunch boxes and action figures be far behind?

Thank you New York and Boston

8:23 AM PDT, September 9, 2007

September 9, 2007 - On my way home from the mini, two-city Men of Mystery Tour with my most excellent colleagues Neil Plakcy, Chuck Zito and Mark Zubro.

It was sweltering hot in both cities with humidity off the charts, which, when I learned it was unseasonably cold and drizzly back home, was quite a treat.

We had such a good time on this tour, and many thanks to all the fine folks who came out to meet us and the outstanding booksellers who supported us. Special thanks to my long time pals and born-again-New Yorkers, Pat & Mike who brought lots of friends and put up with odd ballon hats and knitting jokes (long story).

I was also thrilled to have author and chef James Haller, and his spouse, come to our Boston event, driving up from Maine to do so. James - who I now get to call Buddy - wrote a book that appears on my list of faves on my website - *Vie en France* (I think the spelling is correct...) - a lovely tale about a group of friends spending time and cooking up a storm in France. I rarely read a book more than once, but I have this one. And I've used many recipes from it, as recently as last year. Actually, that was when James and I first e-met. We were in south of France where we'd rented a little place in a town called Grimaud. I was intent on cooking French with French ingredients. And I used the recipes from the book. One day over a few pastise, I emailed James a fan letter and he kindly responded. I hope one day we have a chance to visit Buddy and Jack in Maine.

In New York we began with a rousing wine and cheese reception which always helps to create a convivial atmosphere. And the same in Boston, after the event.

As it often is, a popular question asked was whether Russell would soon have a serious love interest. I'm always touched by this query, because I know readers really care if they're worried about my main character's love life. Another question was who I would see playing Russell in a movie or TV show. For the longest time a Josh Duhamel type (TV's *LAs Vegas*) was top of list. But another possible would be an actor named Nathan Fillian, who is up and coming. He starred in a shortlived cult fave TV series called *Firefly*, recently starred with Kerri Russell in

Waitress and I've heard rumour that he'll be doing a stint on Desperate Housewives.

It was a treat doing this tour with Chuck, Mark & Neil. All are very committed, professional, and humorous fellows, and it was a joy to work with them. Check out their books.

These last few days have also given me a chance to spend more time in one of favourite cities, New York, and get to know Boston a little better. I investigated New York's shopping scene rather intensely - if you're looking for brand /designer names at discount - you have to try out Century 21 department store. I had a great lunch at Grand Central Station with the best darn Bloody Mary I've ever had. I had a Bloody Mary phase a few years ago, but rarely have one now. But it came with the Prix Fix brunch menu - and oh my, on that hot hot hot day it really hit the spot. In Boston's Fanueli (sp?) Market I found a glorious spot, white linens, outdoors but in the shade, and good view of the goings on, and had terrific oysters on the half shell with a some excellent chardonnay. (Prairie boy gets sea food fix). I also discovered the Newbury area - think blocks and blocks of charming brownstones housing shops, and bookstores, and eateries and tea bars. Very lovely - made me wish I could have lunch all over again.

On my last night in NYC I had dinner at The Modern - the newly renovated MOMA's fine dining option. It's a nice spot overlooking a sculpture garden. They pour a mean martini - and by that I mean BIG. I ended up doing the Chef's tasting menu with wine pairings. This was both good and bad news. The good was that the food was extraordinary (and it reminded me that Gerwutzemmeiner...again with the bad spelling - but you know, that sweet wine - I think of it as my mother-in-law's wine...is actually incomparably good when chilled just right and served with exceptional pate). The bad news was that although I asked if they could get through the menu in time for me to make it to my show, Alta Boyz, they could not. So I left late, had to run in new dress shoes (the place has a dress code - yup - full tie and jacket in broiling heat) which began to chafe, and I still missed the show. But y'know, although I was quite disappointed, I had to focus on the fact that I'd had this amazing day in an amazing city capped off with an amazing meal in an amazing restaurant. Not a bad day off.

Now back home. Always a sweet place to go.

Reining Tentacles

8:18 AM PDT, August 28, 2007

August 28, 2007

When asked "how's it going" about writing this new book (the first non Russell Quant I've written in some years), I have at times frowned, swatted the air as if it were filled with flies, looked away distractedly, or just mumbled something unintelligible. It's not that it isn't going swell, but that I simply have been unsure how to describe "how's it going".

As a fan of change, I like that this is a brand new experience in many ways. Yes, it is still writing, and it is still writing a mystery. But imagine living with a certain group of people for several years (people you know well, interact with a great deal, and in many ways control the fate of), and then leaving them behind to move in with a new group of people who you don't know at all. Daunting. Interesting. Irritating. Exhilarating. And lots more. That's how it...is...was...going.

This new book is in some ways bigger in scope, deeper, and there are so many lies and secrets and subplots and storylines and character arcs going on, that it has, at times, felt as if the book was a many-limbed squid with all these tentacles flailing about and my job was to rein them in...by which I mean taking control of all the lies, secrets et al and making them make sense and making them readable.

After several weeks of battling the tentacles, sometimes thinking I had them all in my grasp only to watch another bugger escape from under my arm, I've entered a sweetheart phase - in this case, Draft 3, where I am beginning to think I've reined in the tentacles. I know where they all are. I know know where they should be. And I know how to get them there. They're still tentacles, but they're my tentacles, under my control.

That's today.

It's exciting and I'm loving this book. Still not quite sure how to talk about it. But I'm doing some good 'law of attraction' stuff with it now - visualizing its success.

Other neat stuff happening. Next week I am in New York and Boston on the mini Men of Mystery tour with my colleagues Neil Plakcy, Mark Zubro and Chuck Zito.

Most of the new changes to the website are up and running, including the new and improved photo albums and calendar of events. You can now also hear me read from the first four books in the series (there is a link in the Books section to an audio file - may take a while to download - but it's cool).

I was just elected to the Executive Council of the International Association of Crime Writers for a four year term.

The official launch of Sundowner Ubuntu has been set for October 25, 2007 with a great event in my hometown of Saskatoon.

I'll be doing a fun signing/wine tasting event in Vancouver in November.

I'm running a new promotion for book clubs, beginning September 1 and running to November 14 - with some great prizes in the offing.

Check out the website for details of events and promotions.

As any good prairie boy should, I have to at least mention weather - Although July in Saskatchewan was a stunner, August is possibly going to go down as one of the coldest in history. Grrrrrrrrrrrr. Brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr.

NEW - Special Book Club Prize

8:09 AM PDT, August 17, 2007, updated at 2:32 PM PDT, September 15, 2007

August 17, 2007

NEW

Special Book Club Prize

Beginning September 1, 2007 (ending November 14, 2007), I am running a special prize offering for book club members. So, all you and your fellow book club members need to do is:

Send me an email with the Subject heading: Russell Quant Book Club Prize to anthony@anthonybidulka.com, with your name, name (and/or location) of your bookclub, and return email address.

On November 15, 2007, in time for holiday season reading, I will be drawing for one (1) grand prize and five (5) subsidiary prizes.

The five (5) subsidiary prizes will be a free copy of Amuse Bouche, the first Russell Quant book, to help you begin your Russell Quant library.

The one (1) grand prize will consist of all five of the Russell Quant books, including the brand new Sundowner Ubuntu to be released in Canada - October 2007 and in the US - May 2008.

On the draw date, I will contact the winners (via the return email address) to announce their win and arrange for delivery of the book to them.

Good luck and happy reading

Sundowner Ubuntu - Website Montage and Galley Edits

7:43 AM PDT, August 14, 2007

August 14, 2007 - We've just completed some big changes on www.anthonymbidulka.com . For those of you waiting for the new Russell Quant book, the website's opening montage now includes Sundowner Ubuntu, with some rather haunting African background music, to set the mood for you. Within the website you'll find an excerpt from the book's first chapter, as well as photographs that inspired many of the scenes and locations used in the book, as well as some potential cover images that were considered.

Also new on the website is a re-vamped colour-coded calendar of events, and a new photo gallery. The photographs are now organized into six galleries: Author photos, Inspiration (photos that depict some of my inspiration for the 5 books, and people and places I personally find inspirational), Moments (photos of special moments in my career), People (photos of people who enter my career and life), Travel, and Work (photos of book launches, appearances, tours etc for each book).

And speaking of Sundowner Ubuntu, I just received the galleys for the book. Galleys are basically the last version of the book before it becomes a real book; a mock up of how it will look. It's a last chance to make any changes before it goes to print. If we - author and editors and proofreaders have done our job - there should be little to change at this point - but I always (frustratingly) find something.

There was a terrific F. Scott Fitzgerald quote in this morning's paper - which mirrors a practice I try to follow (not always successfully) - it goes something like this: "Exclamation points in your writing is like laughing at your own jokes." So true!!!!!!

Men of Mystery - Boston and New York, Here We Come!

9:14 AM PDT, August 10, 2007

August 10, 2007 - They say the more the merrier. I am joining up with four of my favourite authors on a mini-tour with two appearances, one in New York , one in Boston. Hopefully, we'll quadruple your pleasure. If you or anyone you know in these areas is interested in joining us for these fun and entertaining events, below is the Press Release with the details and information about the other three terrific writers, Neil, Chuck and Mark.

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

August 2007

Anthony Bidulka (306) 477-7411 anthony@anthonybidulka.com

Neil Plakcy (954) 303-8727 neil@mahubooks.com

Chuck Zito (917) 751-9576 cjzito4@yahoo.com

Mark Richard Zubro (708) 479-5335 zubrom@yahoo.com

MEN OF MYSTERY

COME TO NEW YORK AND BOSTON

Mystery authors Anthony Bidulka, Neil Plakcy, Chuck Zito and Mark Richard Zubro will speak

6:00 PM Thursday September 6

The LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, New York

7:00 PM Friday September 7
Calamus Bookstore, 92B South Street, Boston

Anthony Bidulka's four-book series about Saskatchewan private eye Russell Quant has garnered a Lambda Literary Award, renown among Canadian mysteries, and critical acclaim. *STAIN OF THE BERRY* takes Russell on a professional and personal journey to the reaches of the far north as he discovers why members of the Pink Gopher choir are dying.

MAHU SURFER, Neil Plakcy's second mystery novel, sends openly gay Honolulu homicide detective Kimo Kanapa'aka back to his surfing past. Rather than announce Kimo's public return to the HPD after the events of *MAHU*, his new boss asks the former competitive surfer to go undercover on Oahu's North Shore to find the killer of three young surfers.

Chuck Zito's amateur sleuth, Nicky D'Amico, is a theatrical stage manager, and the two books that feature him have received applause from reviewers and readers alike. In *ICE IN HIS VEINS*, Nicky's trying to figure out who's killing the actors in an all-male production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

HOOK, LINE AND HOMICIDE is Mark Richard Zubro's twentieth mystery novel and the ninth in a series following Chicago homicide detective Paul Turner. Mixing humor and social concerns, Zubro also has written eleven books about amateur sleuths Tom Mason (a high school teacher) and Scott Carpenter, a professional baseball player.

All four authors are available for interviews and can be reached at the contact information at the top of this page. Author websites are:<http://www.anthonymbidulka.com/> <http://www.mahubooks.com>

<http://www.chuckzito-online.com/> <http://www.markzubro.com/>

The surprises have since come fast and furious, starting with a suite at the famed Beverly Hills Hotel where we sat in a booth next to Sharon Stone our first afternoon to meals at some of the best places in LA: Spago, The Ivy, Asia de Cuba, lots of shopping, and I swear, we are the only people in LA who walk. Our first morning we took a half hour walk in Beverly Hills and met not one other person. More sidewalk space for us.

Tonight we're going with friends to Hollywood Bowl for a picnic and Gladys Knight concert. Yesterday we had a driver take us on a private, good old movie stars home tour. I loved best seeing the people who really do sell the maps on the street. I also really loved to see that although they are monstrous, they're only just houses. It made it all a bit more real.

But the real stars are those people in the airport lounge. I wonder if they'll still be there when we fly back home....? :)

Murder Morning

5:22 PM PDT, July 20, 2007

Friday, July 20, 2007 - One of the questions I'm often asked is: What inspires your writing? It's a good question. I've often talked about finding inspiration from travel, the people I meet, extraordinary circumstance, food and, in most basic terms, my five senses. Every day, I pay attention to how things look, sound, feel, smell and taste.

After this morning, I must definitely give kudos to weather as one of my all time favourite inspirations. It's been hot in Saskatchewan this summer. In the low 30's Celsius (low 90s Fahrenheit). Today was to be no different, but I was jolted awake this morning, about 6 a.m. by a deep rumbling that meant, without doubt, to foretell a rain storm.

It was time to get up anyway (I'd tossed and turned all night regarding some new ideas for the current book), but instead I luxuriated for a half hour longer, playing a childhood game: after I saw the lightening streak across the sky I counted: one one thousand, two one thousand, three one thousand....the number of one

thousandths told me how many miles away the storm was. I have no idea whether this has any scientific validity at all - but what fun, especially as the one one thousandths grew smaller, meaning the storm was coming closer.

Eventually I reverted to adulthood and found myself at my desk, facing a large, double-size glass door and I began tapping away at the keys giving life to the ideas that had roamed through my head the night before. As the words poured out, every so often I looked up and glanced out the glass and saw the trees sway, the sky darken, the rain begin to spit. The thunder boomed, the lightening clawed at the sky. It was a morning storm - rather rare. Through my mind ran the slightly altered phrase: It was a dark and stormy....morning. And that it was.

As I reveled in what I was doing, I couldn't help but stop to smell the roses, so to speak, and think: this is the perfect morning to write mystery. And so I did.

Museum

7:37 AM PDT, July 19, 2007

July 19, 2007 - A couple of days ago - Tuesday of this week - one of our local journalists who has a regular column in our daily newspaper did an article about me. Title was Building a Mystery. A nice piece about my background and current work, along with a decent picture.

I've been fond of saying, Ned (the journalist) did a terrific job - he even made me look good. The best line so far came from a good friend who emailed me as soon as he saw the paper with: Great to make the front page without going to jail. (He was being generous - it was the front page of the Lifestyle section). And some of my co-Harry Potter enthusiasts declared me having hit the big time as I shared the page with the (daily) article counting down the days to the release of the next book - and my article was bigger.

There is something sweet about getting some home town lovin', exposure, promotion - all tied into one. And I am grateful for the calls and emails and messages from friends and family in response to this. Thank you all.

But the best reaction has got to be from my mom. She called me yesterday all excited because HER phone rang off the hook - everyone from the neighbour lady and long-heard-from relatives to the Prud'homme museum curator (I wasn't aware my home town had a museum) saying they wanted my books added to the collection. Very cool.

Listen to Me

8:13 AM PDT, July 16, 2007

July 16, 2007 - <http://www.booktalkradio.net> That's where to go if you'd like to hear me read from the first four Russell Quant mysteries. These are short audio excerpts, only a couple minutes long.

The dog dayz of summer are here - we had a really terrific pool party this weekend - chips and dip and splashing in the water with friends. Summer is a good thing.

On Taking Risk and Being Scared

7:23 AM PDT, July 4, 2007

July 4, 2007 - First off, to my readers, friends, colleagues and family in the USA - Happy July 4th! And belated Happy Canada Day (July 1) to my fellow Canadians. Here in Saskatoon a heatwave has engulfed us. The weatherman predicts a temperature record will be broken on Friday, and due to the wet June we had, the humidity in the air (which we are unused to in typically dry Saskatchewan) will be unusually high all week. Ahhhhh - tropics on the prairies. I love it. Especially since weather such as this is often accompanied by grandiose summer thunder storms which I quite enjoy.

For the first time since my early days of writing full time- let's say 6 or 7 years ago - I am writing a non-Russell Quant book. To be clear, the fifth Russell Quant - Sundowner Ubuntu - coming out this year is not (fingers crossed) the last, only the last for a little while longer than usual. Since I began the series (the first book, Amuse Bouche, was released in 2003), there has been a Russell Quant book every year. Although many of my readers think that even at that I am too slow (I take that as a compliment to Russell, so thank you), that is about as quickly as they can - and should (don't want to wear out my welcome in the market place) - be written and published.

Still, ever since the first book came out, I've had an urge to try my hand at another mystery or even some of the other genres I am interested in - thriller, fantasy, romance, even children's books. I think this urge is common to many people, certainly artists; the desire to try other forms of the art we love, see what we can do, stretch our wings. On the other hand, I fell in love with writing Russell Quant books and before I knew it, five years had passed and there were five Russell Quant books.

As I mentioned in earlier posts, this five thing seems like a bit of milestone to me, and as so, it felt a good time to stretch my writing muscles. I miss Russell a great deal, and Sereena and Errall and Anthony and Jared and Kay and that whole world, but this summer - the season in which I do most of my hard writing - I am spending with a whole host of other characters, in a new world. A risk, I know. And I am scared. Scared that what I write will be no good. Scared that when I get back to writing and publishing a sixth Russell Quant that the readers will have forgotten about him. Scared to make a change in what really is a pretty fantastic career and way to spend my day.

I am finding however, that the other side of fear, the other benefit of risk, is exhilaration. I am very excited to be writing about these new people, delving into new territory, trying new writing techniques and facing technical challenges. It's like coming up to two paths, one you know well, the other not at all, and choosing the latter. Oh, the adventure of it all. And, I've concluded that Russell and his bunch, and the people who read about Russell and who support me as a writer, will still be there at the end of this adventure. So here I
gooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo..... ..