

Top Tens

3:02 PM PST, December 31, 2007

December 31, 2007 - Tonight we are hosting about a dozen of our friends for a new year's eve appetizer-potluck-games night. I'm the type of guy where new year's eve is either extravagant and big with lots of people, or something like this, small, quieter (although I expect much laughter and good conversation) with a group of close friends. Anything in between seems to fall flat somehow.

As part of the evening, I asked everyone to bring a top ten list. The content/subject matter was up to them. It could reflect the year past or portent the coming one. Anything from your top ten favourite curse words to top ten reasons you love your spouse to top ten favourite movies is up for grabs, let your imagination take over.

I'm a big one for having pictures to commemorate most occassions. I love looking back at photos of holidays, special events, people who've passed on or no longer live in my daily life, photos of parties and professional milestones. I used to have The Wall in my home. On it I hung 5x7s of favourite photographs. Each year the wall grew larger and larger until finally it took up most of the free space on the lower level of my house. It was all or nothing for me. So I took it down and began collecting the photos in photo boxes which people could rifle through at will. (Duplicates are always kept in photo albums and electronically - so I don't worry about fingerprints and the like). And now I've moved on to digital photo frames. I have three such frames which constantly flicker with an ongoing slide show of decades of photos.

So, as one might guess, I decided my top ten list would be my top ten 2007 memories in photographs. It was hard to get the list down to ten, but eventually I did. And they were:

1. April 21, 2007 – Spring Dinner Party - this was the perfect dinner party with about twenty guests, from various worlds, lines of work, ages, backgrounds. We had it catered which was a perfect way to really enjoy the evening ourselves instead of worrying about whether the chicken was overcooked, or running back and forth to the kitchen. Nothing better than good friends, good food and wine, and lots of laughs.

2. October 25, 2007 – Saskatoon Sundowner Ubuntu Launch - the launch of my fifth Russell Quant book.

3. October 27, 2007 – Sundowner Ubuntu Celebration Dinner - the dinner party following the book's launch, with a select group of special people.

4. May 28, 2007 – The Rainbow Room, Top of the Rock, New York City - we took out mothers to New York for four days of treating them like Queens - which of course they are - and this evening was the penultimate - we had a wonderful table on top of the Rock, with a stunning view of the Empire State Building, we were all dressed up and feeling like somebodies.

5. August 12, 2007 – Mom's Surprise 75th Birthday Party - we actually surprised her and had almost all the family in attendance. It was a pool party and the weather cooperated. Mom just sat back and smiled all day.

6. September 14, 2007 – JY's Top 100 UofS Alumni Induction Celebration Dinner - my father-in-law was posthumously inducted and family gathered at our house for a special dinner - like the previous, just another one of those perfect family moments.

7. June 10, 2007 – Tahitian Lanai - although I am a social guy by nature, I am really an introvert at heart, and while all the stuff like the first items are terrific, I also enjoy that perfect summer evening alone on the back deck (which I nicknamed the Tahitian Lanai after draping it with elephant grass and surrounding it with tiki torches), with a good bottle of wine, smokies on a bun, my thoughts, and a good book.

8. July 25, 2007 – Surprise Birthday Party at Saskatoon Airport - I tend not to like surprises - I like surprising people but not being surprised - but this one worked - it was for my 45th birthday and the party was at the airport, right before we got on a plane heading for a mystery location which turned out to be an extraordinary few days in Los Angeles, staying at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

9. March 6, 2007 – La Ropa Beach, Zihuatanejo, Mexico – view from our apartment - we have a place here, and the photo of the beach from our balcony is awe inspiring to me because of the big fat beach just waiting for me.

10. December 7, 2007 – House Without a Key at sunset at the Halekulani Hotel, Hawaii - this is one of our favourite places, we've been here countless times, and this photo could be of any year over the past fifteen, we're sitting there, the dusk sun golden on our skin, drinks in hand....lovely.

Smudge Fires

6:47 AM PST, December 21, 2007

December 21, 2007 - Ever wonder what it's like for a writer to do research for a new book? It always sounded glamorous to me; usually something involving travel, interviewing world-renown experts, digging through dusty tomes in centuries-old libraries. My latest research? Finding out whether Volkswagon bugs have a back seat, what the top speed of a John Deere lawn tractor is, the recipe for cream chicken, and how to make a smudge fire. Glamorous? Maybe not. Fun and interesting? You bet. Thank goodness for all those people out there who know things I don't (there are many!). And some of them are my own relatives!

Reading and Writing

7:20 AM PST, December 17, 2007, updated at 7:24 AM PST, December 18, 2007

December 17, 2007 - The holiday season vortex is upon us. I think the line was crossed some time in the last day or so, when it hit me that 2007 is hurriedly coming to an end, with dizzying speed. Like an uncontrollable train the days and nights are filled with gift wrapping, attending parties and dinners, eating oh-so-delicious stuff I'd normally stay away from (my lunch the other day was Wheat Thins and Creamy Asparagus Dip). It seems we're out more nights than in. I'm having to grab moments to work in between get togethers and sleeping in and planning what to do for New Year's eve.

But I am getting work done. The new book, Once Upon a Time in Fable Glen, is now with my editor and I too am giving it a once over. There are many many blue

marks on every page - but they are good blue marks, checking the flow, and adding little touches to make each sentence as good as I can get it. But overall, the story is done, it makes sense, and I'm loving it.

Recently finished books by two of my favourite authors, *Dead Cold* by Louise Penny (www.louispenny.com) and *Mahu Surfer* by Neil Plakcy (www.mahubooks.com). I never throw or give away a book. Every book I've ever read is somewhere in my possession. Thank goodness I'm not a speed reader. Even though I keep them, I'm not adverse to letting them show signs that they've been read. Both these books were with me on my recent Hawai'in getaway and have sand in their creases, mai tai stains on their covers, the pages are a little curled up due to the intense humidity during our stay. I love a book that looks lived in. Next time I pick them up, they'll carry with them all the fine memories I have of reading them and where and when I read them.

Thanks to all the wonderful readers who came to visit me on my recent signing this past Saturday afternoon.

WINNERS!!!

6:09 PM PST, December 11, 2007

December 11, 2007 - Yesterday was the conclusion of two of our World of Russell Quant Gift Basket contests; one at Little Sisters Bookstore in Vancouver, BC, and one at Chronicles of Crime Bookstore in Victoria, BC.

The winners are entitled to a basket of five wines representing five countries visited by Russell in the five book series: France (*Amuse Bouche*), USA (*Flight of Aquavit*), Spain (*Tapas on the Ramblas*), Canada (*Stain of the Berry*), and South Africa (*Sundowner Ubuntu*).

Today, a Random Number Generator selected the winner in these two contests.

I am thrilled to announce that the winner in Vancouver, BC is:

Dave V!!!!!!!

And so happy to reveal the winner in Victoria, BC is:

Nancy S!!!!!!!

Congratulations to both our fine winners. And many thanks to all the wonderful readers who participated in these contests. It has been a joyful experience and great fun for me. Thank you to these two wonderful booksellers as well, Janine and all the staff of Little Sisters in Vancouver, and Frances and her troupe at Chronicles of Crime in Victoria.

Where would a writer be without wonderful readers and booksellers?

Victoria and Vancouver - Contest Coming to an End!

11:50 AM PST, December 9, 2007

December 9, 2007 - Just a quick reminder to those of you in Victoria and Vancouver: the World of Russell Quant Wine Gift Basket contests running at Chronicles of Crime Bookstore and Little Sisters Bookstore respectively, are coming to an end Monday, December 10th. So, if you haven't yet, and want a chance on winning five bottles of wine in time for Christmas, now's the time to do it. You can see further details on my website Events calendar or contact the stores. Contest winners will be emailed on Tuesday, December 11th and announced right here. Thanks!

And aloha from a rather soggy Honolulu!

First Reviews

6:51 PM PST, December 4, 2007

December 4, 2007 - I think for many writers, there is a sigh not released until the first review for a new book has been published. It's that way for me for sure. And the first reviews for Sundowner Ubuntu came out this past Saturday, on the same day I was leaving for a few days away. The first was in my home town paper, The Saskatoon Star Phoenix, by a local, esteemed writer, Ned Powers. They say if you can make it in your home town, you can make it anywhere. The paper was delivered at 6 am and I was there to collect it. And hurrah, Mr. Powers gave Sundowner Ubuntu a rave, particularly enjoying the details in the story.

I'd heard from a bookstore owner in Ottawa that the Globe & Mail, a large Canadian daily, was also reviewing Sundowner Ubuntu on the same day. I thought we'd buy a copy at the airport, but as luck would have it, it hadn't arrived by the time we were boarding. Then I thought we'd get a copy on the aircraft, as they sometimes hand out the big dailies. Still nothing. So I had to wait all the way until we'd arrived in Vancouver and were in the Maple Leaf lounge for our 6 hour layover to finally get a copy. And, yay, Margaret Cannon also liked the book, saying it was the best of the series.

Phew.

I know I shouldn't judge my own work by what others think - but, oh my, it helps when they like it! :) And the timing was so wonderful - sending me off into a wonderland of maitais and soft tropical breezes feeling my baby was doing okay out there while I took some time off.

Opener Extravaganza

6:49 PM PST, December 3, 2007

I love Christmas. Especially the parts leading up to it. The decorations. The parties. The overwhelming goodwill towards man that seems to be everywhere. And part of it is hosting what this year I think was our 16th-ish Christmas Opener in our home. We think of it as a human Christmas card, where we don't get to have long visits with everyone, but in a 3-4 hour period, we get to give a Christmas hug and good wishes to a bunch of our nearest and dearest friends, family, neighbours and colleagues - this year, 180 to be exact. We go all out, with 6-7 trees, a piano-playing man, lots of chocolates and hot hors doerves, and 60 bottles of wine. Everyone dresses up a bit and looks their best. It's one of my favourite nights of the year.

Now we've headed off to Honolulu, just escaping through an unusually snowy Vancouver, for a few days of defrosting. Last night we tried an authentic Japanese restaurant we've not been to before - Miyako in the New Otani Hotel - the flavours were outstanding. The meal was a chef's special, called a kaiseki, which we understood to be the Japanese version of tapas or pupus. Maybe the birth of a new book title: Kaiseki on Kalaukaia?

There are even storms here on the island - but stormy in Waikiki is much different than stormy in Saskatchewan.

Off it goes...

6:12 AM PST, November 28, 2007

November 28, 2007 - Since the beginning of this century (isn't that a grand and overblown way to start off a sentence?...but really, how often does one get to use those words?) - as I was saying, pretty much since 2000, I have worked full time writing and promoting my Russell Quant mystery series. (And loved every second of it). But, over the past several months, I have been working on and off on my first non-Russell Quant book since I began the series. Yesterday, after putting the manuscript through a rather drastic, last minute, format change (which I think has made the book even better), I boxed it up in preparation to be sent away for its first serious review by an outside party. A second copy of the manuscript will accompany me and my spouse on a plane bound for sunny beaches (it turned visiciously cold and snowy this week) at week's end. Over the course of the next several days we'll each give it a read - the first read as if it

were a real book. (I love this part...unless it stinks, then not so much).

As I said at the recent launch for my latest Russell Quant mystery, Sundowner Ubuntu, I am one to - on occasion - take risks and try something new. I didn't have to write this book. I love writing the Russell Quant books, and the series is successful. But, as a writer, I've had an itch to try something new, stretch my artistic wings so to speak. But with all change and risk-taking, there can be a price to pay. In this case, it could be a hefty one.

Although I'll begin writing the next Russell Quant likely before 2007 lets out, it means the book won't be released until probably fall 2009. Will readers have forgotten about Russell by then? And although the new book is a mystery, that is about where the similarity to a Russell Quant book ends. Is writing something new (to me) and experimental a recipe for failure?

I however am loathe to even consider or type out here any possible worst case scenarios. Why give them credence? I like to throw out positives to the universe and expect the same in return. I felt the time was right to try something new. I think the Quant series is established and strong enough to survive a break. Maybe a break is even good for it. And the new book has been a great joy to conceptualize and create. As I've said to some, I'd rather create something unique and unexpected and exciting to me and fail with it in blazing plume of defeat, then write something nice and safe and achieve pale, middling success.

When I first changed careers and began writing, for the longest time I would introduce myself to new people by saying I was a writer, but quickly add that I was also a CA (Chartered Accountant) before they could ask the next question: Are You Published Yet? It was as if I wanted to give myself some identity that related to a personal success (achieving my CA meant I'd not only successfully completed years of university training, but also the grueling process of qualifying as a CA). It wasn't until I had published my first Russell Quant book, Amuse Bouche, that I began to introduce myself as a Writer. Period. Not as a CA who wrote.

In some ways, I think my current situation has some similarities. I regularly identify myself as the author of the Russell Quant books. I am what I have accomplished. Not what I am trying to accomplish. Hmmm. Interesting. If this new book finds a home, is published, and people respond well to it, well, then I'll come up with a new introduction for who I am...

The new book is tentatively titled: Once Upon a Time in Fable Glen.

Now off it goes...

Regina, SK World of Russell Quant Wine Gift Basket Winner Announced!

3:52 PM PST, November 21, 2007

November 21, 2007 - It has been a wonderful few weeks receiving entries for the very first World of Russell Quant Wine Gift Basket Contest held at the wonderful Book & Brier Bookstore in Regina, Saskatchewan. Many thanks to manager Robert Green and all the fine folks of Book & Brier for their help and support on this event.

I received entries from Russell Quant readers, new and longtime, and I want to say a big thank you to all of you who bought books and entered the contest.

Today, in a random drawing, the winner of the World of Russell Quant Wine Gift Basket was announced. The basket consisted of five wines, one for each of five countries Russell has visited over the first five books of the series: France (Amuse Bouche), USA (Flight of Aquavit), Spain (Tapas on the Ramblas), Canada (Stain of the Berry), and South Africa (Sundowner Ubuntu).

And the winner is:

Jean M!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Congratulations

Jean!

Brunch & Wine

12:02 PM PST, November 19, 2007, updated at 6:24 AM PST, November 20, 2007

November 20, 2007 - Yesterday morning began with the first real snowfall of the winter. It was one of those picture perfect scenes, with nary a breath of wind and snowflakes the size of dinner plates coating everything like coconut icing. The day ended with the Saskatchewan Roughriders Greycup bound. In between, we attended the Saskatchewan Book Awards annual brunch where I was honoured to be one of four shortlisted authors to read to the sold-out crowd. The others were Arthur Slade (www.arthurslade.com), the famed children's author, reading from *Invasion of the IQ Snatchers*, Doug Cuthand (www.dougcuthand.com) with *Askiwina: a Cree World*, and poet Elizabeth Philips reading from *Torch River*. A marvelous event with a most welcoming and supportive audience. Thank you to the event organizers for putting together a top notch event.

For those of you in Regina, SK, today is the final day of the Russell Quant World of Wine Gift Basket Contest. Run, don't walk, down to the Book & Brier Bookstore for an entry with every Russell Quant book purchased.

For those of you in Vancouver, BC and Victoria, BC, similar contests are now underway at Little Sister's Bookstore and Chronicles of Crime Bookstore respectively. For more details, see the store or my website events calendar.

Book Club Contest Winners Announced!

11:38 AM PST, November 15, 2007, updated at 7:02 AM PST, November 16, 2007

November 15, 2007 - Yesterday was the final day to enter the Russell Quant Mystery Book Club Contest. Which means today...ta da!...is the the day to announce the contest winners!

From a random drawing of all contest entrants, the winners of the five (5) subsidiary prizes of a signed copy of the first Russell Quant book, Amuse Bouche, are:

1. Kathleen from Thompson, Manitoba, Canada
2. Lloyd from Asheville, North Carolina, USA
3. Iffat from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada
4. Marie from Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada
5. Dottie from Maynard, Massachusetts, USA

And the winner of the GRAND PRIZE of a signed copy of all five of the Russell Quant mysteries, Amuse Bouche, Flight of Aquavit, Tapas on the Ramblas, Stain of the Berry, and Sundowner Ubuntu is:

John from Toronto, Ontario!!!!

All the winners have been e-mailed, and once mailing addresses are confirmed, the books will be going out to you.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Russell Quant Mystery Book Club contest. It was so much fun to hear form so many wonderful readers across North America and beyond. Many happy hours of reading to all of you!

Arthur Ellis Awards Submission Rules

7:15 AM PST, November 14, 2007

November 14, 2007 - For the information of Canadian crime writers and publishers (and their friends), submission rules for the Arthur Ellis Awards and the Unhanged Arthur are up on the Crime Writers of Canada Website www.crimewriterscanada.com <<http://www.crimewriterscanada.com/>>

Vancouver Shining

5:35 PM PST, November 10, 2007

November 10, 2007 - Thanks Vancouver for a truly enjoyable afternoon.

I love trying something new. So, today in Vancouver I did a Sundowner Ubuntu signing and wine tasting at one of my favourite Canadian indie book stores - Little Sisters on Davie Street.

In the past I have done a Thursday evening reading at Little Sisters - but this year decided to do a Saturday afternoon signing, 2 - 4 pm, paired with a wine tasting. Since in this book Russell travels to Africa, we sampled South African red and whites, along with some lovely cheeses from the deli next door. I met so many terrific new people, along with many faithfuls. And despite an original forecast of rain, the sun shone today. So it was a shining signing. Okay, okay, I'm not good at the pun thing.

It was also a fun way to kick off our Vancouver (exclusive to Little Sisters) World of Russell Quant Wine Gift Basket contest. The first 50 people to buy any Russell Quant book, are eligible to enter to win a gift basket of 5 wines - one from each of the countries visited by Russell over the first 5 books - France, USA, Spain, Canada and Africa. A Little Sisters customer WILL win.

Anyway, thank you to all who came out, and those who just happened by - it was a blast! And many thanks to Janine (isn't she great?) and Jim and all the folks of

Little Sisters for their help on this. And my, that South Africa has some pretty fine wines, doesn't it?

Cheers!

Buy a poppy.

Sundowner Ubuntu #1

6:59 AM PST, November 5, 2007

November 5, 2007 - McNally Robinson posted Sundowner Ubuntu as their #1 Trade bestseller last week - thank you readers. Seeing something like that just makes a writer's heart burst.

And thank you to all of you who have - very speedily I must say - finished reading Sundowner Ubuntu and sent wonderful notes and emails. It gives me the chance to experience the book all over again and in a very new way.

At a launch celebration dinner party - and as a total surprise to me - to start off the evening there was a three-person play of a scene from a previous Russell Quant book, with my editor, Catherine Lake playing the role of wily, Regina PI Jane Cross, and her son, Nigel portraying none other than Russell Quant. It was really something.

I'd managed to have shipped in from Ontario a case of Ubuntu Shiraz (not yet available in Saskatchewan), and so we partook of this lovely wine during an African themed dinner catered by our friends Jordan and Dan at JorDan Catering. Over the course of the evening, different guests read excerpts from the books and other Quant/Bidulka thoughts.

Gosh, makes me wish I could release a book every week.

A Night Like This

12:44 PM PDT, October 26, 2007

October 26, 2007 - Last night was the official Canadian launch of the fifth Russell Quant mystery, Sundowner Ubuntu. And what a night it was in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan!

The evening was kicked off by a pre-launch cocktail party thrown by my ex-boss Shelley (from my former life as a practicing Chartered Accountant) at the Saskatoon Club, attended by many of my former colleagues, where we soon fell to form and all tried to out-talk one another and generally enjoyed each other's company.

Then it was on to McNally Robinson Bookstore, where the restaurant tables were booked out days in advance of the event, leaving standing room only. It's something I always feel bad about - the people who have to stand - but they are such good sports they do it and laugh and cheer and visit with one another and have a good time anyway.

In keeping with Sundowner Ubuntu's African theme, we had a half-time show from Kahmaria Pingue's African dance troupe with drummer (thank you Kahmaria, Kristy, Kristen and Marnie), and throughout the evening a table-full of munchies that included South African Peanut Soup, East African Curried Prawns, Ethiopian Sik Sik Wat stew, and Ubuntu Brandy Snaps, along with some lovely South African wines to wash it all down with.

My editor, Catherine Lake (along with her son, Nigel) flew in from Toronto to celebrate with us, and she gave a wonderful speech to start off the evening. We even had CTV cameras and - although I haven't seen it yet, but it has been reported to me by my ever-vigilant mom - the event made last night's 11 o'clock news and today's noon news. Gotta love CTV! The flowers, cards, hugs, well-wishes, phone calls, emails; I even received a telegram from good friend Karen in Toronto (when's the last time you heard of a telegram being delivered? - it really got everyone's interest at the store).

As always, it was the people who made the evening. As I said in my speech, the African humanist philosophy of Ubuntu refers to the idea that we are all part of one community, and everything one person does - good or bad - effects everyone else. "I am who I am, because of who you are." And I really believe that I am who I am because of the community of people who were in that room last night. From family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, mystery readers, first-timers to a Russell Quant launch, they all gave generously of their time, support, applause, laughter, genuine interest and caring. They drive me on. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

A night like this is rare, special, it buoys the spirit. A night like this is hard to find. A night like this is a writer's dream. A night like this is one to remember. And I will for a very long time.

Reader's Choice Award

8:19 AM PDT, October 20, 2007

October 20, 2007 - The shortlist for the Saskatchewan Book Awards was released on Thursday and *Stain of the Berry* has been shortlisted for the Reader's Choice Award!

This is a new category that is based on votes from the reading public. I am so appreciative for this - thank you, readers! You've made my day. Russell thanks you too!

Tick Tock

8:04 AM PDT, October 17, 2007

October 17, 2007 - The clock is ticking down the seconds until my new book, Sundower Ubuntu, is out. The printer promised shipment on Monday, October 15th, and indeed, I'm told they did just that. Phew.

I called to confirm with my publisher. They told me they already have copies - and that the cover has turned out absolutely stunning. I wanted to charter a plane and fly down to Toronto to see it for myself, cradle it in my arms like a newborn. But, I guess I'll wait for the courier. Maybe I'll hug the courier guy.

This week is Saskatchewan Libraries Week. Last night, I was invited to do a reading at the main branch of our public library. Although the majority of the evening was spent reading from the first four books in the Russell Quant series and having fun giving out prizes for answers to library-related skill-testing questions, I read a small snippet from the galley of Sundower Ubuntu - sort of as a pre-opening night try-out. It's always fun to try out new material and I was lucky to have a wonderful, appreciative audience. Thanks to the Saskatoon Public Library, the Outreach Department and the attendees.

Now that the library event is done, the clock has also begun ticking down the time to the official launch of the new book next Thursday night. To add excitement to the proceedings, my ex-Accounting-Life boss, Shelley, is again hosting a pre-launch cocktail party, my editor, Catherine, is flying in for the event, and we've got dancers and African goodies and face painters lined up!

In other news, the fantastic Book & Brier Patch bookshop in Regina is the latest bookseller to agree to run my newly conceived World of Russell Quant promotion with a wonderful wine basket - five wines in all, representing the five countries Russell Quant has visited over the first five books - as the grand prize. Its a 1 in 50 chance to win. Not a bad prize just before the upcoming holiday season. You can check out the Events section of my website for details. Or visit www.bookbrier.ca

Book & Brier PAtch Bookstore

4065 Albert Street
Regina, SK, Canada
(306) 586-5814

The contest will commence in the next week or so.

Stores in Calgary and Winnipeg have committed to similar contests in the new year, with details forthcoming.

We're travelling to Edmonton this weekend to do some research on a a charity we hope to become involved in. I'm excited to see what role we might play.

tick tock tick tock...

What do the Speaker of the House (US) and Ugly Betty Have in Common?

12:09 PM PDT, October 8, 2007

Monday, October, 8, 2007 - This past weekend - Columbus Day weekend in the US and Thanksgiving in Canada - I had the great opportunity to be in Washington, DC to attend the National Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Fundraising Dinner. I had a Russell Quant package in the silent auction, and that along with the chance to catch up with an old friend we met on the Mediterranean cruise on which Tapas on the Ramblas is based on, convinced us to attend. Along with three thousand others - yes, three thousand. I have to take my hat off to the Washington Convention Centre for the ability to have a served dinner for that many. And that wasn't where my being impressed ended.

I knew ahead of time that the key note speaker would be Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House. Being Canadian with little political bent, I thought she would be passably interesting, but let me tell you, she was a passionate, articulate, powerful speaker who brought the crowd - and me - to their standing ovation feet several times.

Actually, the meal was difficult to eat, and even more difficult to digest, what with the number of times we rose to our feet to show our appreciation, or vehement agreement, or love, or awe for someone who took the stage. For Pelosi was not a one-of. Award recipients (and speakers) ranged from Sheryl Swopes of the WNBA, Pelosi, Matthew Broderick (of Broadway, Sarah Jessica Parker and

Ferris Bueller's Day Off fame), to Michael Urie and Rebecca Romeijn (from the cast of Ugly Betty). Tim Gunn from Project Runway was one of the presenters. Pretty cool from where I was sitting, lemme tell ya.

The rest of the weekend in DC was grand. The weather was an unseasonal mid to high eighties every day. We found a great spot off Georgetown on the water for lunch - we liked it so much we went back twice. Had a wonderful time visiting with our SilverSea buddy - always fun to put on tuxes and drink martinis in the afternoon. Dined like famous people at a spot I researched called 2941 which is actually in Falls Church, Virginia (but only about 20 min cab ride from our DC hotel), saw the Bodies exhibit (reminded me of ham), and did some fine shopping on Wisconsin Ave. And as an aside, let me send good thoughts and our love out to Tom in Florida. Persevere, my friend.

Back home tonight, to begin the final lap leading up to the launch of the latest Russell Quant book on October 25th. I still haven't seen the final product myself - maybe this week, maybe the next. And at the same time, I am making great strides on the new book. Beginning last week, I printed the thing off - now in draft 3 - and sat down - without editing pen (hard thing for me to do) - just to read it. I needed to get a sense of whether I'm on the right track, do I have a worthwhile new book here? - or have I made a horrible mistake. Thankfully, I'm loving it. I was surprised, however, to find that it was sitting near 500 pages, when I had at one point thought I didn't have enough for a book - but 500 pages I can deal with.

So, I'm excited to see how Sundwoner Ubuntu is received by the world, and how the new book continues to grow and develop.

As a note to those who've read this blog and my website and are worried that this new book means this is the end to Russell Quant. By no means. And actually, once this new one is sent into the cosmos to meet its fate, I have a new Russell Quant in my head, ready to meet paper.

To those south of the border - happy Columbus Day, to those north, happy Thanksgiving. Only thing wrong with this weekend - no turkey.