

...whiskers on kittens...these are some of my Favourite Things 2008

1:58 PM PST, December 30, 2008

December 30, 2008 - I'm a big planner and like looking forward to new things, people, experiences...but I thought this was a good time to look back, and to pick some of my Favourite Things from each month of 2008.

January - Friends Pat & Mike celebrated 25 years together, Puerta Vallarta, Michael Buble concert, grand opening of the new Persephone Theatre

February - Zihuatenejo with Pat & Lynne, Jill's famous martini party

March - Denver for Left Coast Crime convention...but mostly and without doubt the **top moment of the YEAR** - I got married!

April - Honeymooning by sailing around the Arabian peninsula, Honeymoon brunch at The Ivy, raising tons of money for Camp fYrefly, Surprise honeymoon party at Mick & Bev's

May - Saints & Sinners Literary conference in New Orleans, dinner with Ted & Robert, doing a mini- Men of Mystery Book Tour to Washington and Philadelphia with Neil and Mark, attending Lammie awards in LA

June - acting as MC for Bloody Words writers conference in Toronto, niece Amy's graduating from highschool, going on an Alaskan cruise with the in-laws

July - summer dinner parties (rained out but fun all the same), visiting Edmonton's Camp fYrefly, Auntie Jean's 80th

August - Acreage Life interview with Sheila, Dan & James' and Della & Susan's wedding, Mexico night with Dori and Shelley to celebrate our upcoming trip

September - fall galas and openings and fundraisers and dinners galore

October - seeing Bette Midler in Las Vegas, the combo of dinner at Alex and seeing La Reve at Wynn Hotel in Vegas, Michelle's art show, Russell Quant #6 publication date pushed up 6 months - Aloha, Candy Hearts is born, The Big Chill Dinner party, seeing Madonna in Vancouver with Jill

November - more fundraisers and dinners, Xmas Opener Party for over 200

December - 10 days in glorious Hawaii, Midlife Madness dinner party, Fireside Singers concert with the moms

Gosh, I'd love to do it all again. And maybe I will....

To a wonderful, happy, healthy, prosperous, exciting, fulfilling new year for us all!

[Comment](#)

Moment in the Sun

10:35 PM PST, December 9, 2008

December 9, 2008 - I often find myself rather thoughtful when I sit in airport lounges, which, for those of you who have read this blog before, will know. And the same is true tonight. It is a little after 8 pm, I'm in the JAL lounge in Honolulu waiting for our 9:30 flight to Vancouver. The red eye, I think they call it. We get in around 6:30 am BC time.

Anyway, I think why I am reflective in airport lounges is that they are a little world apart - between two places, often two countries, two cultures, two experiences, between work and fun, between family and colleagues, between reality and the dreamscape of vacation time.

I spent the last 10 days in one of our favourite and long-time haunts, Waikiki. I've been coming here for going on two decades. I've probably logged in near two dozen trips here. In that time I've formed a close attachment to this island, along with its people and, of course, the gentle weather and lifestyle. I 'get' the aloha mentality. It is a way of life and treating one another born of the Hawaiian forefathers.

It is not always easy, I think, when one comes on vacation to immerse yourself in doing what you need to do given your current life circumstances - escape? have adventure? go wild? relax? heal? But eventually, if you are lucky, you get there.

What I like about Oahu and my familiarity with it, is that its become like a weekend cabin type of experience. There's not much new to see or do here for me. Everything is easy. Dependable. Expected. So I can hit the ground running, so to speak. I get here and can immediately get into vacation mode (whatever that is). There is no figuring out currency or food or where to get the best sundowner or how to work the phones or how to score the best lounge chair around the pool or planning day trip itineraries.

So I spent much of the past ten days enjoying the familiar. Going to favourite restaurants. Visiting our favourite hula dancer. Going to our favourite maitai bar. And spending a lot of time just sleeping - in bed and on the beach. It was all pretty wonderful for sure. And then came that special moment in the sun. The one I always hope for on holidays but I know does not always come. That special point in the vacation when all is going well, the weather is just right, you feel good,

relaxed, everything is going right and you reach a point where you really start to think about life. You get perspective.

This time, for me, it happened a couple days ago. It was a little more than half way through our holiday, so everything was set, yet no stress about thinking it was time to go home soon. Actually the weather had not been great that day, but in the late afternoon the sky opened up with that glorious Hawaiian sun, and I took advantage of it. It was a rare occasion when I was on the beach on my own. I chatted with a few of the other people on the beach we'd gotten to know over the last few days, but otherwise I was totally alone on this lovely piece of sand with hot sun, a bit of wine in a cooler, and the sparkling Pacific stretching out in front of me.

Usually I read on the beach (or sleep). But this time I just laid back and let my mind wander. And for the next two and a half hours I not only conceptualized a great little outline for a new book, but I did some 'law of attraction' stuff (those of you who've read or watched The Secret will know what I'm talking about) and worked on some good life planning. It was an especially lovely moment in the sun in what was a terrific ten days in the sun.

We can't all always find time or resources to end up on a beach in Hawaii to do this kind of stuff. But I know, because it has happened to me, that these great moments in the sun can happen anytime and anywhere, as long as we create the right environment to make them welcome. My last one was actually at home in my back yard eating hotdogs and drinking red wine (hmmmm..is wine a commonality here???? nah.). Nothing more grand than that. But it was time alone in a place I love. Try it. You may like it.

Aloha all!
[Comment](#)

The Xmas Opener

2:31 PM PST, November 28, 2008

November 28, 2008 - Every year for the past...well, 16 or 17 years I'd say (I'll have to check) we have hosted an annual early Christmas bash (usually the last Thursday of November or first Thursday of December) that we call The Xmas Opener. We invite friends, family, co-workers, neighbours, colleagues, people we've sat on boards and committees with, our plumber, repair man, housekeeper, candlestick maker...everyone who is a part of our lives and makes them rich and full and wonderful.

We have this party, and set it early in the season for a number of reasons. We love the Christmas season for a lot of reasons, but one of the biggest is that it is

a time of year where one can unabashedly promote fellowship and love for one's mankind, show appreciation for one another, and hug and kiss and make merry - so I'm all for anything that gets that process started early. Setting the party early gives us a better chance of getting people out before the onslaught of office and family and other Christmas activities begin to clog people's calendars. I love to decorate and have a thing about Christmas trees. I like the idea of having an early season party that gets people in the mood and ready for Christmas.

Over the years, this gathering has become what I like to think of as our human Christmas card. You know how we (some anyway) send cards, we don't necessarily write a lot in them, but it's the sentiment, just a quick hey, how are you, we're thinking of you, have a wonderful holiday season and new year. That's what this party is. It has become a pretty busy party with a lot of people (more on that in a bit), so often we don't get to do more than say hello and have a quick chat and hug, but at least it's a touch base, we get to see each other during this great season, smile, have a laugh, hug and kiss, wish each other well. Yup, I like that. Although I'd love to spend more time with everyone who comes through that door, given the alternative of having no contact, this is much preferable.

Last weekend I did the marathon decorating - seven trees, each with a different theme. This year it was: Polar bear, Masquerade, Tourquoise, Wheat/Burgundy/Plum/HarvestGreen to match the wall of the bathroom it was in/Nutcracker/WhoVille/Mannequin.

Last night was the 2008 party. I am a freak about always believing that no one will show. That has never happened, I have nothing to base that fear on other than that I'm weird that way. So when we did some math this morning and found out that we'd reached a record attendance (by far), at over 200 people, I was flabbergasted. And the first thought I had was: how lucky are we to have such a large group of people - as wonderful as all those souls were last night - in our lives.

From teens to people well into their eighties, from all walks of life, race, religions and belief systems, it was a most lovely cornucopia, the heady stew of life. Gosh, I wish I could relive it all again. But that will wait for next year I guess. Anticipation is a wonderful thing.

In the meantime, for any of you who are reading this who were with us last night - I say a mighty huge thank you. Life would be so much less without you in it. And for everyone else who is just reading this, my fondest wish for you this holiday season is that you have with you a wonderful blanket of people, be it 2 or 200, who give you love, support, friendship, laughter, or whatever it is you need to be happy and fulfilled.

[Comment](#)

Crazy Times

11:02 AM PST, November 6, 2008

November 6, 2008 - moving up a book's release date by 6 months is heady stuff - and crazy too. Everything has to be done like yesterday. But hey, that's exciting. While editor Catherine is busily completing the first round edits, we've been working on stuff like back cover blurb, author bio, author photos and cover image. I've just downloaded a new Aloha, Candy Hearts photo album in the Inspiration section of my website. There's a mock of the potential new cover image, along with photos of locations I used for inspiration for parts of the storyline. Check it out.

[Comment](#)

New Book Release Date Moved Up!

12:26 PM PDT, October 27, 2008

October 27, 2008 - The next Russell Quant mystery had been set for release Fall 2009 (likely October). I am pleased to announce, that as of this weekend, the release date has been moved up by six months. The sixth book in the series, *Aloha, Candy Hearts*, will now be released in Spring 2009 (likely May).

I had announced a two year period between the last book, *Sundowner Ubuntu*, and the next in the series (as opposed to the usual one year). Since then, many kind readers have let it be known that they'd like to have the book sooner rather than later. And so, with the writing of *Aloha, Candy Hearts* well underway and progressing nicely, an opportunity to move up the release date was investigated. Editor Catherine Lake is back on board and already working hard on making sure the new deadlines are met.

What can I tell you about the book? Well, let's see. For now I can say that Russell travels to Hawaii, and the story begins with a proposal and ends with a wedding.

For the rest, you'll have to wait - but for not nearly as long as before.

Aloha
Anthony
[Comment](#)

Promoting Your Writing - Part V - CREATIVITY

6:48 AM PDT, October 24, 2008

October 24, 2008

(5) **CREATIVITY**

This is perhaps the most important “C” of all, because it weaves its way through all the others.

This past May I was at a conference in New Orleans and one of the sessions was about how to get bookstores to notice you. The panelists were a couple of bookstore owners who were willing to tell it like it is.

Now I don't know if any of you have seen these postcards that so many writers get made up whenever they have a new book out. Typically the front has a picture of the book cover, the back maybe has a short synopsis of the book; otherwise they look like a normal postcard, with a space for an address and stamp. The idea is that the author mails out a million or so (exaggeration) of these things, with the hope it will convince bookstores to carry their books. They also hand them out wherever they go. It's a very popular marketing tool. At writers conferences the book tables sag under the weight of these things, delegate goodie bags overflow with them.

Great idea, right? Well, these two booksellers told us postcards had become so commonplace (they sometimes receive hundreds a week), they'd become the bookstore version of junk mail. They said they always – always – threw them in the garbage without looking at them.

You could have heard a pin drop in that room. There were so many open mouths, it looked like a room full of baby robins at supper time. We'd all done it. And we'd just been told we'd spent hundreds or even thousands of dollars and countless hours on lining bookstore's garbage cans.

Now, this isn't to say this is always the case, only the opinion of two booksellers. But my point is, this is a very competitive industry. For every one of you, there are a thousand other writers out there looking for attention. You have to find a way to stand out in the crowd. What is going to get you and your work noticed?

Now, before I go on, this is a good place to discuss the elephant in the Promoting Your Writing room: Money.

Publicity costs money, right? Indeed, there is a wide continuum in the world of promotion, from the full page New York Times ad and 50 city North American book tour, to hauling around a few copies of your novel in your trunk and selling them to your aunts. But I believe creativity can help ratchet up your position on that continuum without having to cost a bundle. The big budget publicity campaigns are the exception in this industry. There are many levels of marketing creatively that can cost a lot, cost nothing or cost something in between. You

have to figure out where you sit on that continuum. You have to find out what your publisher will spend, and decide if you're willing to supplement that, reinvest profits, whatever. Just remember, there is room for you on that continuum, and you may find yourself moving up and down throughout your career, just don't fall off.

At the start of my career, the first (and simplest) thing I did, was to steal an idea from my life as a businessman. How do businesspeople communicate every day? With business cards. I started with a simple design on cheap card stock. The front has my name and contact info, including website and email, the back has the titles of all my books. It's not fancy, but it works. I take them everywhere. I find if you're telling someone at a cocktail party about your work, and they show an interest, it's much smoother to slide out a business card than to pull out a postcard or a stack of bookmarks.

Instead of postcards, I do bookmarks. (At tip: If you're not too demanding about what goes on them, the printer might be willing to produce these gratis when they're printing your book covers.) Whereas most bookstore owners don't want to read about your book on a postcard, they do want to give freebies to their customers, and everyone can use a bookmark. So it may well have my book cover and name on it. I fully expect that a great many of my bookmarks end up in garbage cans or abandoned in a book that is never read, but bookmarks and similar such promotional items are part of the subliminal advertising effect I talked about in my blog about Circulation.

Posters are another comparatively cheap marketing tool. Here again, know how to use the tool. Sending a poster to a small independent store with little or no window space can be worthless. Sending a poster to a big box store (unless you are having a reading there) is probably not going to work. Sending a poster to a magazine reviewer isn't going to do you much good. But having a good quality, eye-catching poster for the right occasion or right location is very useful.

As mentioned in an earlier blog, communication is an important tool and even more powerful if used creatively. For instance, before I go to any city for an event or reading appearance, I research that city on the internet. I enter the details of my event onto every online community calendar I can find. I'll send out press releases. I'll send emails to community groups and book clubs that I think might be interested in attending. I'll email my aunt's ex-husband's second cousin removed. I do many readings at independent stores. These types of stores are often part of smaller community neighbourhoods within bigger cities. I research the local neighborhood businesses, like B&Bs, pubs, restaurants, art galleries. I'll send out emails saying: Wednesday night, XXX Bookstore two doors down from you will be hosting a wine and cheese and a reading, maybe you or some of your customers would be interested in attending.

Having a website is important. What is more important is finding ways to use your website creatively. It can be more than a simple depository of information about who you are and what you've written.

A couple of years ago I ran a contest on my website where I partnered with a couple of charities. For every donation to the charity (for which the donor received a tax receipt), the donor's name was entered into a draw for an entire set of personally autographed Russell Quant books. I also have a book club offer on my website: I'd attended the meetings of many bookclubs in Saskatoon or cities I happened to be touring in, but I wanted to find a way to reach book clubs in places I couldn't be. So on my website I've publicized an offer that for any club reading a Quant book, I will either answer up to five questions submitted by email or I will call the book club directly for up to 15 minutes to chat and answer questions.

Beginning with my second book, I began using another concept I stole from the business world, called dripping. I later expanded it to something I call focused gifting. Dripping is the idea of identifying key people who are influential in your business success, and instead of doing a big aggressive sell job on them when you have something to sell (i.e. a book), you just drip on them every so often – maybe with a letter or a phone call or even a little gift – just to remind them that you're around, that you appreciate their role in your success. It's the team approach to being a successful writer – acknowledging that they are part of the team that helps to sell my books.

I began by keeping track of people or bookstores or organizations or media contacts who'd been particularly supportive or helpful to me. I started with something as simple as a personalized thank you note. For some, no doubt, it was just another throw away, but you wouldn't believe how many booksellers made a point of contacting me to say how grateful they were to be recognized.

As I sold more books and had more access to funds to invest in promotion, I became more elaborate and added the focused gifting. With *Flight of Aquavit* I sent out several bottles of aquavit. With *Stain of the Berry*, before I went on book tour, I sent each bookstore owner some Saskatoon Berry Jam and cheese crackers. These were signs of appreciation that served double duty as promotion.

With *Sundowner Ubuntu* I took a whole new tack. This was the fifth book in the series. As it turns out, all five of the books take place (in part) in five different wine producing countries. So I put together a gift basket that included copies of each book and a bottle of wine from each country. In several bookstores we ran a month long contest where everyone who purchased a Quant book during the month had their name entered to win the basket. This was a great way for me to have a presence in the store without having to undertake the expense of the travel to be there in person.

Part of promoting creatively involves stepping out of comfort zones. For instance, it's easy to plan appearances at places you are well known and can expect to draw an audience. It takes a bit more guts to go somewhere you aren't known. But what better way to expand readership? A successful publicity campaign can't always be about preaching to the choir, no matter how good it feels. You need to find ways to reach out to audiences that don't know you yet. This is tougher, and harder to approach, but worth a shot. Every so often it's a good thing to risk rejection and an empty house. A couple of years ago I decided to tour Texas. A brave colleague from Toronto decided to join me. Neither of us had much of a readership in Texas. But now, there are people in San Antonio and Austin reading about my gay prairie detective.

This is the end of my series on the five "C"s of Promoting Your Writing. I'd like to leave you with a couple thoughts"

- there is no golden bullet - there is no one perfect way to market yourself - create a basketful of promotional tools and keep them juggling in the air
- the more creative your promotional strategy, the better chance you have to stand out from the crowd - it's worth a try.
- sometimes it'll work - sometimes it won't. Oftentimes you won't even know for sure if a promotion has performed.
- having no budget is not an excuse to do nothing.
- The only mistake is not to try

Thanks for visiting my blog. If you know of anyone who might be interested in reading about this topic, send them by. The more the merrier!

[Comment](#)

Promoting Your Writing - Part IV - CAPITALIZATION

7:05 AM PDT, October 23, 2008
October 23, 2008

(4) CAPITALIZATION

Know your strengths and capitalize on them. On the flip side, know your weaknesses and either improve on them or work around them.

Be honest with yourself. Or get someone you trust to be honest with you. Is your only strength in writing the book? Probably not. Are you great at doing readings, coming up with marketing ideas, are you an entertaining blogger, are you better

at live interviews or written interviews, are you good at schmoozing, personal appearances, being on a panel at conferences?

The only way you're going to figure this out is to do them and see. You'll get a sense of where your strengths and weaknesses lie pretty quickly. I think one of the dangers here is to never at least try to move out of your comfort zone. Try different things. You might have a talent you didn't know you had.

One of the best examples of this is a colleague of mine, a terrific American writer. He believes public readings are an important component of his overall publicity campaign. He has a lot of fans who love to come out to meet him in person. When he does these readings, he first gets up and chats with the audience about his life and experiences as a writer. And he is good at this, very personable and engaging. At the end of the evening he does very well too at meeting the attendees one on one and signing their books. The problem was everything in between.

My friend is a lousy reader. He would lower his eyes to the page, read monotone to the end of the passage, then look up. No movement in his voice, no eye contact with his audience. A ten minute reading seemed to last for days. Eventually I think it was his wife who took the plunge and told him. He tried a few things, but couldn't seem to make his performance much better. What he did then, I thought, was a stroke of genius. He still believed in readings as an important publicity tool, but instead of just giving up, he worked around it. Now he simply arranges to have someone else to do the reading for him; sometimes the bookstore manager or events coordinator, or a local celebrity like a radio DJ or newspaper columnist, or maybe the president of his local fan club, or, if he can't find anyone, he brings along a friend or sometimes even his wife (who turns out to be much better at it than he is). Brilliant. Great way of capitalizing on strengths and minimizing weaknesses.

[Comment](#)

Promoting Your Writing - Part III - COMMUNICATION

7:57 AM PDT, October 22, 2008
October 22, 2008

(3) COMMUNICATION

There are a plethora of choices in the writer's world for (a) who you need to communicate with, (b) how to communicate with them, and (c) how often.

In terms of the who, I'm talking about more than keeping in touch with your publisher and editor, agent and publicist (if you have them). But you also need to think about communication with your readers and fans, bookstores (owners, managers, event coordinators), reviewers (magazine, newspaper, online), media (print, TV, radio, online), other writers (critique or writing groups, joint readings, conferences, online groups), professional writer's groups (local, national and international levels)

In terms of how, the means of communication are proliferating at a dizzying speed: websites, booktrailers (very popular these days), readings, personal appearances, Facebook, Myspace, blogging, online discussion forums, listserves, TV, Radio, Print, email, attending conferences.

Several months ago I moderated a panel at a writer's conference on this topic alone. The four authors on the panel talked about how "time-sucking" keeping up communications was. One writer talked about how she would get up in the morning, sit at her computer, check her work email, personal email, website email, do some blogging, check her Facebook and Myspace pages, answer a couple of queries raised in her writers online group, return a few calls and then it was lunch. She'd done no writing at all.

You have to make choices. You have to say no to some things. In the end, you should come up with a comprehensive communication strategy that works for you but does not take over your life. This strategy will not remain static throughout your career, so be mindful of evaluating and changing things up as you and career do.

[Comment](#)

Promoting Your Writing - Part II - CIRCULATION

7:08 AM PDT, October 21, 2008
October 21, 2008

(2) CIRCULATION

YOU are the best salesperson of your work.

You have to be out there, at the forefront of your promotion activities—in person, on the radio, in print interviews, in mailings, your face on posters, whatever—you have to be out there in circulation.

I used to believe that there was a person who woke up every morning, drove to work, sat in their office, whose job it was to think about: what can I do today to sell more of Anthony's books.

There is no such person. You have to become that person.

Do not rely on your publisher, agent, favourite bookstore, distributor, best friend, mother, to do it for you. No matter how well intentioned they might be, you need to take control.

Help them help you

Put them on a team. A team led by you.

At one point in my career, faced with no discernable publicity campaign or budget, I developed my own. Knowing nothing, I did a lot of research. This meant: going to conferences, joining writers groups, talking to writers. The internet became my best friend. Use it. I identified writers who I thought were successful promoters and visited their websites. Most have event listings or calendar of events on their web pages. These gave me great ideas, or at the least an idea of what real authors did for publicity.

I created a wish list—from conferences I wanted to attend, readings I wanted to do, touring I wanted to undertake, advertisements I wanted placed in magazines and newspapers, review copies I wanted to distribute, bookstores I wanted to focus on, mailings I wanted done, and on and on and on. Altogether it was too much, too big, too soon, and waaaaaaaaaaaaay too expensive. But, my theory was (as it still is today): ask for nothing, and that is what you will get; ask for a hundred things and there's a chance you might get a couple. This began a negotiation process and healthy dialogue between me and my publisher. Be respectful of your publisher. Be aware of their capabilities, restrictions, as well as the business and financial environment they are operating in. Demand nothing. Instead, discuss and negotiate.

A couple of years ago I was attending the Bouchercon Writers conference in Madison, Wisconsin. I had the opportunity to go out for dinner one night with a small group of heavy hitters and I thought, ah ha!, here's my chance to learn the promotion secrets of wildly successful authors. So at the right time, after the right amount of wine was imbibed, I asked: What are your strategies for marketing yourselves and your work? As a group, they hesitated a bit, then all at once started describing the many things they'd done, things they'd tried that succeeded, and those that had failed miserably, and how hard it was to measure whether what they'd done was successful. In the end, after much talk, the answer was quite surprising to me. **There was no golden bullet.** No one could say: if you just do THIS, then you'll be successful. Instead, the best advice was to just keep trying stuff. Keep on getting out there in front of people—be in circulation. Get your name in print. Get your picture or the cover of your book on a poster or in a newspaper article or on TV. Get involved in the writing community. And one day, after you've done this for a while, you'll find that your name will simply start becoming part of the public's consciousness. And that's where it all begins. A bit of subliminal advertising I think.

I've seen this work. Oftentimes now, when I tell strangers about what I do, they'll get this look on their faces and say: You know, I think I've seen your name somewhere or heard of your book title. But they can't remember where or when. Some of them are just being polite, but for others, they probably had my bookmark in their paperback for a month or pass by my poster everyday to work—and that's good promotion.

For many of us, we did not become writers to be salespeople. Quite the contrary in fact. So the idea of being out there in circulation, putting your face in front of the world, and selling a 'product' can be daunting. Even if you enjoy publicity, the sheer volume of what it might take to make a difference can seem like having another job, on top of the one you have as a writer – and for many writers, on top of even another job you might have in the non-writer world. But I for one think it's vitally important, especially in the first years of your career. I think of myself as an entrepreneur. The most successful entrepreneurs I knew in my former life as a professional accountant, were the ones who devoted many hours and resources to their businesses in the early years.

Step one: Don't be overwhelmed. Baby steps are not only a good thing, but encouraged. Find a comfort zone and start there. Who knows where it will take you. The only mistake is doing nothing, trying nothing.

Comment

Promoting Your Writing - Part I - CONFIDENCE

9:46 AM PDT, October 20, 2008
October 20, 2008

This past weekend I delivered a presentation at the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild annual conference called Promoting Your Writing. Not that I have any specific education or professional designation in advertising, but it was one writer's view and experience of what it takes to get your writing noticed in a competitive environment.

As a counterpoint, I co-presented with a publisher who shared the viewpoint on the same subject from the publisher's perspective. The panel was well received, and in response to numerous requests for my notes, I decided to write this series of blogs.

So, if you are a writer (even if your not), or if you know of any other writer who might be interested in this, I invite you to check back over the next few days for more information on this topic. I decided to divide this into five instalments, in order to make it quick and easy for all of us involved - just a small little taste each

day is probably enough. This series of blogs can be seen here or at my website at www.anthonybidulka.com.

Over the past several years since I began writing full time, I created what I came to think of as the 5 C's of Promoting Your Writing. Today I want to talk about the first one:

(1) **CONFIDENCE**

This may be the one "C" that some of you might feel is a bit too touchy feely. But I truly believe a successful career comes from within.

Portray confidence: Portray confidence with whoever you are dealing with; whether it's an agent you hope will represent your work, a bookseller you want stocking your anthology on their shelves, or someone you meet at a party who asks what you do. Be confident in who you are as a writer, what kind of writer you are, and what you have written. Inside your head, not only should you believe your novel or article or poem is the best thing you've ever written, but that it's the best thing anyone has ever written. Warning: be confident, not overbearing.

Protect your confidence: This is an industry where there are people whose job it is to take what we've written, dissect it, decide whether they think it is good or bad, and then announce in very public forums. Good or bad, you need to find ways to protect yourself at these times. I know a writer who, with one bad comment from a reviewer, can't write for a week. A waste of time.

If possible, minimize your exposure to non-professional reviewers. There will be many people who want to read your work. As writer's we want to share. Be wary. Even a good friend can innocently say something that will send your head spinning. I now only ask for critique and comments from the professionals in my life: editors and the like. Although many people tell me what they think of my work, I never solicit it.

Nurture the confidence of colleagues: There is a line of thought that writers should be competitive, especially writers within specific sub-genres (in my case, regional, soft-boiled crime). I disagree. What is good for any other writer is good for me. Another author who does well and gets a lot of publicity and/or accolades is simply raising the awareness and profile of my industry – it creates readers. One of my favourite writers is Gail Bowen, from the city closest to mine. A publication recently named her Canada's best crime writer. Not only do I think this is wonderful because she truly is an extremely talented writer, and just happens to be a terrific person too, but it's good for my business. It publicizes Canadian mystery writing, and a side benefit may be that some of her readership will spill over to mine. Support each other. Not only will it feel good (when given and received), but it makes good business sense.

What's in a Title?

11:07 AM PDT, October 11, 2008

October 11, 2008 – More often than not, when I'm conceptualizing a Russell Quant book, four things are topmost in my mind, plot, character development, where Russell will travel, and the title of the book. With Amuse Bouche and Tapas on the Ramblas, I had the titles chosen long before I even began writing the book. With Flight of Aquavit and Stain of the Berry, the titles fell nicely into place early in the process. With the most recent book, Sundowner Ubuntu, the title was a little more elusive in coming to light. I wanted something that fell into the tradition of the titles referencing food or drink as well as the foreign location Russell visits in the book. I knew all along that I had to have Ubuntu in the title because the concept ran so deep within the plot. But Ubuntu is a serious term and I didn't want to give it flippant treatment. So it took a while to find – in my mind – the perfect marriage of Sundowner Ubuntu, two terms steeped in African lore and history, that winked to the tradition of Russell Quant as well.

I've begun writing what I hope will become the sixth book in the Russell Quant series. I was nearing completion of the second draft and still had no title. Part of the problem, I suspected, was that so much of the action this time around takes place in his hometown, rather than in some far off exotic location. But still, he is spending time in one of my favourite destinations, Hawaii. So I needed the title to reflect that.

Some time ago, readers in Victoria, a charming couple, suggested that Russell should go to the islands, and they even came up with a title: Poison in the Poke. How perfect! I loved it. Perfect for a mystery novel, and the poke part of it meets the requirement for the 'food and drink' portion of the title. Poke is one of my all time favourite things to eat when in Hawaii – it's basically marinated raw fish. Mmmmmmm. We have a special market that we go to in Honolulu that serves up several wonderful varieties. I even wrote that into the book. However, there was no poison involved, and so the title, sadly, did not work. This time. Maybe for the 17th Quant? Who knows?

This newest book tells a very personal story, and much is covered on a topic most often requested by avid Quant readers: Russell's love life. And so, after much thought and several different ideas, the working title has become: Aloha, Candy Hearts.