

Bill Selnes (Mysteries and More) Q and A with Anthony Bidulka – June 2012



Last week I posted my [review](#) of *Dos Equis*, the 8th book in the Russell Quant series by Anthony Bidulka. Anthony, even though he is on vacation in southern France with his spouse, Herb, provided answers to some questions I sent him. Tonight's post features those Questions and Answers. On Friday I will post my thoughts on the Q and A. I appreciate Anthony's thoughtful responses to the questions. The Q and A are:

1.) I do not recall in the book reading any references to "The Most Interesting Man in the World" commercials for Dos Equis. If I am correct, what held you back from exploiting The Most Interesting Man?

Although many people are aware of The Most Interesting Man tie to Dos Equis, many are not. It was not forefront in my mind either when I wrote or titled the book. It was more about the association of Dos Equis to Mexico and the other symbolism factors I mention in the opening acknowledgement section of the book.

2.) Have you considered publishing the Russell Quant cookbook? I believe there is a Nero Wolfe cookbook featuring the recipes favoured by Fritz. Perhaps you could start by confirming whether his mother Kay's sauce for her meatballs in red sauce contains more than a mix of heavy cream and ketchup.

This is a good thought, and I have seen it done before with crime novels. Another example is Patricia Cornwall - I think the book was called Scarpetta's Table - or something like that. To pursue this would be great fun. I think it would be a great way to spend time with my mom, getting her to help me with the recipes. I actually had used a few of her recipes in a manuscript I worked on a couple of years ago; one which I never ended up pursuing for publication. The challenge would be finding the time to do such a project as you suggest. But, who knows. May happen. I never say never.

3.) How much does Russell charge for his services? He is never short of money but he seems so casual about fees.

I was quite specific about this in the first book. But I laid off this aspect of his career in later books. I'm not exactly sure why, but it has always bothered me when a detective is scrambling for money or does a case for free when he/she has an empty bank account. (This seems to be a recurring event in this genre of books). I think my discomfort stems

from the fact that if I like a character - which usually I do if I'm bothering to read about them - the practical/accountant side of my brain worries about them too much (instead of just enjoying the story). How will they pay rent? How will they feed the cat? What will happen to them when they retire? I wanted to remove those type of concerns from the Russell Quant books. I decided to keep that part of his life vague, other than to make small references to the fact that he has enough savings (likely from the death of his uncle - see *Amuse Bouche*) to be comfortable now and in the future. He can't afford not to work, but he isn't destitute either. If he wants a good bottle of wine or to repaint his office, he can do it. But most of the big ticket items, like his travels, are almost always paid by a client.

4.) With your love of travel and, being in demand for panels at mystery events, do you ever see Russell accompanying a well known gay Saskatoon author to a mystery convention, especially if it were in some warm weather destination?

Not sure I follow the question. Do you mean having someone pretending to be Russell attend a conference with me? If so, I'd have to say the answer is no. As real as Russell may be to me and to my readers, I think he belongs on the page and in our minds. Until, that is, he ends up on a TV or movie screen!

It has never failed to amaze me when someone tells me who they think Russell is, or what he looks like, or what kind of person he is. These descriptions are rarely similar or in agreement with my own perceptions of Russell. I think this is a wonderful thing. Russell can be many things to many people. He is relatable in ways I'm not even aware of. A doppelganger created by me, might ruin that.

5.) You mentioned at the book launch that Russell and the remaining cast of characters have become so vivid in your mind they take you to the next mystery. Has that meant the writing of current books in the series is taking less time than the earlier books?

I don't think they necessarily take less time. It would be a disservice to those characters to just let them take care of themselves. I still want to challenge them, and put them in situations - professionally or personally - which will stretch them as characters. I find it interesting to make my characters uncomfortable and watch how they strive to escape that discomfort. That makes for good story telling. I think where the time saving comes from is in how they react to these situations on the page. That part (of the writing process) does seem to come more naturally and smoothly now that they are such full and realized characters. I tend to use up that time saving however, by creating vivid new characters to interact with Russell and Errall and our other

regular cast members.

6.) There have been few children in the series. Was that intended?

No. Actually I hadn't even realized that was the case until you mentioned it. I had at one point thought I wanted to introduce a young character who would be Russell's nephew or niece (via his little heard-about brother). But the pages have simply filled up too fast over the course of the books with other things. I did introduce Ethan's daughter a few books ago. But again, she was only going to be a regular character if the relationship between Russell and Ethan was successful. It was not. But I didn't know that until later! I don't know at this moment whether or not children (youth) will be a part of the series or not. Russell life story is far from over.