

January 31, 2007

ON THE BUBBLE WITH BOB LEVINSON

Bob Levinson is living proof that it's never too late to follow your dream. Bob Levinson is living proof that one can have multiple careers - excel in each - and still tackle another with resounding success. Where he has found the time and energy to wear so many hats, is astounding. Six acclaimed books, short stories, an active member (and often holding board seats) of MWA, ITW, Writers Guild of America, Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, SINC, Private Eye Writers of America...and besides a host of others...Bob was a six-term president of the Hollywood Press Club -which later voted THE ELVIS AND MARILYN AFFAIR - 'The Best Novel About Hollywood' in it's annual HPC Awards of Distinction. AND THEN...he produced one of the absolutely BEST entertaining awards gala evening EVER at last years ThrillerFest in Phoenix. I mean, he had a packed room stomping their feet and clapping until it hurt.

SO, COME JOIN OUR CONVERSATION AND MEET A GENUINE DYNAMO - A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS - I GIVE YOU BOB LEVINSON!



BOB LEVINSON <http://www.robertslevinson.com>

EE: Rumors are rampant, Bob - that after producing that rollicking ITW Gala last year in Phoenix - Hollywood is making overtures for a nod for next year's Oscar party - but you'll only agree if you can bring the dazzling Killerettes along. So, what's the scoop on that?

BL: Well, if you insist... Truth is - the Killerettes started that rumor - originally talking about performing at the Hollywood Foreign Press awards banquet. Alex said later they were inspired by Heather's Golden Globes (Harley said I'm the one said that, not Alex. If the gag just got a laugh, Harley's correct. No laugh, what does she know anyway?)

There are times when even moi - Evil E - leaves answers alone.

EE: And isn't it true that John Lescroat is demanding to go along with you as chaperon for those lovely ladies, but F. Paul Wilson and Michael Palmer are flipping coins over who will watch Lescroat?

BL: Those guys rock, but absolutely not. I work alone.

Wise move - I know those guys, and well...

EE: Most writers I know have a quote or two they keep by their computer. Do you have one, or do you write your own? Can we steal them?

BL: There's a quote I've kept close going back decades, to my years on a Selectric: "*Im ain, mi li?*" It's from the Talmud and translates as - *If I am not for me, who is?* And this one from Marcel Duchamp: "*Don't let yourself become hypnotized by the smiles of yesterday; rather, invent the smiles of tomorrow*"

One of my making has been quoted for years: *Don't give up the quip.* (And you can't imagine how tired I am of going around quoting myself...)

Damn, those are all so good - I'm not sure which one I want to steal!

EE: Besides writing, Bob - what would you be doing if you weren't writing?

BL: I'd be struggling as an actor instead of struggling as an author.

I doubt it would be much of a struggle! You have a knack for making dreams happen.

EE: "Write what you know" is what new writers are always told - so I'm wondering here, Bob - (and it's been rumored) - if those letters between Marilyn & Elvis in your debut book - THE ELVIS AND MARILYN AFFAIR - were really letters Marilyn sent to you. I think it's time we knew the real skinny on this.

BL: Get real, my darling. If that first novel had been titled THE BOB AND MARILYN AFFAIR. you really think it would have found a publisher? However, I do remember bumping into Marilyn once and for some reason was immediately struck by thoughts of the Hollywood Foreign Press awards banquet.

Uh, I think I'll pass on this one too. :)

EE: As a seasoned and popular panelist - we'd all like to know who would be your ideal panel mates at the next con?

BL: Any on a long list of those whose talent I admire and opinions I respect, who welcome opportunity to educate and inform an audience based on their practiced knowledge and experience, especially the authors with a natural, spontaneous wit, able to spice their serious observations with a bit of humor. Happily, they outnumber the authors who hijack a panel and use it to promote themselves and their latest book exclusively, motormouths too self-absorbing to realize the good will and sales their showboating is likely to cost them.

Yep - I've seen a few of those hijackers...and I don't buy their books. And - you'll never see them here at OTB.

EE: What advice - if any - would you like to offer writers these days? I don't mean just new writers - all of us.

BL: Hmmm. I suppose something along the lines of "Don't be discouraged." For new writers, it's by those rejection letters from agents and editors. For published authors outside the safety zone of the NY Times bestseller list, it's the sense of gloom and doom caused by corporate mergers, a shrinking market place, indie bookstores going out of business, and, of course, the fear of falling off the mid-list as the mid-list shrinks into memory. I believe resiliency is the key to success and survival. I also believe for every drop of rain that falls a flower grows. And to all of us, I say - nay, I sing (everybody join in!): When you're down and out, lift up your head and shout, "*There's gonna be a great day!*"

Great advice, Bob. I wonder how many terrific books are still languishing in a box somewhere because rejections from agents and editors were just too much to take. One should remember the number of rejections The Godfather and Catch-22 encountered.

EE: You and Sandra are having six guests for dinner. Who are they - and what will you serve?

BL: Since our dining room table can seat twelve guests, we'll go with some of the usual crowd: Gershwin, Jolson, Merman, Berle, Eddie Robinson, Hitchcock, Wilder, Hemingway, Truffault, Lennon, Audrey Hepburn, and reserve one place for you, dear Elaine.

The dinner, as prepared by our Chef Sandra: Assorted cheese and crackers; a salad of mixed baby greens with balsamic vinaigrette dressing; Cornish game hens with Dijon walnut sauce served on wild rice; baby artichokes; lemon gelato and cookies for dessert - coffee and appropriate dinner and dessert wines.

Moi? I'm invited too? With that bunch? My heart is jumping here. Can I sit next to Eddie Robinson (I can talk art) and Berle (maybe he could help me develop a sense of humor) - and oh, Audrey Hepburn? Maybe I should just help Sandra? I mean, that's an awesome group, Bob.

EE: Which best selling book do you wish you'd written? Just PLEASE don't say that DVC book! Ah, hell - go ahead if you must.

BL: Ragtime by E.L.Doctorow. Talk about storytelling at it's finest and making every word count. If you were asking for a list, I know I'd include Gatsby, just to give me some credibility, and something by Hemingway and a couple by Ira Levin, and, oh, yeah - Catch 22, and I suppose The Catcher In The Rye (or J.D., if he reads this, will never speak to me again), and Time and Again, and early Harold Robbins (Never Love A Stranger, A Stone for Danny Fisher), and Robert Traver (Anatomy of a Murder) and Evan Hunter/Ed McBain and Joe Wambaugh, and who or what am I forgetting? Yikes! Ray Bradbury! Philip Roth! Oh, and Freddy the Pig by Walter R. Brooks...DVC? Nope. Haven't read it...

Ragtime! Absolutely! Oh, J.D. said he might drop in-he's not mad at you,okay? And as far as Robbins goes - I've always felt he was a master.

EE: We've had some pretty interesting Walter Mitty dreams offered here at On The Bubble, Bob - what's yours?

BL: I'll level with you...My dream was to write a novel and get it published. I got lucky and pulled it off. Other than that, it's been to write a play and get it performed. I'm sort of on that road now. "Transcript", a one-act I wrote a few months ago during a breather from the novels and the short stories, is on tap to be staged during the International Mystery Writers Festival at RiverPark Center in Owensboro, KY - June 12-17. (Subtle how I worked in the plug, eh, Elaine?)

Congrats on the play! And Bob? You don't have to be subtle here - this is about you...so thanks for letting us know what else you're up to.

EE: You and I have seen a lot of changes lo these past decades in Bookville - what trend or which writer stands out in your mind?

BL: Judge Traver for sure. With Anatomy of a Murder, the novel I credit with inspiring lawyers to leave the courtroom where they belong and invade the wunnerful-wunnerful world of fiction. Joe Wambaugh, of course, brought realism to the ranks of fictional cops and perhaps single-handedly created a breed of writers who've been following his lead ever since.

A trend that stands out in my mind? The rise of the small press, where new homes and hopes have opened up for both new and established writers.

Couldn't agree more... And yes - a round of applause for small presses!

EE: Other than your own - which series protag do you most identify with?

RL: According to a just-this-minute tour of authors and titles on my bookshelves, hunting for an answer: Nobody. (I'd love to say Sherlock Holmes, but I still haven't figured out why that damned dog didn't bark.)

Maybe someone out there can tell us why the dog didn't bark?

EE: Your favorite non-writing quote?

BL: "In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart." Anne Frank

Lovely - thank you for reminding us.

EE: How would you like to be remembered?

BL: Fondly

Count on it.

EE: What writer or book has influenced you the most?

BL: The Kinsey Report

I wasn't ready for that, Bob...but, uh...what the hell, huh?

EE: Are the rumors true that you were the one who killed Paul Guyot's blog - INK SLINGER - and do you have plans to convince him to leave Murderati????!!!!

BL: First, understand I was among the first to pronounce his name correctly (it rhymes with Gaul) - and yes, 'mdear, I plead guilty. I screamed at him for wasting his time and considerable talent blogging, using his blog as his time-crunching excuse for not writing the novel he wanted desperately to write. So, Paul - quit the blog - and the rest - as they don't say isn't history. Not yet, anyway... (Paul, you reading this? Paul?)

Okay, just wait a minute here... We're all for Paul working on his novel...but we ain't letting him leave Murderati! So - as much as I love you, Bob - knock it off, okay?

Meanwhile, you won't catch me blogging. What I have to say, I say on (wait for it) (here it comes) (another subtle plug) - my website: <http://www.robertslevinson.com> And, in response to invitations to Q & A visits on wonderful blogs like yours, sweet Elaine...

All of us at Murderati appreciate your compliment - and want you back again. So consider this an open invitation.

Okay, are we done? Is it a wrap? If so, thanks for inviting me; thanks to all who've read down to here; and please join me in pausing for a moment in fond memory of the indomitable Barbara Seranella.

A wonderful exit from a terrific guy...

January 31, 2007 in [Elaine Flinn](#) | [Permalink](#)

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By the way - I opted to use Bob's photo with the Killerettes instead of his website photo. Since he's always surrounded by gorgeous babes - it seemed natural, you know? So here he is with Heather Graham, Harley Jane Kozak and our very own delectable Alex!

Eat your hearts out, guys - he's got it. And then some. :)

Posted by: [Elaine Flinn](#) | [January 31, 2007 at 03:15 AM](#)

Eternally Mr. L's straight man. Straight babe.

Sigh.

But what a chaperone! ;)

Love you!!!

Posted by: [Alex Sokoloff](#) | [January 31, 2007 at 07:40 AM](#)

What a lovely interview. Bob was the toast of Phoenix, and I can't wait to see what he does in New York!

Posted by: [JT Ellison](#) | [January 31, 2007 at 10:19 AM](#)

One of the things I love about OTB is that I get to see sides of people I've met, but only know a bit.

This interview really fleshed out Bob (which is difficult to do since he's so skinny) for me. Thank you for that.

Oh, that dinner sounds astounding -- the guests, I mean -- no . . . maybe the food, too.

Damn, I'm hungry now.
On second thought, thanks for nothing.

Posted by: [Pari Noskin Taichert](#) | [January 31, 2007 at 11:02 AM](#)

"Don't let yourself become hypnotized by the smiles of yesterday; rather, invent the smiles of tomorrow."

Thanks, Bob. I'm adopting this one for myself now, too.

And thanks for a wonderful interview. But keep your paws off Guyot. I need my Tuesday blog mate.

Posted by: [louiseure](#) | [January 31, 2007 at 11:43 AM](#)

Bob Levinson has led such a fascinating life - and being the super guy he is - he was a dream interview.

Posted by: [Elaine Flinn](#) | [January 31, 2007 at 01:03 PM](#)