

Turning the page on a career

Posted @ 8/7/2012 9:30 AM by Colin | Files in

By Chris Roberts

Though he worked as a teacher and counsellor for 25 years in a number of schools throughout Alberta and British Columbia, Ken Budd has always had a desire to express his creativity through written word.

Well, from Grade 10 onward, at least.

"It was (my) English teacher in Grade 10 who said 'Geez this guy' s never handed in anything that' s been worth anything before, but this one' s pretty good so I' ll read it to the class,' and I went 'Wow, maybe I can write stuff,' " the jovial Budd explained.

Born in North Battleford, Budd attended the University of Alberta where he received his phys-ed degree, and went on to do a grad degree in counselling. It was then that he started seriously considering penning a novel.

"While I was counselling I started thinking about writing this book, and I took a year away to do some of that – foolish fellow I was thinking that someone would buy something from an unknown author – but I did submit that to the Banff School of Fine Arts back in 1982, and it was accepted on a full-ride scholarship for the summer," he said.

Nearly 30 years later, Budd published his first novel, *Summer Wild*; a book that takes place in 1953, following an 11-year-old boy, Buddy Williams, and his friends as they spend the summer together around the lake, dealing with the nuances of growing up.

On Tuesday, Aug. 21, Budd will be at Coles in the Lloyd Mall as part of a book tour, promoting his second novel, *Fall Gently*, which picks up where *Summer Wild* left off.

"*Fall Gently* takes (Buddy) from the lake in the summer to going back to school in the fall, where he meets a new teacher that isn' t a very good role model, and also encounters a tragic loss in his life," he explained.

Budd is already hard at work finishing the final two installments of what he' s labeled *The Adventures of Buddy Williams* – they take place in the winter and spring, if you haven' t already guessed.

And while the series is considered fiction, it isn' t hard to tell there' s a taste of Budd' s own childhood in the books. The character of Buddy Williams is in fact a play on his full name – Kenneth William Budd. The town that Buddy lives in – Buffalo Crossing – is also based on North Battleford, and the lake that Buddy spends the majority of his time at in *Summer Wild* is an essentially Jackfish Lake, just north of North Battleford, Budd said.

"When I taught creative writing in my classrooms, I would always tell the kids start with 'write with what you know,' and I knew what I experienced when I grew up," said Budd, adding that the series is littered with autobiographical elements.

There are study guides available for both *Summer Wild* and *Fall Gently*, a decision that was made as a result of his years in the classroom.

"It was my intent there should be some educational value to that which I write as well as entertainment," said Budd, adding that the study guides have particularly been of use to ESL classes, as the books themselves are written for a more light-reading juvenile audience.

Though, despite the intended audience, *Summer Wild* inspires a feeling of nostalgia for older readers.

"Some of the best reviews I' ve gotten are from old farts – men and women who have read it and went 'Geez, you took me back to that lake up in Northern Ontario where I used to go every summer with my dad and mom,' " Budd laughed. "Wherein it was aimed at juvenile fiction, I' ve gotten a bonus audience of older people who enjoy the reminiscing."

Though it has taken him a few decades to turn the page on his career, Budd has now validated that 10th grade English teacher and has dedicated himself to being a full-time author.

After he finishes *The Adventures of Buddy Williams*, he even has plans to go back, edit, and hopefully publish some of his older work, which he explained is for a much different audience than those who would have read his first four books – it details the experiences of misfits at an air base on the west coast of Vancouver during World War II.

He will be at Coles from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. to sign copies of either *Summer Wild* or the recently-released *Fall Gently*, and to chat with fans of the books.