

August 25, 2008. Queenie D interviews espionage author, Geoffrey Gluckman, about his thriller *Deadly Exchange*.

My first question has to do with your background and experience. It's very intriguing to read that you "drew from personal experiences as a federal agent." Of course you may not be able to give too much detail but can you share with us what kinds of experiences you're referring to? How much of this book is based on your real life?

Geoffrey Gluckman

Well, first off the story is completely fiction. It doesn't resemble my life. However, I was trained as a federal undercover agent, then later recruited by the CIA, but turned down the offer. I drew from my experiences and training and immersion in the world of clandestine ops to add authenticity to the story.

Book Club Queen: Sounds very mysterious and exciting! So then I guess you're not Frank?! Is he based on someone you've known? Are any of the main characters based on someone you've known?

Geoffrey: No, none are based on people I've known, though as a writer I think we create characters from our imagination and sprinkle them with parts of people we may have met, seen, or know.

Book Club Queen: I agree that even when we don't mean to base a character on someone we know, many times a little personality trait or quirk from someone we've met along the way will come out.

Book Club Queen

Why did you decide to make this a book about love and spirituality as well as a terrorist thriller? Do you think you accomplished what you set out to do?

Geoffrey Gluckman

Espionage is the perfect vehicle to carry the deeper themes that I wanted to share, such as identity, which operates in the novel on multiple levels--for the individual and the for the nation. In addition, it is a story of freedom. The freeing of oneself from the corporate/mental imprisonment. Did you discover the secret within the story?

Book Club Queen: Uh-oh, you're putting me on the spot! Let's see, my answer to that would be that I think the secret of the story has to do with learning to live the life you've dreamed of, no matter what the cost. Now I don't mean like Ulrich or Jones, but like Jennifer and Frank. There is a hesitant quality to each of their lives until they come together and begin to see that there is much more out there than they've allowed themselves to have. I'm positive that the secret you're referring to has something to do with "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" but I think I'll need you to help me out a little!

Geoffrey: Well, I can't give the secret away. People just have to read the novel. And I do like your answer. The quote from the Declaration of Independence, of course, is very powerful and begs the reader to ask that to themselves. It is also, especially in the politically troubled times we have had, an important question to ask of our government. In addition, for me the novel is like a piece of music, a sonata perhaps, that acts to expand us. It may even liberate us from beliefs, fears, etc that no longer serve us.

Book Club Queen

You raise many interesting questions, the most concerning of which has to do with our own government. Is it often that a person in power abuses his or her privileges and people get hurt? How "normal" are these behind-the-scenes operations taking place - the kind that any public official would disavow if they came to light?

Geoffrey Gluckman

These types of things go on all the time, unfortunately. In fact, one real aspect in the story, which you may have gathered from the author's note at the end, is the ability to use ULF (ultra low frequency) to alter the subconscious behaviors of people, animals, etc. This was perfected by the CIA in the 80's and used on enemy troops in the Gulf War and other areas. Now, with the proliferation of the digital age, radio frequency identification (RFID) makes the scenario in the story very possible, though when I wrote it that was more of an extrapolation.

Book Club Queen: Yes, the author's note definitely made me nervous. I thought "well, if they really end up using mind control to make nations of people subservient, at least Gluckman will know how to stop them!" The them being the government of course.

Book Club Queen

That leads me to my next, somewhat scary, question - is any citizen of any country really free? To what extent does a government, even a democratic one, control their people?

Geoffrey Gluckman

That's a deep question. We have quite a bit of freedom afforded to us here in the U.S., and many Western countries in comparison to others, such as those that are controlled by theocratic doctrine. However, I spent a lot of time with the Native American people and was deeply influenced by them at a very young age. As Chief Seattle says, 'The Earth Does Not Belong to Us, We Belong to the Earth.

If you think about that, then you realize that we are born in the universe first, Earth second, everything else is political or ideological. In other words, these lines on the globe are made by minds of man.

Book Club Queen: And so really, maybe the secret you've referred to earlier, has more to do with the fact that even the powers that be, the people who think they are in control, really have nothing on the forces of the Universe.

Geoffrey: Exactly. It's really just a waiting game, of sorts. But many people busy themselves with all the things that society, parents, governments tell us we should be busy with, such as getting a good job, taking vacations, making good investments, saving up for retirement, etc. It's not that these things aren't wise suggestions, however one may want to question whether it needs to be the main focus, rather than something larger and deeper that runs through each one of us.

Book Club Queen

Well on the subject of morality, I have a question about death, or killing rather. The things that Frank, Peter, and the "Team" do in their attempts to bring down the bad guys could be considered just as awful as the murderers we put on death row. Is it true that when you're on the "good side" the killing of another human is less frowned upon? Sort of a "for the greater good" mentality?

Geoffrey Gluckman

First, that is part of Frank's struggle: to re-enter the world that he had left. Second, it's a story. Third, in the real world of espionage assassination and murder are seen as means to an end, where someone has trained these people to do their job as efficiently as possible and a clean up crew helps with any screw ups. Whereas in the general day to day world, when a person kills someone else, they have emotional motivations, such as fear, anger, hurt, pain, and know one has taught them which is the best weapon, method, etc, or reviewed the plan to make sure it will work. In the end, espionage killings are seen as service to one's country or doctrines of beliefs, like we see the Islamic terrorists doing now. However, they don't realize that they, too, are just pawns in a bigger game. They have not truly emancipated themselves, though they think so.

Book Club Queen

A particular line from Jones really resonated with me long after I finished the book. "For me, their training just honed my skills, adding to my natural abilities." If you didn't know that he was talking about murder and mayhem, this would be an honorable statement about his training within our government. It scares me to think that there are others who are bred for a life of killing and that we just give them the tools they need to do it legally. How can the bad apples, so to speak, be sorted out?

Geoffrey Gluckman

Des, you really are getting the deeper nuances of the story. So in a way, Jones is not all bad, just as Frank is not all good, which emulates life. Also, hopefully makes for appealing, yet intriguing characters, subtly crafted. But to sort out the good and bad is a job for whom? We all have darkness and light, so it becomes the individual's responsibility to accept their darkness and choose the light. In the end, energy is just energy, not good or bad. We can all choose to create or to destroy. So that is true power.

Book Club Queen: Well said. So really, Jones chooses his path and there is no way to know or prevent that from happening. The best we can hope for in this type of situation is that we, I mean the people in charge of our country's security, have a plan in place to deal with it.

Geoffrey: Mhmm. If we look at the last 232 years of this country, while things started out well with powerful documents to establish a country of free will, much of that has been eroded by those in positions to do so. Much of that erosion was to better serve the aims of those in elected positions with personal agendas, instead of it being 'government by the people and for the people'. It is important for us to not relinquish our power to supposed authorities, especially those that may not have our best interests at heart.

Book Club Queen: So as citizens we need to be sure we are owning our own freedom and taking advantage of our own "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness." There's that phrase again!

Geoffrey: Precisely. That is the call to arms. That is the true revolution. It is an internal one, as there will never be another external revolution in a large Western country.

Book Club Queen

Let's get back to Frank for a short minute. Since Frank has both a dark and light side, can he defeat his demons and live the life a "regular" guy? Or let the light "win out" so to speak?

Geoffrey Gluckman

I don't know yet. As I write the sequel to Deadly Exchange, he's telling me his story, along with the other characters.

Book Club Queen: You've led me right along to my last question! What are you working on now? Will you write another novel? Will we see any of these characters again?

Geoffrey: For sure, I'm writing the sequel to Deadly Exchange right now, after much hounding from readers. Actually, I've written another novel, unrelated to the first, which is more of a literary mystery. So with with any luck that will be out before the sequel to Deadly Exchange. And some of the same characters reappear in the sequel and some don't, of course. They are also some new ones that readers will find fascinating, I hope.

Book Club Queen: You are a busy man Geoff! Well we wish you the best of luck from Book Club Queen and you've certainly made yourself a few more loyal fans! Come back and visit when your next book is published!

Geoffrey: Certainly. Thank you so much for allowing me to share with your readers. Such a pleasure!