

MICHAEL BRANDMAN & THE SAGA OF JESSE STONE

In late 1996, after repeated prodding, Robert B. Parker's long time film agent, Flora Roberts, finally arranged for me to meet Bob for breakfast at his favorite Los Angeles hotel. We started talking at around nine am and by noon, we were still at it. That's when Joan Parker joined us. Then the three of us talked our way through lunch and well into the afternoon. It was the beginning of a dialogue which would continue for the rest of Bob's life. There was no subject we didn't exhaust. There was no such thing as a short conversation. We were never at a loss for raucous laughter.

Bob's erudition was legion; his knowledge prodigious; his passions profound. He had the answer for every question. And more importantly, that answer came accompanied by his skewed and ironic perspective.

Bob had a passion for movies. Old ones. He had long since given up venturing out to see any of the new ones. Even those which came highly recommended. Regardless, it wasn't long before we began making movies together. We even wrote together, most notably the re-make of Jack Schaefer's "Monte Walsh," which now starred a popular actor by the name of Tom Selleck.

Prior to its publication, Bob showed me the manuscript of his novel "Stone Cold," and we both agreed it would be the perfect movie fit for Selleck. Inasmuch as Tom Selleck, Bob and I had already worked together, both on "Louis L'Amour's 'Crossfire Trail,'" and on "Monte Walsh," the three of us met to discuss it. Tom immediately climbed aboard. In short order, we sold the project to CBS, thus beginning the franchise of Jesse Stone movies which still continues to thrive.

Jesse Stone became the most significant character Tom had played since Magnum. "Stone Cold" was a huge success. CBS quickly ordered more. And with each successive movie, Tom and I became more involved in the writing. Our editorial guru was Bob, whose comments and ideas always made us better.

In addition to "Stone Cold," I co-wrote the screenplays for "No Remorse," "Death in Paradise," "Innocents Lost" and the forthcoming "Benefit of the Doubt." I co-wrote the story for "Thin Ice," and supervised the writing for both "Sea Change," and "Night Passage." Along with Tom Selleck, I co-executive produced them all.

It was due to my having written in part on these Jesse Stone movies that Putnam proposed I succeed Bob in the writing of the novels, a thought which would never have occurred to me. Following in the footsteps of a Grand Master is daunting enough, but when that Grand Master is Robert B. Parker, it's positively dizzying. But I came to realize that my experiences with Bob had helped shape me as a writer. We had discussed in great detail what it was like for him to write Raymond Chandler. The sparseness of Chandler's language, his humor, the richness of his characters, his heightened sense of irony... all had informed and influenced Bob.

Having read everything Bob had written helped to inform and to guide me as I was writing **KILLING THE BLUES**. I can't even begin to describe how humbling and profound an experience it was. Joan Parker recently commented that from whatever cloud Bob's now sitting on, he is most assuredly amused that it's I who is carrying his torch. I'm only hoping that he's not press-checking his pistol and preparing to fire at me.

Truth is, I'd much rather be with Bob in Lucy's El Adobe, the Mexican cantina in Los Angeles...sitting beneath the photos of him which hang on the wall, pigging out on enchiladas and margaritas...which we did shamelessly in the middle of the day...laughing and carrying on as was our wont.

So, I am honored to have been chosen as the guardian of the Jesse Stone escutcheon. And terrified as well. Robert B. Parker was an American original. There was no one else like Bob. He was smart, funny, tart, ironic, generous, garrulous and singular. He brooked no fools and made no amends. He was a writer, singer, actor, boxer, tough guy, family man, pussy cat.

I am so very proud to have been Bob Parker's friend, and now to have been chosen to carry on the Jesse Stone legacy.