

THE CHATHAM DAILY NEWS

Local author shining spotlight on Chatham-Kent

Faces: Bryan Prince's book attracting huge media attention

Posted By ELLWOOD SHREVE, THE CHATHAM DAILY NEWS

Chatham-Kent is gaining international attention thanks to the latest book penned by Bryan Prince, a local historian and author.

Prince and his wife, Shannon, recently returned from a six-day trip to the Washington D. C. area, to promote his nonfiction book titled: *A Shadow on the Household: One Enslaved Family's Incredible Struggle for Freedom*.

While in Washington, he did four interviews and one speaking event in a single day. He added he averaged two to three interviews or events a day during the trip.

The list of interviews Prince did included a segment on Voice of America, which is heard worldwide, two talk shows on Sirius XM Satellite Radio, including one with Bob Edwards and another with Magi Litton. He was also on a radio talk show in Connecticut and made an appearance on an ABC television affiliate in Maryland.

He said the first printing of the book sold out prior to this promotional trip. However, a second printing is ready for distribution in the U. S.

Other interviews outside this trip include a half-hour radio talk show out of Boston on Tuesday and an interview with CBC television in Windsor that aired on CBC National. He was also a guest on CFRB radio in Toronto and a radio talk show in British Columbia.

Prince said he was scheduled to be interviewed by CBC Ontario Today radio yesterday.

He said so far this month, Valentine's Day is the only day he and Shannon haven't done an interview or made an appearance to promote the book.

He said the book has also received positive newspaper reviews across Canada in the Globe and Mail, Ottawa Citizen, Montreal Gazette, and Winnipeg Free Press.

Prince has been told by his publicist a positive review written by World News Syndicate is expected to be picked up by 240 U. S. newspapers shortly.

Prince, who also wrote *I Came As a Stranger*, said this is the most media attention he has ever received for a book.

"This has just been great," he said.

Prince credits the circumstances endured by the family of John and Arabella Weems before they eventually gained their freedom for creating such an interest in his latest book.

"It's just an incredible, true story of a very big, enslaved family that went through all sorts of horror by being sold and separated," he said.

Prince said the story catches the attention of people in North America and Great Britain, because people raised the money to buy some of the Weems family members and set them free. He added other family members escaped slavery, with most of the family ending up in Chatham-Kent.

Shannon, who is curator of the Buxton Historic Site and Museum, said they did a lot of networking while in the U. S., adding she is sure this will translate into more visits to Buxton.

Prince said the interviews about his book typically lead to conversations about Buxton and the surrounding area.

"American journalists are so intrigued by this story they don't know about," he said.

The Prince's have married their love of black history and storytelling with music.

Prince said the couple are included in a CD titled "Road to Freedom," which is a concert series featuring the Karen Schuessler Singers from London and jazz singer Denise Pelley.

In between songs, the Princes provide historical narratives.

"We're thrilled about it," he said, noting it is available at the museum in Buxton for \$15.

The CD was recorded at Fanshawe College in London by award-winning producer Kevin Doyle.

Prince said the Road to Freedom CD dominated the book interview he did in Connecticut, because the interviewer, who is "deeply rooted in gospel music" had never heard anything like it.

He said 650 people attended the CD launch at Wesley Knox Church in London. During the performance, he noted he and Shannon read excerpts from his latest book, "taking care that the narrative fit the lyrics of the songs."

He said the couple have been providing narratives for the concert series for the last five years.

"Every time it's just a special evening for us."

Prince said a highlight occurred in March 2007 when they performed for Governor General Michaëlle Jean at York University in Toronto, when she received an honorary doctorate.

"She came up and hugged us, she was so moved by the performance," he said, noting that remains a special memory.

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