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Wednesday Gems: Interviewing Famous People Is Hard Work

By: Frank Diamond, The Bulletin
05/23/2007

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Bill Boggs is too stinking successful. I mean it'd be easy to hate him if you were the jealous, petty type. Which I'm not. Really. Boggs was raised right here in Philadelphia, attended Lincoln High School and then the University of Pennsylvania. He came up through the same streets as you and I did, in other words. Except, he's gone much further.

He's won four Emmy Awards, helped launch entire TV networks (Court TV), and has even sung in an off-Broadway hit called "Our Sinatra." In addition, he's a loyal and dedicated husband and father. He's like the guy from high school who becomes so successful that it lets the air out of every other "so what have you been up to" conversation at the reunion.

Now, he's had the temerity to come out with a book called Got What It Takes? Successful People Reveal How They Made It To the Top.

I jumped at the chance to interview Boggs when the opportunity presented itself. Lucky for him that I'm not the jealous, petty type.

Diamond: I don't know any famous people. That's a question. Advertisement

Boggs: Well, you'll never be able to say that again, cause now you know me, Philadelphia native, Bill Boggs, the four-time, Emmy Award-winning TV host and author of the best-selling book, Got What It Takes? By the way, the book makes an excellent graduation gift.

Diamond: We here in Philadelphia already have Pat Croce. Aren't you a tad redundant?

Boggs: Ah, that name stirs memories ... Jim Croce. I only wished that I had met him. He was wonderful songwriter. I love "Time in a Bottle."

Diamond: Err, actually I was referring to Pat ...

Boggs: ... And Sinatra's recording of Croce's "Bad, Bad Leroy Brown" was fabulous. By the way, there are stories about Sinatra in my book, Got What it Takes? You know, I snuck in to see Frank Sinatra dressed as a busboy at the 500 Club in Atlantic City.

Diamond: Sinatra? Dressed as a ...

Boggs: ... I don't believe Croce ever worked there, it burned down before he was performing, I think.

Diamond: Tell me you're not a morning person.

Boggs: I could tell you that, sure why not... I am not a morning person. That's why the accomplishment of writing my book, Got What it Takes? was so monumental ...

Diamond: The problem with you is that you're not mentioning the title of your book enough.

Boggs: OK, I'll try to correct that. It's: Got What It Takes? I had to get up early to work on the transcripts of the interviews I did with 44 leaders in their fields - people like Trump, Branson, Matt Lauer, Renée Zellweger, Diane von Furstenberg, Jeff Lurie, Jim Cramer, Dr. Judith Rodin. But I did it, and I got up early to do it.

Diamond: Of all the famous people you've met, whom did you hate the most?

Boggs: That's tough to answer when you've interviewed despicable figures like the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, and Nelson Mandela. Hate is such a scornful word. I prefer revulsion. I must say, and I think to your surprise, that I really liked all of

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the people I interviewed in Got What it Takes? even Mario Cuomo, Brooke Shields, James Blake, Joy Behar, Clive Davis, Maria Bartiromo, Joe Torre and Mark Burnett, the creator of "Reality TV."

Diamond: OK, wise guy. Define success.

Boggs: Following the path of your passion and living a passionate life, that's my definition, and I think those interviewed for my book, Got What it Takes? - people like chef Bobby Flay, Craig Newmark of craigslist.com, writer Anna Quindlen, Bobbi Brown, the makeup guru and clothing designer, Joseph Abboud, and television pioneer Norman Lear - all share that vision.

Diamond: Positive, schmositive. What's the big deal?

Boggs: Well, the alternative is not so attractive, and let's all remember the lyrics to Croce's "Time in a Bottle" - "there never seems to be enough time to do the things you want to do once you find them." And conversely, his "Bad, Bad Leroy Brown" was "meaner than a junkyard dog" - not a very positive attitude - and he actually carried a razor in his shoe, which could be the whole reason he was so mean. Who wants to walk around with a razor in his shoe? So Croce shows us the way in his songs. Got What it Takes? is like a very long positive song - like one album-length song - except it is a book, but you could sing it as you read it. I would recommend singing it to the tune of "The Best is Yet to Come." The writers of that song, Marilyn Fields and Cy Coleman, are sadly in songwriter's heaven, like Croce.

Diamond: What gives you the right to try and make me happy?

Boggs: I am paid to do that. I am a professional, I appear on TV, radio, on lecture platforms, and on stage in my play, "Talk Show Confidential," and I appear in the pages of my book, Got What it Takes? for your entertainment and enlightenment.

Diamond: Where'd you say you can buy that book again?

Boggs: If you simply go to the highly-entertaining Web site, www.gotwhatittakes.net you can buy the book at a substantial discount, or you can find it in any bookstore. It's published by HarperCollins and its full title is Got What it Takes? Successful People Reveal How They Made It To the Top. Based on your questions to me, you could use this book.

Diamond: That one hurt.

Boggs: The truth will set you free. Thanks very much.

[Note: Thanks to Bill Boggs for being a good sport in participating in this skit.]

Frank Diamond lives and writes in Bucks County. He can be reached at fpdiamond@yahoo.com.

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