New Book Highlights Kodiak Bears, Locals

Wednesday, 06 November 2013

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

The Kodiak Brown Bear has long been the focus of books, movies, and captured the awe and admiration of many a worldly traveler. But few come back as often, or are as dedicated to capturing images and stories of the great bear as Stefan Quinth. Quinth has been traveling to Kodiak on and off for the past 25 years and has filmed and produced many films about the archipelago’s bears. Afterall, they are what first attracted him to Alaska’s Emerald Isle.

“And I heard about the Kodiak Bear and I always enjoyed wildlife and of course we work mainly with wildlife and so I wanted to see the bear with my own eyes. So a couple of years later I got on a flight, both of us, LaVonne and I and we started shooting our first documentary about the Kodiak bear. And we did that, I think we worked on that movie for four years. And the title of that move was “Kodiak: The Island of the Great Bear.” And it ended up on Discovery and Animal Planet for many years, and many other TV stations around the world.”

Quinth’s wife, LaVonne, has continued to help him with his projects in the decades that followed that first trip to Kodiak. The pair, along with local filmmaker Dave Kaplan, runs Camera Q Productions, which now has an office and studio here in Kodiak. LaVonne designed Quinth’s most recent project – a 286-page book featuring photos and stories about his past 25 years visiting Kodiak.

“Well we’ve been working on the book as a book project for a year and a half, I think. We first came out with the book in Swedish. And so Stefan would write stories and I would try to find pictures to fit the stories and then we would find a picture that was just too great to not have in the book and so well, what story do you have for this picture. So it was kind of a back and forth process of what are we going to use. And of course we’ve got stories that we couldn’t use and we have pictures that we couldn’t use. But this is the best of everything we could find.”

The book, “Kodiak, Alaska – The Island of the Great Bear,” came out in print recently and is available at various locations around town. Quinth said it was a different process writing his stories, rather than telling them through film, but one he very much enjoyed.

“I could see them in writing. And that made it a lot easier for me to remember details. So every time I was on an airplane I would sit with my iPad and write stories. And when you sit there and you write stories you remember all different things. You remember color, sounds, maybe flavors and fragrances and so it’s quite different. You know when you write a book you can put a lot more story into the story, words into the story than what you can do in a movie. Movies are kind of short. You know it has to be told really quick. You can’t spend too much time telling a story in a movie, but in a book you have that luxury of being able to tell a complete story in a different way.”

Quinth’s book has been available in Kodiak for about a week, and he

said it has been received very well by the community, including those featured in it.

“It has yes. Every place.
We’ve had a couple book signings so far, and I would say almost everyone bought the book. So I’m impressed. It’s very hard to say about your own work. Is it good or bad? Is it interesting? Because it’s interesting to me, but how will it be received by other people and how is it received by the people that are in the book. And that’s what is the most interesting to me.”

Quinth will be in town for the next few days and host a slew of book signings. You can find him at the Baranov Museum tonight at 7 p.m. He’ll be at Fly By tomorrow at 11 a.m. and also at Henry’s starting at 5 p.m. On Friday he’ll be at the brewery starting at 3 p.m. and will also have a table at the holiday bazaar at the high school this Saturday.