

We came across Kathy Stickles from Feathered Quill when she reviewed *Eye of the Moon* last year. She has since become the only person to review each of the books in the Eye of the Moon series, and she has conducted three interviews with Ivan. In coordination with Katie Specht, Editor of Feathered Quill, we did an interview with Kathy to learn more about her, and the insight and resources she could impart to others in the industry.

How did you become a reviewer?

My mother was a librarian, and my sister was an author/reviewer/editor so I come from a long line of “book” people. I spend all of my free time reading because I dislike TV so much. I never actually thought of or expected to become a book reviewer but my sister, who worked for Feathered Quill for years, passed away very unexpectedly two years ago and in trying to deal with everything surrounding that I found myself offering to help the company with the awards program that my sister always did so much work for. One thing led to another, and I found myself working for two companies for their award seasons and then I all of a sudden found myself writing book reviews as well. Never saw it coming from such a tragic event, but I absolutely love doing it. There is nothing like being able to turn your favorite thing (in my case reading any and all books) into a job that you really enjoy.

Can you share with us part of your reviewing process?

First and foremost, I just sit down and read the book all the way through for my own enjoyment. I try not to think about what I am going to write in the review or anything like that, I just read. Having been an English major it is easy for me to pick out any typos or parts of the story that do not flow well so I make notes on those things if they are really noticeable and make the story harder to read. Once I have read the entire book, I will then make some notes on particularly good or bad things that I think should be in the review and then I just sit down and write it out. I do not try to make any notes while reading it through the first time because that ends up confusing me and taking away from what I am reading.

What do you think are the hallmarks of a well-crafted/professional review?

Most important to me, and I think it should be to everyone, is honesty in the review. If it is a great book that is really easy. If it is not my cup of tea but probably would be for others, I also find it easy. When the book is not good (too many typos, not well-written, etc.) it makes the review a lot harder, so I feel that honesty is the most important part. I have also found that by being honest with the author, it makes them appreciate the review more. I have had a number of authors thank me for being honest and pointing things out to them so they could make changes.

Which are some books that influenced your life?

Wow.... This one is hard for me because, as I said, I will read just about anything at all. I think that the most enjoyment I have gotten from reading has always been the classics. I

love Dickens, Hemingway, Bronte, etc. Reading books from these authors and so many others is just always so satisfying because they really knew how to write/develop a story. They also cause me to think and look at myself, which is another part of reading that I always enjoy. Personally and for fun, a good mystery is always at the top of my list, whether it is an Agatha Christie or a John Grisham. It is so much fun to just lose yourself in another world for a while.

What do you find most satisfying about writing a review?

Definitely the responses that I receive from the authors that they liked and appreciated the review that I wrote.

What inspires you when choosing your interview questions?

Most of the interviews I have done consist of about 8-10 questions. For the first few I try to focus on the book itself. I love to pick out one or two specific characters and ask about them and where the author came up with them. After that I go with the questions that I most want to know the answer to and don't really think about who will be reading the interview afterwards... things like what or who inspires the author and what their writing process is... things like that. I also like to check out the author bios because sometimes what they say in those will create a question or two in my mind to expand on.

What advice would you give to new reviewers?

Above all else, have fun. Read the book and enjoy it and try not to think about what comes next in terms of the technical part of writing the review. It is no fun if you are trying to look at the book and come up with your review in your mind at the same time.

What guidance would you offer to budding journalists and other interviewers?

I'm not sure I really have any advice for budding journalists/interviewers... lol... I am still trying to learn it myself and it is a trial-and-error process in my opinion. I guess I would say: enjoy it, be honest, and do not get stressed over it. Nothing is simple in the beginning and so you have to keep trying, keep learning, and have confidence in yourself.

Is there anything else you would like to say?

This has been fun for me... definitely the other side of the coin from what I am used to. I do not have anything else to say for or about myself, but I will take a minute to express yet again how wonderful Ivan's books are and plug him for a moment. *Eye of the Moon* was one of the very first books that I reviewed for Feathered Quill and it definitely started me on my way. These are wonderful stories and they should not be missed!!! Thank you for being a part of my journey.

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Read Kathy's reviews and interviews of [Ivan Obolensky](#) at [Feathered Quill](#).