

Interview Topics Advisory

(with sample Q&A)

For Interviews with author, Ruth Marlene Friesen; topics I would be happy to discuss in your interview.

Her novel, *Ruthe's Secret Roses*

The 30+ year saga of writing this book

The NEW opportunities for publishing on the Internet

Editing and publishing books and ezines - a writer's paradise

Online on a shoestring too short to wrap around a finger! (Living and working on ZERO income)

Mentoring would-be writers eventually

Having an intimate relationship with God

Family History books - a minor authority on genealogy (see <https://agodyinheritance.com/books>)

A light review of Mennonite history

Caregiving for elderly parents in their home

Don't forget to ask, "*How do you eat your aloe vera plants?*"

Sample Questions & Answers:

Q. What is the main conflict or theme in this novel?

It's a unique Christian girl's struggle to sort out her secretive double life. She has one life in the city, and another one back home. Although she helps many others and gives good advice, it takes a while, and stronger pressures, before she faces her own fears. The theme is how to walk and talk with God about everything that happens to you - no matter what.

Q. What are the 'secret roses' in the title?

Ruthe thinks of her friends as various types of roses. She discusses them with her Friend in their early dawn walks, but she hides her city friends - or most of them - from her family.

Q. What is the locale of this book?

Ruthe Veer and her family live in the Saskatchewan town of Kleinstadt, but much of the action in the novel happens in the city of Saskatoon, which is about a half hour's drive away. Ruthe works shifts in the telephone office as an operator, and commutes most of the time. At least in the earlier part.

Q. Why persist in writing this for 30 years and work so hard to publish it?

I had a dream about it when about 11 or 12 years old. I was convinced back then God meant for me to write it, and that one day it would do marvelous things around the world. I've had periods of doubting, but mostly the calling has only grown stronger. I used to do an annual re-write then give up on it, or set it aside. For many years most of my friends had no idea I was writing it. But it has been the theme of my life and everything else is periphery or "while-I'm-bidin'-my-time" stuff.

You'll find the more detailed saga on my site. <http://Ruthes-SecretRoses.com/rsr/history.shtml>

Q. What does it take to publish a book for free on the internet these days?

Non-fiction ebooks sell like ice cream. Especially those that tell you how to get rich quick! Fiction is slower but gaining some ground. The last few years have been like the pioneer era in the Canadian prairies. A lot of fresh ground is broken and land tamed in the world of digital publishing. The time to get on the bandwagon is NOW. In a few years it will be hard to get a place in the crowds.

You need a good idea, preferable something to benefit people in a niche group. Almost everyone has some area of expertise or wisdom gained from their experience that would qualify. On my site I recommend certain eBooks that guides you through the steps, from brainstorming to marketing and sales.

Secondly, you need a willing and teachable spirit to get on the internet and learn some basic skills in communicating, web design, and marketing. There is lots of stuff out there, most of it still free when I began - though that era has been slowly disappearing. The ones who know their stuff are starting to charge just to read their site! But a hungry and determined person can teach herself all she needs to know.

Thirdly, you've got to be doggedly persistent. Work your plan, and keep promoting your book in the many avenues that are available on the net. Publishing a book IS still work! At least the first one!

Q. Are you sure you did this for free? You must have had some costs.

In 1999-to-2007 I had my monthly Internet connection bill, but I learned to design my web sites for free, I started several ezines for free. I was online for two years before I spent \$10 on an e-book about designing a cover for my book, and then about \$40 Canadian for a software program to compile all the chapters into an e-book.

It's important to get a domain name and a proper web host if you are going to be taken seriously. I simply couldn't afford that right away. December 2000 I won a year's free hosting - and domain name of my choice - in a contest. That gave me a start. In July that host went under financially, so I to find a new host, transfer my domain, and start paying. But when it got to that point, God provided gifts of money. After Dad died in 2007 I began to work for a non-profit so I had to find some sponsors, and I had a web-design client that paid me faithfully for one evening a week. (They still do!)

Necessity has taught me to shop very frugally, and find the most economical ways to proceed. My setup fee for this new Print-on-Demand contract cost \$199 US, and a friend gave me that. When I found errors in the Galley-Proof, funds miraculously appeared to cover the corrections. There's a fee now to get into the Ingram's Book system catalogue, (else your book doesn't get to the bookstores!) however, God provided for that too. Those are my total expenses so far. Once I can afford it, I'll start investing in advertising. For now, I'm using all the free avenues!

Q. Tell us more about editing an ezine. Don't you need a Journalism degree? Does a newspaper chain hire you for this?

There are people starting up as ezine editors who have no journalism training whatsoever! It must happen in some places that you get hired, but most people just read a few e-books on how easy it is to start one up, and then they do it.

You draw up a template for your ezine or newsletter's look with a masthead, table of contents, spots for ads (if you will be running them), articles, and any special features you want to run regularly. you also need to create a spot for subscribing and un-subscribing instructions.

Once you have the name and the description of the ezine ready, you go to various ezine directories and fill out forms announcing your ezine. If you have a web site, obviously, announce it from there too, with plain subscribing instructions. If at all possible offer a free ebook for subscribing.

Some run theirs right from their own email address, but the wiser people buy a special software program, or as many do, and I did, you go to one of a number of sites where the ezine mailing list is handled for you. I I did that at first with Groups. For the privilege of putting an ad at the top and bottom of each issue, they handle the details of administration. Then, for many years I installed a free cgi script that allows me to do this all very professionally from my own domains. Presently I'm signed up with a mailing list service that allows me to create all the lists I want and have as many subscribers as I can find all for a flat fee of \$17.95 US per month.

Q. If you don't charge for subscriptions, how do you make money from an ezine?

My *RoseBouquet* (email newsletter), is a means of keeping in touch with friends and people who have visited my site but may not always have time to come back often to look for new material. I use my ezine to share what I'm up to with my book, with my site, and to give them inspirational articles. My ezine makes money when my subscribers turn into loyal friends who trust me when I recommend my books, or other products, from which I can profit. Meantime, it allows me to write inspirational articles for each issue and to trade them for ads with other editors who aren't so prolific.

If you can write, and are disciplined, chances are good you will get a following on the internet!

Q. Tell us about your family and background.

I was born into an evangelical Mennonite family on the Saskatchewan prairie, near Hague, which is a half-hour drive north of Saskatoon. I'm the oldest with two brothers and two sisters after me. My mother was gored by a cow before I started school, so she was sickly all the rest of her life, in and out of hospitals. I had to be grown up and care for my siblings from early on. My two brothers and one sister married, and gave me four nieces and two nephews. Two nieces have had babies, making me a Great-Aunt!

Labour Day weekend of 1983 I came home to look after my aged parents, depending on God to meet my financial needs, while I used my free time to write. That care-giving era lasted 24 years. During that time I learned to research and write, and then print and bind by hand some genealogy books!

Q. Why did you give up everything and move back home to your parents? Without a salary?!

Yes, I struggled for two years over that decision. It seemed way too hard. But I prayed a lot about it and once I was ready to give up my beautiful dreams and to really trust God's plans for my future, then it was easier.

That's not to say the last 20+ years have not been hard. Looking after Mom was tough, we clashed at times, but once I was clear that it was God's plan and therefore good, I was able to be fairly resolute. Besides, the full salary from God hasn't been paid out yet. It's still coming!

Q. How come you've never married?

I did dream of it for many years. When I realized the lovely scenes in my head that were not prophecies of my own marriage after all I decided to love God more and stop feeling sorry for myself, and get to work. (sigh) It's a long story. However, I've got things to do with eternal value, and in those matters, singleness can be a blessing rather than a deterrent.

Q. Why not put your parents in a nursing home and concentrate on your career?

Because Mom resisted, and I wouldn't want to either, as long as it is not absolutely necessary. My mother looked after her aged grandmother until she died, and it seemed only fair that she should be cared for at home too. Mom spent lots of times in the hospitals, and wanted to die at home. I chose to honour her wish and managed to do it, though at the end it almost looked like her dying would take too long. I'd wear out.

Dad is still mostly healthy for his age, and since he doesn't need nursing care yet, and can go for long walks, or travel in the car with me, there is no earthly reason to coop him up in a Home. Nor would they accept him yet!

Besides, I wouldn't be able to work full-time at getting my book published as I am now, if I didn't have this roof over my head, and free meals for making them. God knows what He's doing in giving me this career setup.

[Note: More questions always welcome; these are meant to be helpful to busy interviewers].

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