

Angela Thompson



Thief of Glory is the novel that's closest to my heart, as it was inspired by my father's boyhood in a Second World War concentration camp in the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia. He never talked much about it, so my research for the background was as wide as possible – from the culture of the Japanese Imperial Army to the Dutch colonization of the East Indies, from survivor accounts to the natural fauna of the islands. Armed with this, I was able to ask specific enough questions of my father to get him to open up about his time in the camp. I recorded some of those conversations and posted them at thiefofglory.com. I also convinced him to act out a part in the book trailer. His Dutch accent, I hope, adds impact to the video.

How do you approach researching for your historical works?

Doing the research is my favourite part of a novel. I'd much rather read than write. I incorporate as much as possible into the research and, as I mentioned, follow any bunny trails. With *Saffire*, for example, I spent hours learning about Teddy Roosevelt, and that led me to complete books on Wall Street interactions in the building of the Panama Canal. The link seems strange, but it sure was fun, and aspects from each subject show up in the novel.

The most fun, however, was tracking down letters written by one of the historical figures who plays a major role in the novel – T.B. Miskimon, who served as the right-hand

person for the head of the Panama project. I went to Wichita University in Kansas to read a collection of letters, then to Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. to read the other collection of letters available to the public.

My research even led me to a cemetery in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia where I wanted to find Miskimon's grave site to learn what his initials stood for. When I found the answer, it was definitely a Twilight Zone moment for me, as I reveal in a video at sigmundbrouwer.com/saffire.

Do you have any plans for any other historical explorations – either fiction or non-fiction?

Absolutely! Right now I'm immersed in learning all about the Apollo Eleven journey that allowed humans to first walk on the moon, and as I'm researching this, I'm also spending hours and hours reading about Sitting Bull and his years of exile in Canada. Did I mention that I'd rather research than write?

What advice do you have for young people who dream of telling their own stories?

Don't worry about your voice or your writing. Find the stories you want to tell, and don't let anyone stop you from telling them. Humans are wired for story, and you'll find an audience for yours. ■