

Sheri McGuinn: Biographical Information

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First Person: Talking about writing.

I write.

Elementary school plays and short stories, high school news articles, college papers, investigative court reports, individual education plans, screenplays, novels, non-fiction—it all demands attention to detail, careful choice of words, and the end objective of clarity for the intended reader. It's all writing, and I write.

My fiction:

I write about resilient people. They experience rejection, grief, anger, and jealousy the same as you, but in situations I hope you never encounter. They all have people who help them – sometimes people close to them, sometimes strangers. They have good times, too, that will make you laugh with them. My books are also about the cosmic glue that links people – the stuff that connects a mother and daughter when their relationship has gotten so bad the girl runs away, the stuff that makes a boy search for grandparents he's never known. It's there when people who met briefly long ago cross paths again and it can connect you to someone who never got to meet you but knew they loved you anyway.

Suspense will keep you reading. You'll want the characters to survive dicey situations and repair bonds that have been stretched past endurance. Scenes that make you laugh will provide balance.

My non-fiction:

Self-Publishing for Schools is my first non-fiction book. Aside from publishing my own books, I've helped with the preparation and publication of a yearbook and two picture books and I've been teaching workshops on self-publishing. I presented on the topic at NCTE's annual convention and am developing workshops for schools.

Not everyone has the same goal for publishing. What I'm doing is looking at the needs of a specific group and tailoring the instruction manual to cover what they need to know to produce the product they want, without burying them in other information. Families are next.

I publish.

First Person One-Page Bio: Sheri McGuinn

If my life were a painting, it would be an impressionistic cross between Monet and Van Gogh—vivid specks of color requiring distance for the picture to become clear. I never paint my own portrait; I simply use selected specks of life's color to make my stories seem real.

My experience is diverse. A few examples:

- Working as bin attendant on a grape picker, perching on the edge of a one-ton bin, getting covered in grape juice with yellow jackets swarming about, plucking leaves and other undesirable items out of the mechanically picked grapes as they poured into the bin.
- Surviving three children born in fire signs: The oldest disappeared for nine months when he was seventeen; I got two helicopter rides with the youngest when he had severe head injuries; their sister still surfs in Great White waters. There are many more stories.
- Being an exchange student in 2012 – five weeks with a family in Lima, Peru, and weekend adventures: sandboarding dunes, climbing above Machu Picchu, and fishing in the Amazon.

Writing is part of me.

- I collaborated on my own bedtime stories and attempted my first novel at age ten.
- I wrote class plays in elementary school, was editor of my high school paper, and took writing classes throughout college.
- Day jobs honed skills essential for writing: interviewing, managing various tasks with deadlines, research and evaluation, writing in a variety of modes for different audiences, adaptation/simplification of written materials, editing and proofing, and public speaking.
- On the side, I wrote GED practice exams, a book review for Colorado Libraries, and a successful grant application (my school received \$100,000).

Writing as a profession: In 2005, I got my first check for writing.

Screenwriting: In 2005 I was hired to re-write a screenplay with specific budgetary and story requirements. The script helped land funding for the project, but ended up being changed again. I got paid, was credited as Creative Consultant, and the experience spurred my enthusiasm for writing professionally. I've written screenplays for all of my novels, and the first one, *Running Away*, was optioned by Nasser Entertainment and is now being shown on television.

Books: *Running Away* is realistic. I was pitching the novel when vampires were the rage – and I wasn't pitching it right, either. I turned to self-publishing and have learned to do it myself. In fact, I've helped two people format picture books. The up side of being my own publisher is that I get to be writer, artist, and computer geek. I have four titles published now, one of them in uncensored and school-friendly versions. I'm still working on my marketing skills.

I offer other writing services and write the occasional short story or article.

I will always have stories to tell.

Third Person Biographies

Bio/Brief:

Sheri McGuinn is an award-winning writer and self-publisher. A former teacher with a Master's in Education, she also assists others with formatting and conducts self-publishing workshops.

Bio/Background

Sheri was born in Kenmore, New York. An “afterthought” child, she grew up among adults. Her mother wanted to be a writer – the dining room table held her typewriter and *Writer's Digest*. Unfortunately, a letter to the editor is all her mother ever saw in print. She would be thrilled that her daughter's work “Maria Angelica's Baby” was included in *Best Short Stories from Saturday Evening Post's Great American Fiction Contest 2016*.

In high school, they moved to a small town where Sheri was drafted to be editor of the high school paper. In her senior year, she took art classes. Instead of applying to Northwestern for journalism, she tried unsuccessfully to talk her parents into art school. Sheri spent her twenties at odds with her parents, supporting herself and going to school when she could afford it. She was a music major for a while, then a drama major for several years. Working on sets satisfied her art interest. However, she always took classes in literature, composition, or news writing.

Thanks to transferability of credits and the way prerequisites are set up at colleges, when she decided to get a degree, Psychology was the affordable option. That led to work as a probation officer and later as a child protection caseworker/investigator. As a divorced mom with three children, she decided she wanted a safer job and returned to school for a Master's in Education, specializing in Learning and Behavior Disorders. She continued her studies to become certified as a Reading Specialist as well. As a special education and reading teacher, she worked in rural, urban, and reservation schools, usually with tough teenagers.

Now she restricts her teaching to workshops on self-publishing and occasional subbing. In December 2014 she finished a Master's in Administration, Professional Writing. That's technical writing and editing and planning writing projects for businesses and is the basis for many of the services she offers. It helps the organization and editing of her own writing as well.

Books, Awards, & Honors

Running Away, the first novel Sheri self-published, was an honorable mention in the *Writer's Digest's* International Self-Published Book Awards. The movie has been released on television.

Michael Dolan McCarthy, Sheri's second novel, was a quarter-finalist in the Amazon Breakout Novel Awards and the screenplay was a finalist at the Sacramento International Film Festival.

Alice is a very short novel. It's now being submitted to contests; it may be the best so far.

Self-Publishing for Schools was published in 2014 as Sheri's first non-fiction title. That year she presented on “Self-Publishing for Schools: Why and How” as part of the Digital and Media Literacies Poster Session at the annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English. She also wrote an article on the topic for the inaugural edition of *Literacy Today*. She has given several workshops on self-publishing to writer's groups and the general public.