

## **Sheri McGuinn: Biographies**

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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 reader.

It's all writing, and I write.

#### **My fiction:**

My short fiction often shows the influence of Poe, Hitchcock, and Serling – but not always.

My novels are 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.

#### **I teach.**

I've been self-publishing for more than a decade. I speak, do workshops, and coach other writers through the process to promote quality self-publishing and help them avoid trouble.

#### **I edit.**

I do copyediting and proofing, but my favorite is developmental editing. It's an extension of teaching – pulling the best work out of each author while keeping their unique voice.

## **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. Editing is part of writing.**

- 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*, is on *Lifetime*.

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. I have multiple novels published and more in progress.

Editing: Pulling the best work out of each author while maintaining their unique voice, then seeing them follow through to publication, is fun. It also helps pay the bills.

**I will always have stories to tell.**

## Third Person Biographies

### **Bio/Brief:**

Sheri McGuinn is an award-winning writer and self-publisher. With Master's degrees in both education and professional writing, she also does writing and editing for hire, coaches other authors through self-publication, and conducts self-publishing workshops.

### **Bio/Background**

Sheri was born in Kenmore, New York. As an “afterthought” child, she grew up among adults. Her mother wanted to be a writer. When it was time for dinner, they had to clear the dining room table of her mother’s manuscripts, the typewriter, and *Writer’s Market*. Unfortunately, a letter to the editor is all her mother ever saw in print.

When Sheri was in high school, they moved to a small town where she 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 newswriting.

Thanks to transferability of credits and the way prerequisites are set up at colleges, when she decided to get a degree, a psychology major 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 occasional workshops on self-publishing. In December 2014 she finished a Master’s of Administration, Professional Writing, which is the basis for many of the services she offers. It helps the organization and editing of her own writing as well.

### **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 shown on European television and Lifetime. A slightly revised version was released in 2020 as *Running Away – Maggie’s Story* and has received a positive Kirkus review. *Peg’s Story – Detours*, the mother’s story from that novel, was also released in 2020 with a positive Kirkus review.

**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.

**Best Short Stories from Saturday Evening Post’s Great American Fiction Contest 2016** included one of Sheri’s short stories, “Maria Angelica’s Baby.”

### **Self-Publishing Expertise**

In 2014, Sheri 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* and has given several workshops on self-publishing to writer’s groups and the general public.