

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:

Most of my non-fiction has been about self-publishing. I presented on self-publishing for schools at NCTE's 2014 convention when my book *Self-Publishing for Schools* was new and also wrote an article on the topic in the inaugural edition of *Literacy Today*. While I've decided not to keep updating the book, I've left the digital edition available as some of the material specifically for teachers still holds true and is not generally available.

My newsletter:

My weekly newsletter is for readers and writers. I'm always learning and always sharing.

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 surfed in Great White waters for years. There are many more stories.
- Being an exchange student at sixty – 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 produced and is now streaming.
- I was pitching an edgy realistic YA novel when vampires were the rage – and I wasn't pitching it right, either. I turned to self-publishing and learned to do it myself. I enjoy being writer, artist, and computer geek. I'm learning to enjoy marketing – especially my weekly newsletter.
- Writers generally need multiple streams of income. When I'm not working on my own projects, I enjoy helping others refine their stories and guiding them in the self-publication process. Businesses and non-profits provide other paying projects as well. Then I get back to my fiction.

I will always have stories to tell.

Third Person Biography

Sheri McGuinn is an award-winning writer and self-publisher. With one Master's degree in Education and another that focused on professional writing and editing, she provides editing and coaching services to other self-publishers, does freelance writing and editing for businesses and non-profits, and promotes responsible self-publishing through presentations and workshops.

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 Market. 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 newswriting.

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.

When she retired early from teaching, Sheri went back to school for a Master's of Administration, Professional Writing. Aside from coursework that has proven useful in her work for businesses, non-profits, and her own projects, going back to school made it possible to purchase affordable healthcare and to spend five weeks in Peru as an exchange student the summer she turned sixty. Videos of sandboarding and the traffic in Lima are on her YouTube channel @sherishorts.

Sheri's children and grandchildren are supportive of her writing and other activities. Her granddaughter, Ember Eastridge, illustrated a picture book for one special project.