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**WORD FORGE  
BOOKS**

Author Biography

## Word Forge Books – Bringing You the World Through Words

When Mary Shafer was born in June of 1961, not only was her sun sign in Gemini, so was the moon and Gemini's ruling planet, Mercury. Since none of her homies were into astrology at the time, Mary was unaware she was doomed. Blissfully ignorant, she turned her natural inclinations toward attention deficit disorder and taking mechanical objects apart into a varied and interesting career path with more twists than an elephant's intestine.

Always possessed of an artful side, she first tried her hand at illustration, doing her first paid freelance job at 14. (Thanks, Dad.) Since art directors weren't exactly beating down the door, she also got a fast food job. Steadfastly refusing the pedantic, she never asked, "Do you want fries with that?" Especially after witnessing how those fries were made. (You don't wanna know.) Throughout these trials, she served as a reporter and layout editor of her high school newspaper.

Following graduation, Mary suffered the inertia common to all liberal arts students, and decided she was sick of school for awhile. She worked several different jobs that included picture framer, auto mechanic, electronics salesperson and deputy sheriff in undercover narcotics. Yes, really.

Tired of putting her life at risk for six bucks an hour, she decided to attend the University of Wisconsin system as an art student. Quickly realizing that was the fast lane to starvation and chronic fashion faux pas (with which she needs no help), she left school in 1981. She took a job as a production artist at a newspaper group in a Milwaukee suburb, later moving to a small weekly on the city's south side. Through it all, she continued to write ad copy and the occasional feature story for the papers.

After striking out on her own as a freelance graphic designer, Mary got a job as art director for NorthWord Press, a small nature book publisher. She went back out on her own when the company moved away from books toward producing music cassettes, CDs and videos, but never got books out of her system. In fact, she wrote her first book, "Wisconsin: The Way We Were, 1845-1945" for Heartland Press, a NorthWord imprint. The book came out in 1993 and she was hooked forever. She knew she'd always be an author in one form or another.

A second book, "Rural America: A Pictorial Folk Memory" came out in 1995, and won an award from the MidAmerica Publishers Association. Mary did a small tour of New England and the MidAtlantic region in support of it, and decided she missed the east coast. In February 1997, the day after the Green Bay Packers won the Super Bowl, she got in her loaded van and moved back to her home state of Pennsylvania.

She settled in Bucks County, where she mainly freelanced until realizing she was competing with every high school kid who had a computer and a layout program. By June 2001, she had become thoroughly disenchanted with the ad agency life. She resigned her job as president of a small agency in Lambertville, New Jersey and again struck out on her own. This time, though, she left graphics behind to follow the path she realized she'd always been on: that of a writer.

Mary now splits her time between freelance writing for magazines and books, consulting with small and microbusinesses on their marketing needs, and publishing books. Ever unable to focus too long on any one thing, she also dabbles in drawing, painting, teaching, metal detecting and blacksmithing. She's frequently tired but never bored.