

My Really Long and Boring Bio

Please note: I had to write this for the super thorough students doing school projects on me – no one else should take the time to read this, REALLY. It's not that interesting!

I was born in Washington State in 1959. I learned to ski in the Cascade Mountains when I was four-years-old. My patient father used to give me piggyback rides up the bunny hill with all my ski equipment on, and when I hit maximum velocity on the way down, I loved to throw away my ski poles. I expect this sort of behavior would be discouraged at most ski resorts now. We also had a very grumpy dachshund named Poozle.

We moved to Denver, Colorado when I was seven. My father, who was a doctor, was an avid outdoorsman, so we went skiing, hiking and camping frequently, and I learned to love nature and the Rocky Mountains. I also LOVED to read, in part because my parents read to me and in part because my beloved grandmother Goggi would come visit from Nebraska, and she would read great big long books like *Black Beauty* and *The Jungle Book* to me by the hour. I also was crazy about horses and longed to have one of my own.

The family of one of my best friends, Laurie, had a ranch up in the mountains where we could ride the cowponies in the summer and winter. We often rode them bareback, and we even tried to teach them how to jump! After one incredibly fun winter weekend full of snowmobiling at Laurie's ranch, we wrote a book titled, *Rustlers of the High Mountains*. We had such a great time imagining and writing our story about two girls outsmarting horse thieves, we actually wrote sixty-seven pages, and that's when I first learned how much fun it can be to write a book.

At the end of sixth grade, my mother was concerned that I was spending too much time reading and hanging out at the library, and therefore she decided to help me buy a horse. I promptly fell off my lovely chestnut mare Highland Lark and broke my arm. So, do you know where they send you at PE in school when you have a broken arm??? I was right back in the library happily reading again!

Eventually I did improve at riding and went off to high school in Virginia where I fell in love with history. I went on to attend Middlebury College in Vermont where I studied more history, minored in writing poetry, and became a ski patroller. I also started dating the guy who eventually became my husband. By the end of college, I was sure I wanted to be a teacher. So when I graduated, I went home to Colorado and earned my teaching certificate at the University of Colorado. I interned at the Colorado History Society creating classes about sodbusters and taught Colorado History at a private school in Denver for nine years. During our Denver decade, I married my husband Joe and started writing fantasy novels during my summer vacations. As much as I loved my students, I did NOT want to teach summer school!

Then we began moving frequently for my husband's work, and we had two children. So I gave up teaching and concentrated on my writing and raising our daughters. After we settled in Plano, TX, I wrote a wild story about genetically-engineered kids struggling to survive in the sea that eventually became *The Neptune Project*. I have been scuba diving in many beautiful places, and therefore I did know what it looks and sounds like under the waves, but I still had to do a ton of research. I wanted to make sure I made my underwater Neptune world as vivid and authentic as possible.

I was thrilled when I signed with a good agent, and he sold *The Neptune Project* to Disney/Hyperion Books for Children. The book went on to be placed on state reading lists in Texas, Florida, Maryland, Ohio and Hawaii and gained fans from all over the world. I was particularly honored when students in grades 6-8 in Florida voted *The Neptune Project* their favorite book on the Sunshine State Young Readers Award list. I'm also proud of the fact that the AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) recommended my book as a strong science-based read for kids. I continue to be very worried about the impact climate change is already having on our planet, and I do hope my Neptune books will make my readers aware of this terrible problem.

Now that my daughters are off at graduate school and college, I am writing a big middle grade fantasy series. I spend lots of time with our three dogs, an old cat and two parakeets. I also visit schools all over the United States, and I enjoy convincing students that being a writer is the coolest, best job in the world... and you can do it in your pajamas or your sweatpants!