

Extended Fact Sheet & Interview Q & A

Christine McMahon

Born & Raised: Kaukauna, WI

Daughter of: Harold and RoseAnn Welhouse

Attended: St. Mary's and St. Al's Grade Schools
Kaukauna High School
Fox Valley Technical College

Married: Joe McMahon

Currently resides: Hilbert, WI

Christine McMahon
W5366 Faro Springs Rd, Hilbert, Wisconsin, USA 54129-9384

Web site: www.ChoicesMade.com

E-mail: chris.mcmahon@tds.net

Phone: Home: (evenings, Saturday, or Sunday): 920-989-2834
Work: (Mon-Fri) 8-3:30pm CST 920-735-4349

After reading the manuscript for *Choices Made: The Street Years*, her father, Harry, said, "I'm an old man. I want to see your book in print. Do something about it."

With that impetus, Christine chose to self-publish and through research decided on Trafford Publishing. After much work, the reality of her first book in print happened in March, 2005. Of course, her father has copy #1.

Her father also read the manuscript for *Choices Made: Father and Sons*, the second in the series, which was published in November, 2006. Quoting Christine, "Dad got copy #1." Christine is currently working on the third novel in the series, *Choices Made: Missouri or Misery*.

Christine and her husband, Joe, and their champion Rhodesian Ridgebacks live in rural Wisconsin.

"Thank you for your interest in [Choices Made: The Street Years](#) and I hope you will continue to join Jamy in [Choices Made: Fathers and Sons](#), now available. Be watching for the next installment of Jamy's story, *Choices Made: Missouri or Misery* in 2008.

Interview Q & A

Why did you choose to write?

ANS: I have always enjoyed reading and often thought up my own situations for story endings. I can't say I CHOSE to write, rather that I picked up a pen and started writing down some of those thoughts.

I like trying many things and when I find something I like, I immerse myself in it. If the joy remains, so does my interest. Writing about Jamy in the Choices Made books has been a joy to me.

How did you choose the genre you write in?

Genre is been a hard one. I don't write to a specific genre. I write the story for the sake of the story. The Choices Made Series would be classified MAINSTREAM. They are Coming of Age stories with elements of Drama, Mystery, Thriller, and Suspense.

Do you use personal experiences in your writing?

ANS: For me that's too difficult. It actually limits me but they say there is a grain of each person or their experiences in every story they write.

What do you like about your writing and what don't you like?

ANS: I get a real high when I finish a particular conflict-resolution section. The joy of the creation and the control I have over every part of it keeps me energized. What I don't like is not having enough time for it.

How did you get published?

ANS: The stats on getting picked up by an agent or publisher is something like ½ of 1%. I tried that a few times but often they are looking to fill a particular market niche. Knowing my first book was mainstream, that market niche is not easily defined, so I decided to self-publish.

I had to format the book, proof it, create the cover artwork (which I painted -oil-on-canvas), etc. It is a very personal effort but there is a great sense of accomplishment in handling those aspects of it.

Since you self-published, how do you sell your books?

I have to market my book and ask stores to carry it but it is a real high when they do. It is currently on the publisher's web site (Trafford.com), Amazon.com, and other on-line stores and can be special ordered by your local bookstore.

In reality, word-of-mouth and book reviews is what really sells a book.

What is it like when you see your book in stores or make a sale?

It's surreal - I ask myself - is that really *my?* book. They want *my* book!

Each time I sell a copy, I open myself up to criticism, which can be tough, but you have to accept that in order to get your story out there. And, when someone finishes the book and comes to you and says – WHEN CAN I GET YOUR NEXT BOOK – it is worth it.

Do you see yourself writing in the future?

ANS: Yes. I have too many stories in my head to stop. A few years ago, I decided I wouldn't get old so I started recounting my birthdays from 1. I am now 5. With this new method, I plan to retire as a teenager. I should have plenty of years to write then!

Other questions that may interest:

What influenced you when you were young?

ANS: I had what my family referred to as TV-itis. I constantly watched TV and always thought up my own endings to the stories. That, along with reading, Westerns were always a favorite, kept my imagination in high gear. (PS - I wouldn't recommend that much TV to anyone, reading is much better for you.)

What steps in education did you take to get to this point?

ANS: I took some workshops but found that working through the UW-Madison Creative Writing Staff was a great help. It was like taking a semester class with a personal instructor. I was lucky because at the time it was a cost-effective way to do it. Though the costs have increased, it is still a very viable method to work through specific issues.

What are some things someone should know to be an author? What skills and abilities should they have?

ANS: Know your writing skills. Get the grammar 'in your head'. Nouns, pronouns, sentence structure – you name it. Know how to spell or use a dictionary, etc. You need to know the rules before you can creatively break them to enhance your story. Bad grammar is BAD grammar. It is different than creative license. One is not the excuse for the other.

Realize that not every word you write is golden. I had written THE STREET YEARS(Book 1) and JUXTON (Book 2) and then made changes in Book 1 that affected Book 2 so much that I tossed it, all 160,000 words - even though I liked the story. I started over; the focus changed and now Book 2 is called FATHERS AND SONS. Sometimes you have to cut wonderful scenes to keep the story flowing.

How did you get started in your career? What other jobs have you had that led you to this path?

ANS: I have worked at my current position for 33 years in a manufacturing environment. It isn't a career path associated with my writing.

As I started to show my writing to others, they encouraged me and I kept going. Just because you do one thing for a long time, doesn't mean you can't change. I supposed I'll stop changing when I am dead.

How do you balance the parts of your life?

ANS: Sometimes you can't. Sometimes the housework doesn't get done – does it matter if I don't dust? – probably not. You just have to remember not to ignore the people in your life but they need to understand your creative needs also. As to dusting and other chores, etc. – they don't define your life. (Besides, I just cleaned everything! so I should be good for a few years. (laugh.))

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