“I’m one of those very lucky people who absolutely loves what they do for a living. There is no career better suited to my eccentricities, strengths, and passions than that of a children’s book author.”

—Mary Pope Osborne

Mary Pope Osborne is the author of the popular Magic Tree House series. She works with her husband Will and her sister Natalie on the nonfiction companion series, the Magic Tree House Research Guides.
“I grew up in the military. By the time I was 15, I had lived in Oklahoma, Austria, Florida, and four different army posts in Virginia and North Carolina. Moving was never traumatic for me, but staying in one place was. When my dad finally retired to a small town in North Carolina, I nearly went crazy with boredom. I craved the adventure and changing scenery of our military life. Miraculously, one day I found these things, literally only a block away—at the local community theater. From then on, I spent nearly every waking hour after school there.

After graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the early 1970s, I lived an intensely varied life. For a while I camped in a cave on the island of Crete. Then I joined up with a small band of European young people heading to ‘The East.’ We traveled through 11 Asian countries and nearly lost our lives, first in an earthquake in northern Afghanistan and then in a riot in Kabul. My trip came to an abrupt halt in Katmandu when I got blood poisoning. During the two weeks I spent in a missionary hospital there, I read all of the Tolkien trilogy. To this day, my journey to ‘The East’ is tangled up in my mind with Frodo’s adventures.

After I returned home and recovered from my illness, I promptly headed back into the real world. I worked as a window dresser, as a medical assistant, and as a Russian travel consultant. One night I attended the opening of a musical about Jesse James. From the balcony, I fell in love with Will Osborne, the actor/musician playing Jesse. I loved his boots and his white cowboy hat; I loved how he sang and strummed the guitar. A year later, in New York City, we were married.

Thereafter, when I wasn’t on the road with Will, I worked as a waitress, taught acting classes in a nursing home, was a bartender, and had a job as an assistant editor for a children’s magazine.

Then one day, out of the blue, I began writing a story about an 11-year-old girl in the South. The girl was a lot like me, and many of the incidents in the story were similar to happenings in my childhood. The first draft was crudely written, but it must have communicated something to an editor, because shortly after I finished, it became a young adult novel called Run, Run Fast as You Can. Finally, I knew what I wanted to be when I grew up.

Now more than 25 years and over 80 books later, I feel I’m one of the most fortunate people on Earth. I’ve been an elegant spider detective who plays the jazz clarinet, and a small girl traveling on the back of a moonhorse. I’ve journeyed through Greek mythology, Norse mythology, medieval stories, and American tall tales. Without even leaving my home, I’ve traveled around the globe, learning about the religions of the world.

Most amazingly, in the last 15 years, I’ve taken journeys through time and space in the Magic Tree House visiting the times of dinosaurs, knights, mummies, pirates, and ninjas, and traveling to the rain forest, the Ice Age, the moon, a coral reef, Pompeii, the Wild West, Africa, the Arctic, ancient Rome and Greece, and India. I’ve met Clara Barton, George Washington, Leonardo Da Vinci, and Merlin the Magician.

The Magic Tree House has opened the floodgates and let thousands of children into my life. I love the letters I get from them and I love reading the countless Magic Tree House stories that they’ve written. I feel as if these kids and I are all exploring the creative process together, using our imaginations plus our reading and writing skills to take us wherever we want to go. ‘This,’ I tell my small fellow authors, ‘is true magic.’”

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See next page for over 40 Magic Tree House books!