Mary Ann R. Unger, Showcased By Influential Women, Turns Research And Real-World Experience Into Award-Winning Suspense

HENDERSON, NV, UNITED STATES, September 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- From Government Publications to Forensic-Driven Mysteries, a Distinctive Career in Writing



Henderson, Nevada – Mary Ann R. Unger is a Professional Writer and award-winning mystery/thriller novelist based in Henderson, Nevada, whose career reflects a distinctive combination of literary training, analytical expertise, professional research, and a willingness to pursue an unconventional path. Best known for her forensic-driven mysteries in the Matti James series and her stand-alone thrillers, Mary Ann has built a successful career as a novelist since 2013, specializing in suspense fiction that blends crime investigation, psychological complexity, and subtle elements of the paranormal.

Her writing is distinguished by meticulous research, strong narrative structure, and a commitment to realism drawn from extensive professional and academic experience. With 11 books to her name, including several bestsellers, Mary Ann has established herself as an accomplished author while continuing to support and mentor serious writers who are serious about improving their craft.

Her academic background is equally varied. MaryAnn earned a Master's Degree in English from the University of Miami. She taught English, journalism, creative writing, and Shakespeare at the community college level. Later, she pursued advanced study in British drama at Fairleigh Dickinson University's Wroxton campus in Oxfordshire. Her education and professional development also included economics and statistics at Rider University, statistics training with

the US Census Bureau, and studies in computer programming at Princeton University and Rutgers University.

Before becoming a full-time writer, Mary Ann spent approximately 10 years as Head of Publications for economics and demographics at the New Jersey Department of Labor. In that role, she produced and edited high-level economic reports and state publications that supported policy and public communication. The experience demanded precision, organization, research, and the ability to communicate complicated information clearly—skills that would later become valuable components of her fiction.

Mary Ann's journey into writing also reflects her willingness to leave behind an environment that she felt limited her individuality. As she puts it, "Small-town NJ stifled my creativity. I needed more and later moved to the Las Vegas area. Some family never accepted it, but the move brought many career opportunities as an author." That decision helped open the door to an exciting new chapter, allowing her to pursue writing with greater independence and develop the career that has become such an important part of her life.

One of Mary Ann's proudest accomplishments, however, is not necessarily one of her own books. She considers helping Gerald Dennen publish his memoir of the Battle of the Bulge, On the Attack, to be one of her most meaningful achievements.

Mary Ann met Dennen at the M buffet when she overheard him mention the Battle of the Bulge. His daughter explained that he had written a book, and Mary Ann offered to help. When she received the manuscript, she immediately saw that it contained valuable historical information but did not yet tell the personal story readers needed. "It was mostly historic information available online," Mary Ann explains. She told him that people wanted something different: they wanted to know what he saw and what he felt.

Mary Ann encouraged Dennen to tell his story from the time he entered the Army, focusing on his experiences and emotional reactions rather than simply presenting historical facts. That change resulted in both funny and deeply poignant scenes. One involved Dennen being on KP duty and repeatedly cutting himself and bleeding into the potatoes. The result? The soldiers apparently loved it. Another described his unit discovering neat piles of American uniforms in the woods after German forces had captured US soldiers, forced them to strip, and taken them away to be shot.

The transformation gave the manuscript the personal perspective it needed. Dennen was able to publish the book approximately two years before he died. Mary Ann and Gerald even held a book signing back at the M buffet, where their connection began. For Mary Ann, the experience remains particularly meaningful because, as originally written, the book might never have been published. Without the changes, his story would have been lost.

This experience also reflects the broader philosophy Mary Ann brings to mentoring other

writers. Her goal is not simply to identify spelling or punctuation mistakes. She works with serious writers who want their books reviewed editorially, looking at layout, continuity, logic, character development, and the larger structure of a manuscript. As an example, if one character asks another a question that is never answered, Mary Ann wants to know why. For her, good editing means examining whether the story works as a complete piece of writing and helping an author understand the effort required to write well.

Mary Ann learned the importance of accepting meaningful criticism in her own career. On one of her manuscripts, she believed she was doing very good work until a friend, best-selling author Donna Foley Mabry, reviewed it and offered a blunt assessment: “Toss out the first two chapters, the book starts on number three.” MaryAnn’s response was simple: “OK!” She did not argue because she understood that her friend knew what she was talking about.

That incident underscored the importance of accepting tough feedback without becoming defensive. Today, Mary Ann passes the same lesson on to the writers she mentors. When people are beginning their careers, they might believe their work is already perfect. She encourages them to develop a thick skin and recognize that honest criticism can be one of the most valuable tools available to a writer.

Her own fiction demonstrates the importance she places on research and authenticity. Her body of work includes the Matti James series and stand-alone thrillers, combining crime investigation with psychological complexity and carefully researched details. Her novel Mermaid, written during the COVID-19 pandemic and set north of the Arctic Circle in the real hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, earned three international gold medals for its fusion of myth and murder. Her work has also received a national Women in the Arts Recognition Award in literature.

For young women entering the writing industry, Mary Ann emphasizes that competition is tough and that developing a distinctive voice is essential. Her advice is practical: read other books in the genre and figure out what sets your work apart. Understanding what is already being published helps emerging writers identify where their own work can offer something different.

She also encourages young writers to seek honest feedback from established authors. Friends and relatives may love everything someone writes, mistakes and all, but professional feedback can reveal weaknesses that personal relationships often overlook. For Mary Ann, learning to accept that feedback is part of becoming a stronger writer.

Today, Mary Ann continues her work as a Professional Writer in Henderson, bringing together decades of experience in government publications, economics and demographics, teaching, statistics, literary study, and fiction. Her career demonstrates how seemingly different areas of expertise can ultimately inform one another. The analytical discipline developed through statistics and government reporting supports the research behind her mysteries, while her academic background in English and drama strengthens her understanding of character, language, and narrative.

At the heart of Mary Ann’s career is a belief in the value of strong storytelling—and in the importance of helping serious writers become better at their craft. Whether developing her own suspense fiction or helping another author turn a manuscript into a publishable book, she approaches writing with rigor, honesty, and a commitment to getting the story right. Her journey from New Jersey to Las Vegas and from government publications to award-winning mystery and thriller fiction has given her a distinctive perspective, one that continues to shape both her books and the writers she mentors.

Learn More about Mary Ann R. Unger:

Through her Influential Women profile, https://influentialwomen.com/connect/mary-unger

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