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Mara Purl Launches Virtual Book Tour

by ANNE HOLMES on AUGUST 1, 2011

Welcome to Mara Purl: NABBW member and author of the popular and critically acclaimed Milford-Haven Novels, small-town fiction written especially for women.

NABBW is honored to have this blog post featured as “Day Two” of Mara’s virtual book tour promoting her first Milford-Haven novel, *What the Heart Knows*, which takes place in the mid-1990s on California’s Central Coast and features a wonderful cast of characters headlined by artist Miranda Jones.

A painter, Miranda has always been told to “use her head” and now she’s beginning to ask herself whether she’s listening to her heart as well. Actually, all of the book’s characters are wrestling with this one way or another.

It seems Milford-Haven is a town full of characters, escapees from big city life who have each come to town with shadowed pasts and their own agenda. After all, the story is set pre-9-11, when the stock market was booming, and the upwardly mobile were pouring out of Los Angeles in search of a fresh start, a weekend getaway—and infinite possibilities.

Thus, it’s a town of dazzling opportunity, high stakes, buried secrets and a danger mystery. While outwardly seeming to be merely a lovely small town, full of quaint shops and breathtaking scenery.

The book previously published in paperback, is about to be published in hardcover by Bellekeep Book. Bellekeep, an imprint with Midpoint Trade Books in New York, will premiere the hard-cover launch of the series beginning in September 2011. Thus the virtual book tour.

As part of her tour, author Purl is offering everyone a free, downloadable



copy of her Milford-Haven short story, *When Hummers Dream*, which is a prequel to *What the Heart Knows*. Don't miss the story before the story . . . the short story that happens right before Book One. You may download the book from the Amazon Kindle store, or read the [PDF version](#) of it here.

Mara has been delighting audiences with stories of the happenings in her fictitious town of Milford-Haven since 1992. The community first appeared in *Milford-Haven U.S.A.* ©—the first American radio drama ever licensed and broadcast by the BBC. The show reached an audience of 4.5 million listeners in the U.K. In the U.S., it was the 1994 Finalist for the New York Festivals World's Best Radio Programs.

Early editions of Mara's novels have won fifteen finalist and gold literary awards including the Benjamin Franklin, Indie Excellence, USA Book News Best Books, and ForeWord Books of the Year.

Mara's other writing credits include plays, screenplays, scripts for *Guiding Light*, cover stories for *Rolling Stone*, staff writing with the *Financial Times* (of London), and the Associated Press. She is also the coauthor (with Erin Gray) of *Act Right: A Manual for the On-Camera Actor*.

Yes, Mara's an actor as well, which may explain why her books are so visual. You may remember Mara as "Darla Cook" on the long-running soap opera, *Days Of Our Lives*. And, she earned a Peak Award for her one-woman show *Mary Shelley: In Her Own Words*, which she performs and co-wrote (with Sydney Swire).

Mara is married to Dr. Larry Norfleet and lives in Los Angeles, and in Colorado Springs. She was named one of twelve Women of the Year by the Los Angeles County Commission for Women.

Please enjoy this stop on Mara's virtual book tour! Here's a chance to learn what makes Mara the woman she is...

Using one paragraph, tell us a bit about yourself?

I have a passion for writing, and a view of life through the lens of story. I love peoples' stories: how they meet, what they pursue, how things work out. I grew up in Tokyo, Japan and attended a school with 40 nationalities represented in the students.

After college at Bennington in Vermont, I lived in New York City as a professional journalist for several years; then moved to L.A. to resume my actress identity (I did a TV series as a child, and grew up in a theatre family).

L.A. has been home since the 80s.

Tell us about your family; married, divorced, children, grands, boomerangs or parents living with you, etc.

After many romantic adventures during my journalist and actress chapters, I married a fantastic guy who'd had a few solo years following a twenty-year marriage.

I became the evil-step-monster to his two older teens, gradually evolving into a trusted step-parent. These teens are now in their 30s with kids of their own, so I'm a step-grandmother known as "Mamaw" to four enchanting kidlets I absolutely adore.

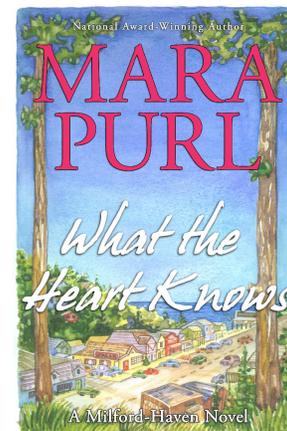
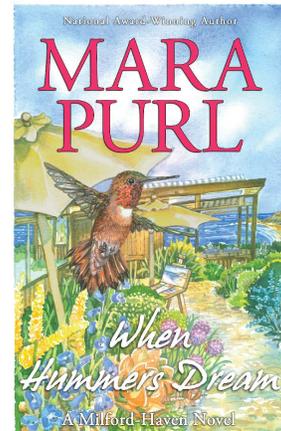
Meanwhile, twenty years ago I became the God-daughter to my best friend's daughter, so Sami is like a daughter to me; And sixteen years ago my sister's son was born, so one of my favorite things in life is being Auntie Mara.

My parents are amazing and live near my husband and me.

What is your favorite childhood memory that is reminiscent of growing up in the 50s, 60s or 70s?

My dad took my mom, my sister and me on a trip around the world in the 1960s. Though I was a kid, I remember virtually every day of the trip, it made such an impression. I love the open-mind and open-heart my international upbringing gave me, though it later made me feel like an outsider in my own country.

By the time American trends made it to Tokyo, they were over in the



States, so I sure never felt “cool.”

What qualities do you have that speak of our generation of women?

Over-scheduled, high-achiever, still believe we can have it all and do it all. Actually I cherish the positive attitude and transformational skills my women friends and so many of my readers possess.

What brings you the most pleasure in midlife?

Love . . . in every form. The deep love that sparkles in a long-term relationship; the love that becomes more and more reciprocal with my God-daughter, nephew, step-kids, and grand-kids; the love that suddenly springs up when I meet a reader and we realize we just “get” each other; the stunning and profound love that resonates in my long-term women-friendships; the inspiring love that descends when we’re able to help someone in need.

Do you have any interesting hobbies?

My hobby is my work, my work is my hobby.

Do you have a favorite book or movie? If so, tell us why it’s your favorite.

Favorite movie is the classic “Rashomon” by Kurosawa. Why? Because it was one of the first films (and plays) to present so clearly that life consists of different points of view. The same experience as told by several different people turns out to be totally different stories. That intrigues me!

Do you travel and if so, who are your favorite travel partners and where do you like to go?

My favorite travel partner is my husband, and our favorite journeys have been to Japan, where I got to share with him so many haunts from my childhood, as well as experience Tokyo and Kyoto as the extraordinary contemporary cities they are; and to Buenos Aires, where we danced tango day and night, one of our passions.

Do you practice preventive medicine? Please elaborate.

Absolutely!! Preventive medicine to me is noticing a thought before it becomes a problem, be it physical, emotional, financial, or whatever. I believe we get wake-up calls along the way, some of which we hear, and some of which we ignore, until they get LOUD enough for us to pay attention to them.

What do you stress about?

Time . . . not enough time in the day, in the week, in the month, in the year.

Is it important for you to retain your youthful looks, and if so, to what degree are you willing to go?

I believe our youthful looks always came from the inside and really can be a permanent part of who we are, if we “claim” the qualities that create them. I never keep track of how “old” I am, but rather how truly I’m living my core mission.

I also find I’m getting more and more active, rather than less and less. When we moved into our new house, which is a three-story, my husband said, “When we get older we won’t like these stairs.” “Oh, yes we will!” I countered. “They’ll keep us young.” My parents still enjoy their stairs so maybe this is a family legacy.

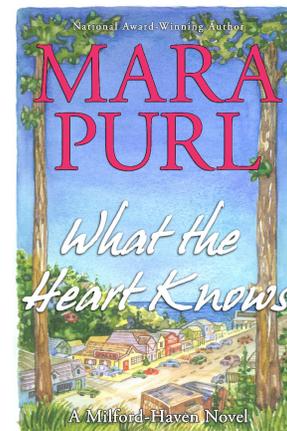
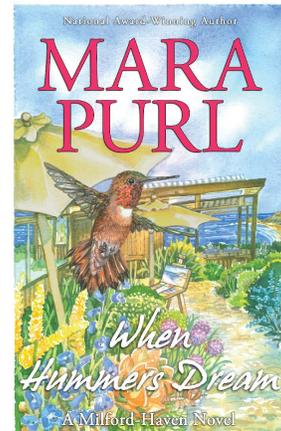
Have you re-invented yourself, and if so, how?

Several times. And this is always the case for an artist. We create all the time, and part of what we create is ourselves. Our vision of self evolves and as it does, we glimpse new possibilities and adjust our priorities.

Do you plan to retire?

I don’t believe in retirement.

Are you doing anything to Go Green?



My Green life began way back when. I was a crew member on a Greenpeace Voyage to save whales, and that changed my perspective on the planet, on water usage, on everything. I've been unable not to recycle since then. I created the first environmental soap opera. I wrote on eco issues for many publications. And . . . we can all do better.

Can you pinpoint major turning points in your life that led to your life's work/play at midlife?

Turning points often look like roadblocks when they first occur. And then as a road disappears, another one opens, or we blaze a new trail.

For example, the BBC had contracted me for another several seasons of "Milford-Haven USA" and since we had a runaway hit with 4.5 million listeners, I was very clear what I'd be doing for several years to come. Then suddenly, the BBC Radio 5 network got taken off the air. My show wasn't canceled – the whole network was. My cast and crew had to find other work. All of us were shocked, and some of us were devastated. I had to reinvent myself completely.

Well, in the mean time, people had been contacting me about the possibility of writing books based on my series. Who knew that would become my life? I didn't at the time, and it was a very daunting prospect. Yet I knew even then, this moment contained the seeds for something wonderful.

With the help of mentors, I kept "listening" and a whole new world did open up, bringing me to exactly the right path in life.

Do you still have unfulfilled dreams, and are you doing anything to accomplish them?

Daily.

How do you make a difference in the lives of others, your community, your world?

I served on the boards of community organizations for about fifteen years, using my celebrity to help raise awareness and funds. One issue to which I devoted a lot of time and energy is domestic violence, serving on the Advisory Board of Haven House, the oldest shelter in the U.S., and also on the Advisory Board of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

I was named Woman of the Year in 2002 for having written and/or delivered 50 speeches on the subject, as well as co-producing with Erin Gray and Women-In-Film one of the early PSAs which ran on TV nationally.

Another long-term project was writing and teaching my Student Theatre And Radio (S.T.A.R.) curriculum, which I taught for 20 years in high schools and colleges in California, Colorado, and Alaska, sometimes working with underprivileged students, sometimes gifted students.

I've learned so much from my twenty years of community service. Now, I put almost all my energy into creating a transformative experience for my readers, through my books, and also through the special events my team and I are beginning to create.

Who has had the biggest influence on your life and why?

Mary Baker Eddy, the only woman to found her own religion in the U.S. Her writings open thought to a realm of infinite possibilities, inspiring others to heal themselves and achieve the "impossible."

If you were to have a personal mission statement, what would it be? Feel free to be as serious or fun as you choose.

What a great question, one I spend time considering again at least once a year. At this point I'd say my mission is to make a difference in the lives of my readers by inspiring them to consider . . . what does your heart know? What are those things in your heart-of-hearts you've always wanted to do? Are you doing them yet? If not now, when?

If you'd like to know more about Mara, visit her website at MaraPurl.com and subscribe to her blog. Or send her an email at [@MaraPurl.com](mailto:MaraPurl).

