

# Unsinkable Western History

Adventures in research & writing by author Joyce B. Lohse



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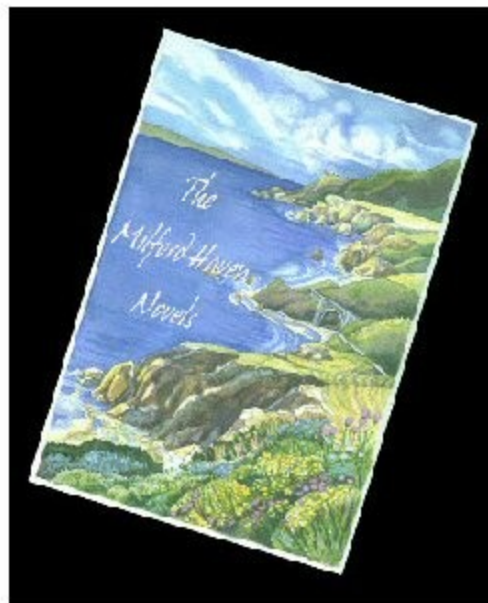
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Unsinkable Western History

Aug  
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## Mara Purl Visits During Her Virtual Tour

joyce4books



Milford-Haven Books

Mara Purl has spent the month of August on a virtual book tour to promote her recent work on her Milford-Haven novel series. Her piece entitled, *When Hummers Dream*, is currently available as an e-book for 99 cents from Amazon.com. Her novel, *What the Heart Knows*, will be published in hardcover next month in September by BelleKeep Books in association with Midpoint Trade Books. If you just caught up with Mara's virtual travels, or her work is new to you, Mara is a talented award-winning author/actress/musician who divides her time between her Los Angeles and Colorado Springs homes. You might know her for her role in the TV show, *Days Of Our Lives*, or playing a Japanese stringed instrument, the koto, on stage, or her series of novels. I have enjoyed many encounters with Mara through mutual involvement in Women Writing the West, and I have benefited from her valuable advice and warm friendship when our paths cross. Her insights about writing and the West are the result of solid experience and a passion for her craft. She will share some of those perspectives here in a series of three posts during the next three days.

**PLEASE NOTE:** As a thank you for your visit today, Mara would like to offer her new short-story "When Hummers Dream." Her charming story, which has become a best-seller in the Kindle store, is a prequel to her upcoming novel "What the Heart Knows." You may download it for your Kindle from amazon.com for free until September 1. But in case you don't have a Kindle, you may still download it for free from Mara's publisher! Visit [www.BellekeepBooks.com/Bonus](http://www.BellekeepBooks.com/Bonus), then enter the password BKbonus. Enjoy!

I proudly present to you Mara Purl's thoughts on writing.

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Joyce & Mara at UCLA 2009

## THE INTERVIEW — Segment #1 —

**– You have a wide and varied background in the arts. You’ve been an actress on TV and otherwise, a musical performer at Lincoln Center, and you’ve learned the tango in South America! Tell us a little more about all that, other interesting endeavors, and how you became a writer.**

Though I was born in the States—in New Haven, near Milford (more on that later)—I grew up in Tokyo, Japan and attended a school with students from forty countries. There’s no question this experience had a profound impact on me. For example, my favorite film is “Rashomon” not only because it’s a classic but because the story is presented from multiple points of view. I now write a novel-series told from the perspective of multiple characters.

Back in my school days, I was walking across the campus one day and was called into the Principal’s office. Worried about what I must’ve done wrong, I was surprised to learn I’d actually been scouted by NHK-TV, the national network. I auditioned and landed the part in a drama-series called “Teach Me English.” From then on for the next few years, twice a week I performed in this show, playing the part of a young girl who lived in Japan with her American family. I had to have the script memorized letter-perfect, because students were following along in workbooks at home. So it was both a drama and a teaching program.

The legacy of growing up in Japan, and also in a family of actors (my dad also grew up in the theatre, and attended Yale Drama School; my mom was a ballerina and performed on Broadway and in film; my sister became a well-known actress)—for me, lead to two specific things in my adult professional life. One is being a story-teller and performer comfortable with media like television, radio and theatre; the other is that I learned to play the classical Japanese harp, called the koto. Though this has never been the central focus of my career, it continues to be a golden thread that has woven its way through many years. I’ve recorded several CDs and have performed at Lincoln Center intermittently for thirty years.

Meanwhile, the writing has always been the focus in one form or another. I was a professional journalist for several years, and loved it. I was on staff in the New York bureau of the Financial Times of London, another multi-national experience. I worked on special assignment for the Associated Press, and freelanced for Rolling Stone and many other publications.

Much as I loved that chapter of my career, I felt compelled to return to creative writing and to performing, so I left New York and headed to Los Angeles, where I plunged into a challenging and wonderful time of acting on stage and television, and writing screenplays and teleplays. I felt excited, and very clear this was where I was supposed to be, and what I was meant to be doing. I think that sense of intuition is a very key part of being an artist.

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## Mara Purl Interview – Segment #2 by joyce4books



Mara Purl

**– How did it come about that your book series was picked up by a large publishing house, and in what ways has that changed your work and your outlook?**

The new publishing contract came about as a direct result of developing a following for my books. I write a novel series, the first four of which were published over the last five years with a small independent press. Like most small indie presses, it had no major distribution. But this period of time was tremendously useful because they gave me a lot of focus, and we all learned so much about my readers and how to connect with them. And of course, my writing kept improving.

The larger New York publishers are looking now not only for good writers, but for authors who know their audience, know how to connect with them, and are willing and able to market their own books. Some authors resent this, and feel they should be focusing only their writing. I feel, however, that the publishers today are acknowledging that we authors are the experts when it comes to our books and our readers. So now, working with this fantastic team of very experienced publishers, who do have major distribution, is a grand experience. I feel I'm with the publishers of my dreams. They "get" me, and they appreciate that I "get" how important it is for me to do effective marketing. Though much of what I'm doing now is along the same lines as what I'd been doing, there are two major differences. First, my books are entering the main stream of publishing, and everything about the books is in compliance with the many layers of industry standards. I love that sense of quality control. Second, it's as though I've switched from piloting a tiny rowboat and rowing hard mostly on my own, to being on board a sleek, spacious sailing vessel with an experienced crew and plenty of wind in my sails.

**– What is your philosophy about research? Tell us about some of your research experiences, and how they have panned out and added new dimension to your stories. What surprises and serendipitous moments have you experienced?**

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The cell phone story is similar, in that I have a wealthy young male character, Zack, and needed for him to have a cell phone. But unlike today, in 1996 most people didn't yet have cell phones. Turns out, the first razor-thin flip phone hit the market in 1996, just in time for Zack to own one. They cost a small fortune at the time—and that, too, was perfect for this character.

**– What goals and challenges do you see for yourself in the future?**

The Milford-Haven Novels will include twelve books, so I'll be busy for a while! I'm also writing a short story as a prequel to each novel. So my goal is to write these novels, and to continue working with my new publishers and marketing team.

So that's the "head" goal. But the "heart" goal is what's really important. The real purpose in writing and marketing these books is to enroll women readers in a whole new realm of possibility for themselves. On one level, my novels are pure escapism. But on a deeper level, that "fiction lens" gives them a tool for looking into their own hearts. What, in our heart of hearts, do we want to create in our lives? Are we carving out time to fulfill our desires? If not now, when?

At my book events, we have such fun engaging in these conversations. We also have fun donating a percentage of sales to charities, because generosity is one of the keys to living a happy life. I'd like to create more and more opportunities for generosity and transformation. And to think, all this can begin with buying a book, taking it home and reading it! When a reader tells me my books have made a difference in her life—that's when I know I'm fulfilling my purpose.

***Thank you, Mara, for sharing your thoughts with us during an interesting and informative interview. Best of luck to you for much future success with your Milford-Haven novels, and beyond! — Joyce***

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## Mara Purl Interview – Segment #3 by joyce4books



Author Mara Purl on Writing

– Tell us about the importance of thin flip cell phones and Jimmy Choo shoes. I Googled the shoes ... WOW, they are HOT!! [You could wear them, I could NOT!!!]

Oh, these are such fun stories! First, the shoes. I have a “hot” character named Cynthia. She’s social climber, a blond bombshell, and is convinced she can get anything she wants by wiggling her hips and batting her eyelashes. And most of the time, she’s right! Of course I think carefully about Cynthia’s wardrobe, and she has to have some “major” shoes.

To create the Cynthia character I draw on observation, imagination, and also some personal experience. When I was performing on *Days Of Our Lives*, all we women cast members had glamorous moments in the story. That’s part of the soap opera world. And part of that world is being photographed, both at events and in the studio. I’d bought some gloriously wicked black patent leather shoes with spike heels. I was about 6 foot 2 in these shoes, and they looked great in photos. Well, one year I was going to the Emmy Awards and decided to wear them. I only realized when we arrived at the auditorium and were faced by a huge staircase, that I really couldn’t walk in these things. My date had to help me “hop” up to the entrance. From then on, I labeled these my “shoes of death.”

Of course, some similar event will come up in Cynthia’s storyline. Meanwhile, I’ve established that she has a wonderful shoe collection. And I just kept seeing her in high-styled, colorful Jimmy Choo shoes. The thing is, he’s a huge name in fashion *now*, but my first novel is set in 1996. So I researched Jimmy Choo’s career. I was intrigued to discover he comes from a multi-generation lineage of cobblers in China, so you could say he was born with an innate knowledge of the foot and how to dress it. Imagine my delight when I discovered Jimmy’s first major success came when he was featured in *Vogue* Magazine in 1996! It’s just so perfect. Cynthia becomes one of the first glam-gals to own a pair of his shoes.

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## About Author Mara Purl:

- Mara Purl was a performer on-camera and on-stage, with her regular character on *Days Of Our Lives* having been her starting point for soap opera.
- Purl began her writing career as a journalist for the Associated Press, *Rolling Stone*, *The Financial Times of London*, *Working Woman Magazine*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*. A prolific fiction author, she also has written a play and several non-fiction books including *Act Right: A Manual for the On-Camera Actor* with actress Erin Gray.
- Other Awards include: for radio, the New York Festivals Award; for her play *Mary Shelley: In Her Own Words*, the Peak Award; and for public service, Woman of the Year 2002 by the Los Angeles County Commission for Women.
- Mara Purl is also an accomplished musician. Her instrument is the koto and she recorded and has played on the international stage with many noteworthy musicians including the works *Sumahama* recorded with Mike Love and the Beach Boys, *Pathless Path* recorded with Charles Lloyd, *Koto Keys* with Marilyn Harris, and Teiji Ito's *Watermill* recorded with Grammy-winning musician Steve Gorn.
- The hit song "Jet Laggin" she co-wrote with Marilyn Harris is in current release on the new CD *Orphans*.

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## Mara Purl

Author – Actress – Motivational Speaker

[www.MaraPurl.com](http://www.MaraPurl.com)

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This entry was posted in [Western Travel](#), [Writing Life](#) and tagged [fiction elements](#), [Jimmy Choo shoes](#), [Mara Purl](#), [publishing](#), [writing](#).

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*September 2011*

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### Blog Tour Visit #21: Unsinkable Western History « The Milford Haven Novels says:

[...] What always strikes me about Joyce are two qualities—she always wants to learn something knew, and she always want to be generous to others. So I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised when she posted not one, but three segments for my blog tour, with an introduction post to boot, about my upcoming novel What the Heart Knows. Her posts include answers to her interesting questions in Segment #1; Segment #2; and Segment #3. [...]

[Reply](#)


**joyce4books** says:

September 5, 2011 at 9:18 am

Thank you, Mara! You are a most interesting and inspiring subject. I especially enjoyed reading your short story, “When Hummers Dream”. It has a peaceful quality about it that makes it a truly enjoyable read.

[Reply](#)


**Velda Brotherton** says:

September 5, 2011 at 10:32 am

Funny about the spike shoes. When I was young I loved them and though almost 6 feet tall in bare feet, I wore them a lot. Today, when I see those wonderfully high, thin spikes (we didn't have those in the 50's and the ones we had broke easily) I envy the women who can wear them. Your story was priceless about not being able to walk in them. Joyce, thanks for a super three-part interview of Mara Purl, and my best to you.

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