

# The Milford-Haven Novels

A Journey into the Heart of Mara Purl's Women's Fiction Writing

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**Milford-Haven USA Celebrates its' 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** Posted by: [MaraPurl](#) / Sept. 16, 2012



When the calendar flipped to 2012 last new year's eve, a bell began to ring in my mind, faintly at first, until I began to pay more attention. The bell ringing was a date happily seared in my memory: the date my radio drama began broadcasting on the BBC. That year was 1992, so of course the ringing bell indicated 2012 would be the twentieth anniversary of the momentous occasion. What? The twentieth?! Holy fleeting time, Batman!

Well, it was too fabulous a landmark not to mark the occasion. So when I mentioned how this anniversary had snuck up on us to my sister ([Linda Purl](#), a cast member of the original show), she immediately offered to host the party. Several weeks in advance, I began contacting other cast

members, some of whom, like [Erin Gray](#), still live in L.A.; several of whom, like [Michael Horse](#), have moved to other cities, and some, like [Colby Chester](#), have moved to other states.. I also had great fun connecting with "Engineer Bill" Berkuta and composers Marilyn Harris & Mark Wolfram, with whom I still work; and tracking down crew, guest-stars, directors, and loyal supporters. Take a look at the all-star cast and all the gifted contributors at [www.MilfordHaven.com](http://www.MilfordHaven.com). Soon we'll have some great photos of the gathering posted at my beautiful new website in the Events Photo Gallery: <http://marapurl.com/events-photo-gallery>.

When I arrived a few hours early for the party, I brought with me photos of all us recording in the studio, rehearsing our scenes, and celebrating at various gatherings through the years. And I brought CDs of our shows, cards and notes we'd written, original head shots and resumes, and scores of clippings from the British press that covered us extensively. All this was displayed on a huge table, with stacks of books and CDs offered as gifts to these amazing creative artists who'd offered their talents to this show. My friend and colleague director Verne Nobles came with a film crew and recorded individual reminiscences of all who were able to attend. It was an incomparable gathering. My heart is filled with gratitude.

Flashback to 1992: *Milford-Haven*, the original radio drama had become a success in a few several U.S. locations. (I'll blog about this soon.) But the question was, what to do next? Syndication seemed the next logical step, so I went to New York for some meetings. "Hmm, radio drama," they said. "Did you notice radio drama went off the air before you were born?" I had noticed that, but, I explained, I also noticed that audiences loved the show and ratings spiked no matter when or where the show was broadcast. They did agree to listen to the tapes I'd brought. I flew home to L.A. to await their response.

When they got in touch they said, "We love your show. But we don't know what to do with radio drama. We checked the numbers . . . and they're bad." Well, I pointed out, the numbers for radio drama are "bad" because the numbers are zero—that is to say, there are *no* radio dramas currently on the air. To make a long story short, though they meant well, syndicators had by then forgotten how to make decisions based on looking *forward* creatively and proactively. Instead, they'd been trained to look *backward* by crunching numbers of existing programs. What a shame. What a loss for American audiences. Happily, the U.K. suffers no such deprivation. They've continued to broadcast radio dramas—especially radio soap operas, an American-grown format—for decades with great success. They have so much radio drama that they have the equivalent of a TV Guide for radio.

Off I went to San Francisco to attend the annual National Association of Broadcasters, under the auspices of Charles Whaley & Associates, who'd decided to represent my show, along with some Louis L'Amour audios. The convention was almost over when two gentlemen began pointing at me. "May I help you?" "No," they said in British accents. "We can help *you!* Call this number!" Turns out an innovative BBC producer had heard about my show and wanted it for her newly revised eclectic BBC Radio 5.

Yahoo! We became the first American radio serial ever broadcast by the BBC. We didn't know whether or not it would compete well in a market filled with brilliantly produced British shows. Pat Ewing called me after six weeks. "You might like to pop over," she said in the Queen's English. "It's doing *rather* well." By that, she meant that we had 4.5 million listeners! For our British audience, we were a trip to far-away coastal California. We were also a trip home, that universal place where heart meets heart. Thank you, dear cast and crew, for taking this great unknown journey with me. Thank you, BBC and Pat Ewing for having the vision to try bring something new to your audience. It's true, I used my head to work as hard as I could on this amazing project. I could write a book about it. But why did this little show achieve such a global reach? It's because it came straight from the heart.

For more information on the evolving world of *The Milford Haven Novels*, visit my new website [www.MaraPurl.com](http://www.MaraPurl.com) where you can subscribe to my newsletter, follow me on social media, enjoy photos and videos, discover more special offers and more.

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