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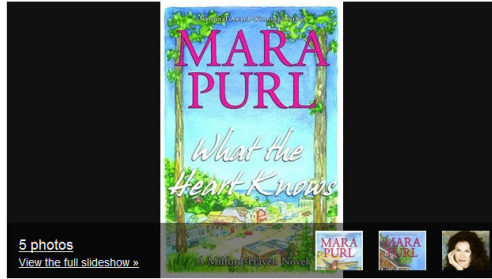
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## A Conversation with Author Mara Purl, Part I

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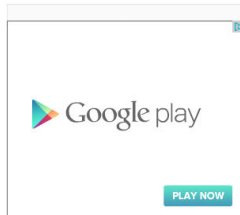


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Actress, playwright and author **Mara Purl** created the world of small-town America in the radio drama *Milford-Haven, U.S.A.* which has delighted audiences across the pond since 1992, when it appeared as the first American radio drama ever licensed and broadcast by the BBC. The show went on to reach an audience of 4.5 million listeners throughout the U.K. Mara has since pioneered women's small-town fiction with her popular and critically acclaimed *Milford-Haven* stories. Her first novel in the series, *What the Heart Knows*, hit the Bestseller list, preparing the way for her highly-anticipated sequel, *Where The Heart Lives*.

**Parker** - You're last novel reached bestseller status. How has that affected your new book?

**View slideshow: Author, Actress Mara**

**Purl**

**Mara Purl** - It is interesting, and very exciting. It is a game-changer in this industry. These days there are the hard copy and e-formats. I happen to be published during a huge time of transition. My breakthrough in bestseller status came in the e-world. *What The Heart Knows* hit #5 overall, so to being the #5 most popular book in the nation was just amazing. But Amazon also has interesting categories like Family Saga, where it hit #1, and Women's Lit where it was #1. It was #3 in Romance and it ranked high in contemporary fiction. The novel was being discovered by people in a lot of different categories in the e-world, but I'm not sure you can track hard copy sales with that kind of accuracy.



Author Mara Purl  
Photo credit: Mara Purl

**Parker** - Are you an e-book reader, or do you prefer hard copy?

**Mara** - I have an e-reader, and I love it for when I'm lying or standing in line. It's convenient to not have to lug around a bunch of heavy books when I'm on a flight. But most of my reading is what I think we all still call "real" books.

People claim they prefer holding a real book, but I'm not sure in this economy they are rushing out to buy a \$25 hard copy from their favorite author. Unless you are fortunate enough to be close enough to an author book signing where you can get a signed copy, which is such a treasure. You can't really get an author-signed e-book.

**Parker** - Author signings don't seem to generate the excitement they used to. How do you perceive author book signing events?

**Parker** - Author signings don't seem to generate the excitement they used to. How do you perceive author book signing events?

**Mara** - The part of in-person events that works for me is speaking. There is a shift among readers toward 'what's in it for me?' in the old days an author could say, 'I'm so terrific you should interrupt your day and come find me in the bookstore.' Well, *them days is over*, as the saying goes. Instead I try to create an event that is completely focused on the reader. I ask, *what would make the event valuable to my reader?*

Bookstores might not be the best venue for such events. I like to do events that have a win-win-win component. I try to create a talk that has some great take-away value. I usually invite another author or two, so the attendees get even more value. We get the event catered so they have some lovely food or tea. I also include a charity connection. I invite a charity organization to speak for a few moments and I donate a percentage of book sales to that charity. My guests get to hear something valuable, pick up a gift for themselves or a friend, and they feel good about themselves because they are also making a donation to a worthwhile cause.

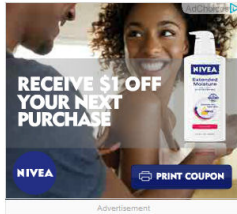
**Parker** - Tell me about *Go Red For Women*.

**Mara** - It is an educational event sponsored by the American Heart Association. They start the day with coaching and classes. The theme of the event is education, but the spirit of the event is fun. It's not about the drudgery of going on a diet so you can be healthy; it's supposed to be fun. Everyone has to wear red, which is very festive. They asked me to speak about matters of the heart, which is metaphorical for our emotions and intuition, rather than medical conditions of the heart, which I have no experience with.

The event was phenomenal. I've asked the Heart Association if I can continue to work with them.



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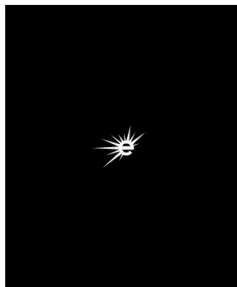
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and hopefully I'll get to present the talk in other areas of the country.

**Parker** - Tell me about your new novel, *Where the Heart Lives*.

**Mara** - This is Book 2 of the series, *Life in a Little Coastal Town*. It is all about mapping your life. Where are you on the map of your life? Did you get lost along the way? Are you where you want to be? That's the metaphorical message, but the literal, more superficial but fun story is an actual road trip taken by the protagonist as she heads south to Los Angeles. She has a number of wonderful experiences, including a backstage concert experience with the Doobie Brothers, who are long-time friends of mine. She gets to visit a feline conservation center where she encounter jaguars and snow leopards and all kinds of exotic cats. It's a fun travelogue kind of story, but there is a mystery wrapped in it as well and there are important decisions that get made at the very end of the story.

