



## TAGS

## RELATED POSTS

## SHARE THIS



## MARA PURL SPEAKS, PART I

POSTED BY MIKE PARKER ON NOV 13, 2012 IN BOOKS | COMMENTS OFF

Actress, playwright and author **Mara Purl** created the world of small-town America in the radio drama ***Millford-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 ***Millford-Haven*** stories. Her first novel in the series, ***What the Heart Knows*** hit the Best-Seller list, preparing the way for her highly-anticipated sequel, ***Where The Heart Lives***.

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

**Mara Purl** – It is interesting, and very exciting. It is a gamechanger 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. It 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.

**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 traveling 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. 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?

**Mara** – The part of in-person events that works for me is speaking. There is a shift among readers toward the '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 it 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 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 in order to be healthy. It's supposed to be fun, so 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, 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***.

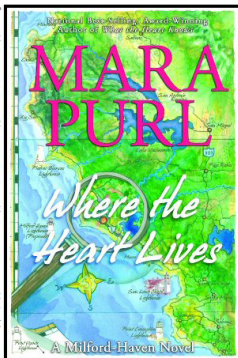
**Mara** – This is Book 2 of the series, *Life in a Little Coastal Town*. It is all about mapping your life. Where are you on the map of your life? Did you get lost along the way? Are you where you want to be? That's the metaphorical message, but the literal, more superficial but fun story is an actual 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 encounters 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. There are important decisions that get made at the very end of the story.

**Parker** – Which I'm sure will spin into Book 3.

**Mara** – You know, readers love serial storytelling, while booksellers discourage it. Booksellers don't want to commit the shelf-space to a single author for a series. With the success of authors like J.K. Rowling and the amazing success of Harry Potter, and the emergence of e-books where shelf-space is not an issue, serial storytelling is making a comeback.

I kind of have to do serial novels, because my novels are based on the radio series. There are 100 episodes of the radio show about characters that people already know and love. The question is, how does that translate into the novel format. Is that ten books, twenty, 100? What I've settled on is 10 books, but I don't think readers can wait 10 years to find out 'whodunit.' You hear a lot about trilogies, but I'm going to do a pentology. By the end of Book 5 we are going to have the mystery of Chris Christian solved, and the romantic life of Meranda Jones solved. Those are two of the core stories. Once those five books are done, there are still stories to tell, and I hope to do another five novels.

[Click here to download a sneak preview of Mara's prequel, \*When Whales Watch: A Millford-Haven Story\*.](#)



## ADSENSE

