

'A slice of life in a small, coastal town where the lines are gradually being drawn between those who want the town to expand, and those who want the town to remain an undiscovered, safe haven ... the last remnants of a pristine environment. The issues are hot, the relationships complex, and the stories compelling in ... Milford-Haven.'

— from the Web site for 'Milford-Haven, U.S.A.'

SOAP RETURNS TO PINES

Mara Purl's radio drama hit *Cambrians* where they lived and kept them guessing about their neighbors during the growth wars of the 1980s

By KATIE TANNER
THE CAMBRIAN

When "Milford-Haven, U.S.A." premieres at 5 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 10, on KTEA-FM radio in Cambria, heroine Miranda Jones and her creator will, in fact, be returning home.

Jones is the widowed protagonist in Mara Purl's environmental-drama series, which launched in Cambria in 1987 and became the first American-produced radio drama ever broadcast in Britain.

Ultimately, the soap opera achieved a cult following and an audience of 4.5 million listeners, and was emulated in the Museum of Television & Radio in New York and the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago.

Since then, Purl's critically acclaimed tales have progressed from the radio to audio cassettes and CDs, and five serial novels.

But recently she decided it was time to bring the nearly 20-year-old show and its characters back to American listeners. The show will co-debut on two stations, one in Cambria and the other, KCAA, in San Bernardino.

In the beginning ...

In 1987, Purl fell in love with Cambria while playing the part of a Welsh woman in "Sea Marks" at the Pewter Plough Playhouse. The "Days of Our Lives" performer created a radio soap opera and based it loosely on the North Coast town.

The original "Milford-Haven"



MARA PURL, who is producing and acting in the radio drama "Milford-Haven, U.S.A.," reunites with Freedom Barry, still the program's narrator, at the Redwood Cafe. A previous safety at that location was the inspiration for "Sally's Cafe" in the soap-opera format show that debuts on KTEA-FM Oct. 10.

hit the air waves July 5, 1987, on Cambria's KCTE radio, and later moved to San Luis Obispo's KVEC and IQDJ. Stars included Purl, narrator Freedom Barry, Elaine Traxel (Evans), Jim Buckley and Simon Wilder of Cambria, Rick Albers of Los Osos and Fiona Stone of Atascadero.

At the time the show attracted

local listeners who tried to identify the Milford-Haven characters with their real-life North Coast inspirations.

The show is even named after Cambria, in a way Purl recalled, since Milford Haven is a coastal town in Wales (which is the original Cambria).

Recently, Purl also learned that she has firm ties to the

If you tune in ...

"Milford-Haven, U.S.A." debuts at 5 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 10 on Cambria's KTEA radio, 103.5 FM. The dramatic serial will be broadcast weekly at that time. For details, visit www.milford-haven.com or call 804-2-0903.

Welsh community. "When my mother said my great-grandmother Gough was from Milford Haven, it was like everything had come full circle," she said Sept. 25 during an interview in Cambria.

Milford-Haven on the radio

The intensively researched radio serial interweaves complex plots laced with humor, natural disasters, gossip, deceptions, international spy rings, new intimations and old flames, adventure, nefarious plots and — of course — bits of trivia and twists of fate.

Key characters include an oil company president, a developer, a savvy Southern cafe owner and a haunting Native American who appears in Jones' dreams.

Purl plays the protagonist, a wildlife artist and avid environmentalist.

Barry, a 41-year Cambria resident, has been with the production since the start. He is the show's narrator, "who gives us permission to laugh," Purl said.

Among other actors are her sister Linda Purl ("Matlock," "Happy Days"), Emmy-award nominee Ed Begley Jr. ("90, Elsewhere"), Erin Gray ("Perry Mason," "Buck Rogers and the 25th Century") and Michael Horse ("Twin Peaks").

The series' dramatic underpinnings nearly always have an environmental bent, whether fo-

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ocusing on water shortages, earthquakes, drilling for oil, liberal wildlife conservationists or other key issues often seen today on the front page of major metropolitan newspapers.

The Cambria connections

Mara Purl lives with her husband, Larry Norfleet, in Col-

Mara Purl

Mara Purl is familiar to fans of the NBC soap opera "Days of Our Lives," and it was while appearing in that show that she conceived the idea for "Milford-Haven."

Her resume includes voice work on television and acting roles on the syndicated series

radio and Los Angeles. They have two adult children.

But part of Purl's heart always



she has appeared in a host of plays including "The Merchant

of Venice," "A Man for All Seasons," "Glass Menagerie" and "Oliver!"

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On the Net

Mara Purl: www.marapurl.com

Milford-Haven: www.milford-haven.com

ing on San Simeon Point last Dec. 22, when the magnitude 6.5 earthquake hit.

In an eerie twist of fate, her most recent Milford-Haven novel — published two years before the San Simeon tremor — is titled "Nobody's Fault," about what happens when a magnitude 6 quake shakes the Central Coast.

Yes, coming home again can have its hazards, Purl said with a sparkling grin. But she and her fictional counterpart will face any such risks, she added, for the pure joy of once again being in Cambria, in the public eye and out.

The sonorous tones of Freedom Barry

Orogenesian Freedom Barry was raised in Maline and came to Cambria in 1983. But 40 years on the West Coast haven't diminished the distinctive Boston accent that is so much the voice of "Milford-Haven, U.S.A.," says the show's creator Mara Purl.

She explained the importance of his role, noting that in the first episode, which airs Oct. 10 on Cam-

bria's KTEA radio, Barry "introduces the show, does bits in between" and, in true soap-opera tradition, "concludes the performance with a series of questions. 'Will Miranda discover that her manager is fooling her? Will Jack let it be known that Samantha used to be his wife? For the important answers to these perplexing questions, tune in to the next episode of ... Milford-Haven.'"

In 1987, Purl hired Barry on the spot to be the radio drama's narrator, after having seen him in "The Man Who Came to Dinner" at the Pewter Plough Playhouse. He was the only North Coast actor who stayed with "Milford-Haven" when it went from being a locally aired drama to one that would be broadcast weekly for more than a year on the BBC.

— Katie Tanner



Freedom Barry