

NewTimes

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY'S NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

opinion

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Arts

Radio

BY JEFF HORNADAY

Cambria revives a lost art form

A Cambria-inspired radio drama finally comes home

Don't touch that dial — the adventures of Hopalong Cassidy will continue. But first this announcement from Radio Free Cambria.

Beginning Oct. 10, the small-town saga of "Milford-Haven" will air weekly on 103.5 KTEA in Cambria, the very community that inspired Mara Purl's radio drama series some 15 years ago. KTEA's decision to air the program will mark the first regular broadcast of "Milford-Haven" in this country, more than a decade since the show's single but successful season on the BBC as "Milford-Haven, U.S.A."

"Radio drama in the U.K. is quite a serious art form," Purl said. Now, at last, "the show is coming home."

Purl, creator of "Milford-Haven," has a long history in show business and a special connection with the Central Coast. Before

Purl's description of the program makes it out to sound something like "Lake Wobegone" meets "The Young and the Restless," only funnier. Her experience in soap operas actually got her interested in the long form of story telling — the same style she uses in the "Milford-Haven" series; following a few main characters through a series of choices and detailing the consequences of their decisions. Soap opera fans may even recognize a few voices on the radio show.

The story revolves around the lives of two main characters and several principal townfolk. Purl describes Jack Sawyer as the "avaricious builder-developer" who wants to transform the rustic beach town into a series of tract homes and shopping centers. Sound familiar? Then we have Jack's nemesis, Samantha Hugo, director of the envi-

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her two-year stint as an actress on "Days of Our Lives," Purl spent a summer performing in a professional production in Cambria. Having grown up in Tokyo, Los Angeles, and New York City, Purl was "intrigued by the issues of a small town."

Purl observed "a life that is closer to core values," and immediately recognized that the beautiful coastal community had very few problems of a big city. She noticed how many people would move to a small town like Cambria to run away from certain issues, but, in fact, they would actually bring those problems with them. It was this peculiar dynamic that piqued Purl's interest and inspired her to create the quirky characters and the familiar but fictitious town of Milford-Haven.

ronmental planning commission, who, in the spirit of soap operas, happens also to be Jack's ex-wife. In its own amusing way, the show actually tackles some big environmental issues that will naturally strike a chord with Central Coast residents.

In the years since "Milford-Haven" ran on Radio Five — an experimental network of the BBC — in 1993, Purl has been channeling her creativity into a series of novels based on the same charming community. Purl enjoys the "level of depth and detail that's impossible to fit into the broadcast restraints of a half-hour radio drama." Five books have already been published, and Purl expects to be in San Luis Obispo in December signing copies of the latest installment, "Christmas Angel."



GATHER 'ROUND Beginning Oct. 10, Cambria's KTEA 103.5 FM will air "Milford-Haven" every Sunday at 5 p.m.

Jim Kampschroer, co-owner of radio station KTEA in Cambria, looks forward to bringing the program to the airwaves of SLO County for the first time. The 60 half-hour episodes of "Milford-Haven" will air every Sunday at 5 p.m., from Oct. 10 through the end of 2005. The young nostalgia station (on the air since December 2003) features "a broad spectrum of music from the 1920s up to the 1950s," and cur-

rently plays an hour of radio drama classics every Saturday at 8 p.m. KTEA remains the Central Coast's only source for radio drama, and Kampschroer hopes it catches on. "After all," he grieved, "there's nothing on television!" Δ

Staff writer Jeff Hornaday operates on a different wavelength. Contact him at jhornaday@newtimesslo.com.

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