

"Digital Doin's" from Gallopade

Interview With Author Carole Marsh

INTERVIEWER: I understand you have a new project that you are just finishing up. Can you tell me a little about it?

AUTHOR: Yep. It's called Mimi and Papa's Everyday Amazing Almanac. It is a 365-day almanac for young readers, second to fifth grade. It is daily and seasonal, but can be read any year. It's not a calendar type thing.

INTERVIEWER: With ebooks, digital whiteboards, online test prep, and an interactive online fan club, you are usually on the cutting edge of technology; did anyone tell you that the almanac is a little old-fashioned when you decided to write one?

AUTHOR: Of course! Old-fashioned won't cut it these days. That's why I made sure to incorporate lots of flabbergasting facts, great doses of drama, plenty of humor, and loads of charm. Plus, this almanac has something others don't: Mimi and Papa.

INTERVIEWER: And Mimi and Papa are you and your husband, correct?

AUTHOR: Right. My husband, Bob, and I get to be in my *Real Kids! Real Places!* mysteries as characters. Papa is the cowboy pilot, and Mimi is a jet-setting mystery writer. Now we are voices of folksy wisdom, apparently, in our own almanac. If readers don't already know us from the mystery series, they will still find a welcome friend in the writer/researcher Mimi, who loves sharing wild and crazy facts that just happen to be educational and true. And kids adore Papa, who always has something to say about everything.

INTERVIEWER: What made you want to write your own almanac?

AUTHOR: There were a million reasons to do this, and probably a million reasons not to. I myself was actually a city girl growing up in Atlanta, but I had plenty of country cousins living from the Georgia mountains to the Georgia coast, and on cotton farms and peanut plantations in between. Papa grew up in western Iowa so he had the day-to-day farm experience, while the city was an innovation to him. Sometimes I feel that most of our coffee conversation each morning is about the day, the season, the weather, and those other types of things that anchor us to our daily world with comfort, fascination, and the kind of continuity that reassures us that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

INTERVIEWER: You sound like a bit of an almanac junkie yourself.

AUTHOR: I collect almanacs, old and new. You should have seen my desk while I was working on the Almanac. I was buried under a haystack but it was all exceedingly helpful. I'm the proud owner of all the Foxfire books, which document authentic blood-sausage- to bluebird house-making, quilting bees, and tons of other homespun, do-it-yourself traditions. Plus, Papa and I have been to all 50 states in the past 30 years, so we have accumulated a wealth of our own information to choose from.

INTERVIEWER: What made you decide to put all that knowledge into one "amazing" book for kids?

AUTHOR: Really, it is an ongoing observation of my city grandkids that really inspired me to create an almanac. I think kids enjoy learning all kinds of things almanacky: the weather, the seasons, where food comes from, how honey is made, what harvest festivals the Native Americans celebrated, the unique names for the moon and tides, et cetera. There is indeed a great renewed interest in all things green, growing, and environmental, as you know.

INTERVIEWER: You already have an almanac out there, don't you?

AUTHOR: Yes, the Daily Dozen Classroom Almanac.

INTERVIEWER: It was recently given the 2012 Teacher's Choice Award from Learning Magazine. What is different about the Daily Dozen?

AUTHOR: Pretty much everything. The Daily Dozen has been out for a year or so. It is a digital whiteboard product for the classroom and home school. Each Daily Dozen entry has twelve short and sweet facts in twelve fun categories. It was designed to be a good way to start off the school day and get the mental juices flowing each morning. Mimi and Papa's Everyday Amazing Almanac is more like a traditional almanac; a book with a traditional companion-type feel.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any other new books I should be looking out for?

AUTHOR: Well, 3 of my mysteries are ready to be released on January 2. They are the Great Train Mystery, the Awesome Atlanta Mystery, and the Baseball Mystery.

INTERVIEWER: A baseball mystery? I like the sound of that. Anything else we should know about?

AUTHOR: I just had 2 other books that came out in October, the Mystery of Mimi's Haunted Book Shop and WHEN KIDS TAKE OVER NASA.

INTERVIEWER: I understand that Mimi's Haunted Book Shop was a smash hit. I also heard there was something different about WHEN KIDS TAKE OVER NASA, that it wasn't your "usual book."

AUTHOR: WHEN KIDS TAKE OVER NASA is the first book I've written for a slightly older audience. My grandchildren are growing up, you know.

INTERVIEWER: That's quite a few books to write in just a year, don't you think?

AUTHOR: I've been doing this for more than 30 years. I've got the process down pat.