



*Following are the author's "notes" for the pre-selected questions Mary Eileen Williams asked on the June 26, 2017, Feisty Side of Fifty Blogtalk Radio interview. The actual interview can be accessed online at:*

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/feisty-side-of-fifty/2017/06/26/diana-black-windows-to-the-soul>

**MEW: "Windows to the Soul" book description: An extraordinary day in the life of an ordinary man, Gabriel Hart—a grieving young father and widower—and the untold ways hope, loyalty and forgiveness are tested to the limit. How did the idea come?**

DB: First of all THANK YOU, Mary Eileen, for having me on your show! The idea came many years ago as I walked through my neighborhood. A male voice (a muse?) cried, "She's dead." I pulled my jacket collar up around my neck because I was the only person on the street. The story was "told to me," silently. I rushed home to write it down as best I could. The struggling songwriter that I was had no idea what to do with the story of a young couple, their little girl and a prisoner. But I felt an obligation to the characters, so I set out to hone the craft of writing a novel.

**MEW: We're told, "Write what you know." How does that apply to your writing?**

DB: My husband and I owned a hot air balloon business for several years, so yes that definitely informed me when I was writing one particular scene. And that scene appearing early on in the book, I believe, helped give the book credibility. Knowing terms and details about flying a balloon and a passenger's experience on their first flight, and expressing both in a way that puts the reader in the balloon as both the pilot and passenger, gives the reader confidence that the writer is qualified to share a story.

Other aspects of the story I can personally relate to such as struggling with forgiveness, loss of loved ones ... maybe not in the same way as the protagonist, but still my heart has been broken — as have most of us — in such a way in the past I remember I had no idea how I could or why I should ever crawl out of bed.

**MEW: Your book explores the human condition — birth, death, love, loss and forgiveness. How difficult was it to delve into these deepest of themes?**

DB: Oh, piece of cake! Not really. That's one of the reasons it took me decades to write the story! Or rather "listen" to the story the characters wanted me to share. I am less an author and more a transcriber. The characters knew their story, the depth of emotion, and were willing to share it. But I wasn't ready to hear it until just very recently.

**MEW: Writers say an editor can make all the difference. What was your experience?**

DB: Yes, yes, and YES! All the difference. Matthew Sharpe is a NY editor, and I doubt I could have gotten to the emotional core of this story without his probing questions. That's the skill of an editor. They don't write the story...they ask questions that get your mind, heart and craft itching to delve into those areas you may have never considered, or dreaded considering, and once you've been called on it, well... And huge kudos to John Bell and Vabella Publishing for believing in the story and sharing it with readers.

**MEW: What advice do you have for listeners who believe they have a book in them?**

DB: If you think you have a book in you, you do! You may write garbage when you begin, but there will be that sentence or phrase that burns in your soul. Keep that, and try to move forward with more garbage until you hit that next golden nugget of truth. One thing I have discovered, and not to worry about early on in your writing, but perhaps when working on later drafts, the minute I write something and think, "Oh, a reader will LOVE this!" I hit delete. **I've written for reaction rather than from reaction.**

**MEW: I think I know the answer to this, but do you believe age should ever stop us from pursuing our dreams? How can we "keep the faith" and persevere?**

DB: I'm very fortunate to work with young people who keep me on my toes and young at heart. I have days when I feel (and look) ancient, but for the most part I think having a young attitude keeps us young ... that and our dreams. So yes, pursue your dreams! Never stop dreaming! Maybe even more important, never stop learning — because when we learn something new (every day?), it expands our human experience and the possibilities we see before us ... maybe you would call those possibilities dreams. And as birthdays add up, and we feel there just won't be enough time to pursue those dreams, dream and do it anyway! What's the alternative? Oh, and love hard and often.



**Diana Black** is a published songwriter, nonfiction writer and children's author. *Windows to the Soul* is her first novel. VP of The Orange Duffel Bag Initiative, a 501c3 nonprofit helping students in need succeed, Black has a daughter and granddaughter, and lives with her husband and two cats. <http://www.DianaBlack.net>

**Amazon:** <http://tinyurl.com/amazon-Windows-to-the-Soul>

**Barnes & Noble:** <http://tinyurl.com/B-N-Windows-to-the-Soul>