



Welcome readers to another author interview. Today we are happy to have Mary Ann Bernal. Join us for a great conversation about writing, history and Mary Ann's books.

**JMR-Welcome to the Books Delight, Mary Ann. Tell our readers where you live, what you do for fun, and what the perfect day looks like?**

MAB-Thanks for having me. I currently reside in Elkhorn, Nebraska, and enjoy attending my grandchildren's activities. From softball to dance competitions, you will find me in the stands, cheering on my talented offspring. A perfect day would include making my daily word count, doing my treadmill miles, and being first in line in the carpool lane at my granddaughter's school.

**JMR-Your written books are set in Saxon England, Crusading Europe, and now ancient Rome. So, what is your absolute favorite time period? Why?**

MAB-That is a tough question. I find history fascinating and am always trying to imagine how people lived their lives in previous centuries. Greek mythology piqued my interest at an early age. Ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt held their own allure, a notable difference when compared to the dark and middle ages. But the romanticized knights of the British Isles deeply affected an impressionable teenager as did the heroic tales of the Vikings, albeit as Hollywood interpreted their escapades. I enjoy every time period equally without favoritism. However, if a choice must be made, I would favor Ancient Egypt on Monday, Ancient Greece on Tuesday, Ancient Rome on Wednesday, Crusading Europe on Thursday, and Saxon England on Friday. As you can see, in fairness, I went in alphabetical order.

**JMR-Who is your favorite historical female? Why? If you could ask her one question, what would it be?**

MAB-Eleanor of Aquitaine was one of the most powerful women in the twelfth century. As Queen of France, she participated in the Second Crusade. She successfully annulled her marriage to King Louis, becoming engaged to the Duke of Normandy (the future Henry II of England) shortly thereafter. She refused to be subjected to "knowing her place." She was not meek and submissive but a force to be reckoned with. As for my question, I would ask Eleanor, "What really happened in Antioch?" (Hint: Her husband was jealous of Eleanor's affection for her uncle, Raymond of Poitiers.)

**JMR-You have a strong connection to the U.S. Military. Tell our readers about that and why.**

MAB-Freedom is not free, and too many people take our freedoms for granted. Without the courage and sacrifice of our military, we would not enjoy the lifestyles we covet. Democracy is fragile and must be protected at all costs. We must never forget the blood that was shed to keep us free.

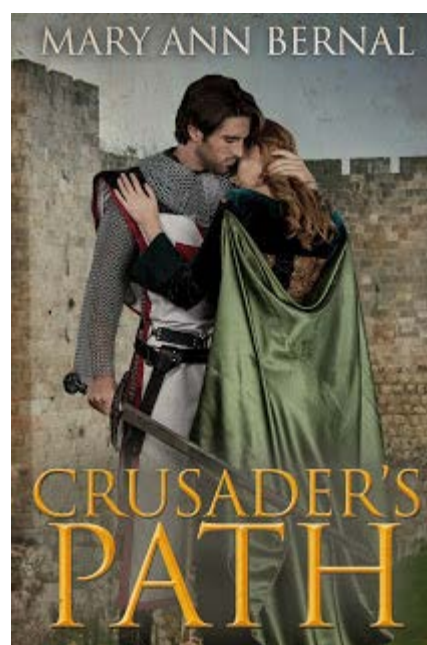
JMR- Thank you for this Mary Ann, my husband and I are both Air Force Veterans and my son is currently serving in the Army. We appreciate your support.

**JMR- Mary Ann, tell us about your new book, *Forgiving Nero*. What's it about, and how is it different from other books about this much-maligned man?**

MAB-History is written by the victors. However, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio, the ancient historians responsible for vilifying Nero, had no first-hand knowledge of the events comprising Nero's reign. Their information was based on hearsay (unreliable in a court of law) and dramatic personal interpretation of the circumstances. For example, fiddles did not appear until the Middle Ages. Thus, Nero could not fiddle while Rome burned. In fact, he was not even in the city when the fire started. While Nero was guilty of monstrous atrocities, he was also a kind and sensitive young man who wanted to help the common people when he became emperor. What forces slowly eroded Nero's idealistic pursuits for the common good? Nero was flawed like the rest of humanity. He deserves to be remembered as the man he truly was, not the man history condemned him to be.

**JMR-You've traveled to the UK, Ireland, Italy, and Greece for your research. Where did you feel the closest connection to your characters?**

MAB-I would have to say my visit to the U.K. ranks at the top of the list. When I walked the ramparts at Kenilworth (Robert Dudley's home), my mind shifted to the ninth century, and I pictured Vikings running towards the walls defended by the Saxons. The historical inaccuracies did not matter. I looked down upon an imagined enemy, hearing the bloodcurdling war cries in my mind, picturing the turmoil as arrows rained and men fell. The Priory Ruins at Thetford had its own ghosts of monks chanting in the abbey ruins, praying for salvation from the formidable enemy. The Anglo-Saxon Village at West Stow represents how the common people lived, enduring hardships we only read about.



**JMR- Your books include a strong romantic storyline, which takes precedence, the history, or the love story?**

MAB-The love story is interwoven with the history. The mores of the day dictate behavior. The characters conduct themselves as befitting their station in life. Conflict arises when a character does not follow the rules. Being an incurable romantic, at the end of the day, love conquers all.

**JMR- What's next? Another Nero book?**

MAB-A few characters from Ancient Egypt have appeared on the horizon, demanding their story be told. I'm considering a novel set during Pharaoh Akhenaten's reign. I always have another tale I want to tell. I need to find the time to write them all.

**JMR- Tell our readers how to find you on social media and the web.**

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**JMR- What question were you hoping I'd ask but didn't?**

MAB: Any fun facts you wish to share?

Nancy Walker (actress best known for appearing on the T.V. show Rhoda) and I almost collided on a sidewalk in Manhattan.

Tom Jones touched my hand during a concert at the Westchester County Center in White Plains, New York.

After visiting the Thetford Priory Ruins in Norfolk, U.K., I learned that Ghost Hunters had featured the site, which is reputedly haunted. I did not see any specters, much to my disappointment.

JMR- Wow, Tom Jones! How long did it take for you to wash that hand?!



**JMR- Thank you, Mary Ann, for stopping by, we really enjoyed talking with you today. Good luck with your new**

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Mary Ann Bernal December 29, 2020 at 5:16 AM

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