

## **Woman of Note: Storybook Beginnings as appeared in Cooking with Paula Dean Magazine**

GREENWICH, N.Y. – After 30 minutes of clicking out the tapestry of her latest novel onto her computer, Gail Fraser looked up from the keyboard at the view of her front yard: a placid, moss-colored pond fringed by a lush forest of blue spruce and oak trees.

“There are a lot of perks working from home,” she said with a smile.

Gail’s elegant home office has been her headquarters since her first book, *The Lumby Lines*, was published in 2005. The novel tells the endearing tale of small town life through a cast of eccentric, but close-knit townsfolk. The book garnered such a following that Penguin NAL subsequently published the second (*Stealing Lumby*) and third (*Lumby’s Bounty*) installments of the ongoing series.

Her writing success is only part of the blissful second chapter of Gail’s life.

Gail lives with her husband Art Poulin, a retired architect turned folk-artist on a forty acre gentleman’s farm dubbed Lazy Goose in the rolling hills of upstate New York.

While Gail writes, Art is a few hundred yards away in a red clapboard studio, painting folk art scenes on deadline for a 2009 Graphique de France calendar.

But Gail’s work environment wasn’t always so pastoral or balanced.

For more than 25 years, she worked as a senior executive strategic consultant, traveling to every conceivable time zone around the globe to advise clients on matters such as revamping product introduction and fraud management.

It all changed on a dime nine years ago when she hired Art to design and build her house in Virginia.

“I knew right away he was one of the most honest and kind men I’d ever met. We couldn’t date, though, because he saw it as a conflict of interest,” she recalled with a smile. “But we were married two weeks after the completion of the house.”

Being newly married and very much in love suddenly cast Gail’s travel schedule in a different light and she decided to take a chance on a longtime secret dream of becoming a novelist.

It was then that she created Lumby, U.S.A., an idyllic but quirky “one-moose town” that’s home to the country’s oldest apple tree, a monastery full of monks, a colorful cast of neighbors, and the town’s newspaper, whose name was accidentally changed from The Lumby Times to The Lumby Lines because of a miscommunication with the pressman.

“I think the possibility of Lumby is important to all of us,” she said. “Lumby is a state of mind, not just a fictitious town. It’s a place for hope and faith...and where integrity always wins out.”

Along with a career change, Gail and Art decided a change in geography was also in order. After finding the perfect piece of remote property close to their life-long friends, the Monks of New Skete, they transformed the acreage into their own version of paradise that includes the newly built main house, barn, two art studios, and guest cottage as well as several gardens where, in the summer, Gail nurtures over thirty different varieties of heirloom tomatoes.

“It’s nice to be able to choose your life,” said Gail. “It was an extraordinary leap of faith but we are now home and our anchor is down. This is where Art and I want to grow old.”

Each day she and her dogs walk out her office door to visit the beehives and stroll through the orchard. “We’re so fortunate to have found Lazy Goose and the small town in which we live. Everything about it supports our writing and painting – and it offers such great fodder.”

When not working, Gail indulges in another passion: cooking, and their new home offers all the amenities of a professional chef's kitchen. "I'm sure great chefs can cook anywhere on anything, but I need some inspiration, and standing in front of an eight-burner range does that," she laughs.

"The kitchen is the heart of our home. That's where we make time to be together," she explained. At least three times a week, Gail and her husband conjure up a substantial meal such as Tuscan Pork with Parmesan Sauce or Roasted Leg of Lamb that offer leftovers for the following days.

Penguin was so interested in Gail's cooking that the publisher included many of Gail's own recipes at the end of each of her novels in an appendix called *The Lumby Reader*.

"For me, cooking is a lot like writing; they're an escape. With both, it's about being passionate in sharing a part of me with family and friends, and there's nothing better in life than that."

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