

We were all big fish

Growing up, author **Cindy Gerard** didn't expect to become a writer, but her childhood in a small town and her visits to the tiny local library helped feed her confidence and imagination.

A conversation with Cindy Gerard

Where did you grow up?

Cindy Gerard: I literally grew up in a town of 750 people. I was a very big fish in a very little pond. But then everybody in that little pond was a big fish. So, when you grow up in an environment like that, the perimeters are small. The area is small, but everybody knows everybody. And you are growing up—the whole town is your family. And you feel like you can do anything, because everybody you've known all your life has said, "Oh, you're so cute, you're so funny, you're so this, you're so that."

Since since it's a small town and a small school—I think there were 30 in my class—everybody did everything, or you didn't do anything, you know. So, I was in student council. I was in thespians. I was in choir. I was in marching band. I was a cheerleader. I played basketball. I played baseball, softball, whatever. You just did everything. So I grew up thinking, oh, I can do anything. [...]

[...] I was a very voracious reader. I—we had this little bitty town, little bitty library. I mean, I can still smell the musk and the mold on the books to this day. But I

haunted that library. And I probably read every age-appropriate book, and some that probably weren't age-appropriate that I could get my hands on. And one of my favorite pastimes—and I was not an introverted child. I was very active, but I loved my quiet time. And I would go in my little bitty bedroom, and I'd make a tent out of a blanket and a yardstick or two and hide myself, just huddle under that little cocoon and read *Black Beauty* or *The Hardy Boys* or anything. If it had to do with animals or mystery, I was into it.

I was going to be a veterinarian. I was going to be a nurse. I was going to do all that stuff. And then I thought probably I'd end up being a teacher. I didn't think I would end up, by choice, getting married right out of high school.

We moved a whole 70 miles away, which was big for this little farm girl. And we've actually been there ever since.

What memories do you have of libraries in your childhood? Did you find romance novels on their shelves?

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