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The Flamboyant
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Lenora Demarest is an independent woman who refuses to be defined in terms of her relationship with a man, yet she is pursued by two men — Ignacio Portelli and George Hanson. Was it difficult to reconcile their romantic intentions with Lenora's unswerving devotion to remaining single and pursuing flying?

No. It seemed to me totally understandable that a financially independent woman could forsake marriage in favour of pursuing her dream as well as choosing to have a long-term romantic relationship with a man. Men have espoused such a lifestyle throughout history, so why not women?

In *The Flamboyant*, you allude to numerous women aviators. Why are most people only familiar with Amelia Earhart?

Amelia Earhart had the extraordinary support of George Putnam, her husband, who arranged high-profile business and media deals for her. His publishing background made him more public-relations savvy than most other managers of equally, if not more so, accomplished female pilots of the era:

The Demarests are model Americans in their adopted Puerto Rico, befriending the workers on their plantation, La Sardinera, and treating them as family. Were you conscious of the *droit du seigneur* implications of Henry Demarest's physical attraction to Milady García?

Not really. If anything, I was surprised, as I was writing this novel, at Henry's budding romantic attentions toward his maid. Fictional characters surprise their creators from time to time, and this was one such case.

You end *The Flamboyant* with Lenora Demarest's obituary, noting her death at age 91. Were you at all inclined to enlarge this book and write about some of her other adventures in later life?

My protagonist, Lenora Demarest, is a courageous aviatrix but this book is not about adventure in the sky. The real adventure in *The Flamboyant* is the one that takes place in the soul — the one that allows a woman who is young and beautiful to say no to marriage.

In your acknowledgments, you mention being inspired by the American aviatrix Clara Livingston in your portrait of Lenora Demarest. Can you identify some of the ways in which Livingston inspired the character of Lenora?

Clara Livingston's love for her adopted homeland of Puerto Rico, her good friendship with Amelia Earhart, her inward, fairly reserved nature, her sense of fierce independence, her absolute commitment to aviation as a career (not just diversion), her love of dogs and her pet leopard.