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## St. Croix Port Visitor Center Now Bears Name of Claire L. Roker, Icon of Tourism and Youth Empowerment

**From her Pan Am days to her rise as Tourism Director and Assistant Commissioner, Claire Roker's lifelong dedication was celebrated as VIPA dedicated the St. Croix port visitor center in her name, fulfilling a law passed unanimously by lawmakers.**

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**Claire Roker is pictured with family and local leaders during the dedication of the Frederiksted Visitor Center named in her honor. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.**

The visitors center at the Ann E. Abramson Marine Facility in Frederiksted now bears the name of Claire L. Roker.

During a dedication ceremony on Friday, Virgin Islands Port Authority officials effected the provisions of Act 8858, which was passed by the 35th Legislature to honor Ms. Roker's legacy as a leading light in tourism, women's advocacy, and youth development.

Having the first building visitors see upon entry into the port of Frederiksted named after the tourism icon is “very important,” according to VIPA Chair Willard John. “Ms. Roker has established a footprint in the tourism industry that is deep, far, and wide,” he said. “She has spent her illustrious career in welcoming and ensuring that our visitors have an enjoyable and productive stay in the Virgin Islands,” Mr. John declared. “I’m sure that everyone under this tent today has had that kind of experience with her.”

From her beginnings as a passenger service representative for Pan American Airlines to launching her own business after leaving Farrelly's Travel Agency, Ms. Roker's early career affirms Mr. John's assertion of her deep roots in the tourism industry. She went on to serve as assistant director of Tourism, eventually rising to the roles of Tourism Director and Assistant Commissioner.

While establishing her sterling bona fides in the tourism industry, Ms. Roker was also cementing her title as “the Queen Mother of pageants” with the founding of Hal Jackson's Virgin Islands Talented Teen, and the Miss America Outstanding Teen competitions. Beginning in 1972, Ms. Roker's legacy of pageantry was built over three decades of youth mentorship.

Her passion for the development of young people did not stop there. As Shamari Haynes said, while delivering remarks on behalf of Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte, Ms. Roker has never been afraid “to pick up the phone, to give me a dose of truth, and to let me know – lovingly and directly of course – when and how to pull up my pants.”

Calling it “one of the easiest pieces of legislation I've ever worked on,” Senator Novelle Francis noted Ms. Roker's widespread recognition across the territory. “Whether you're from St. Croix, St. Thomas [or] St. John, you know Claire Roker. She is a Virgin Islands powerhouse, and no stranger to our community,” he remarked.

For her part, Ms. Roker expressed her gratitude for the recognition. With Sheniqua Robinson delivering her prepared remarks, the honoree called the naming of the St. Croix Visitors Center a “meaningful honor...a recognition that I accept with deep appreciation and a heart full of love for this island that raised me.”

Saint Croix, Ms. Roker said, is more than just her home. “It is my passion, my purpose, and my inspiration.” She cited the island's rich culture and vibrant history, the warmth of its people and the beauty of the land. With an intent expression on her face, Ms. Roker looked on as Ms. Robinson delivered the remarks prepared for her. “This island has given me more than I could ever repay,” read Ms. Robinson. “To now have my name connected to a place that welcomes visitors to our shores, a place that offers the first handshake, the first smile, and the first story is truly, truly, something special.”