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An Author's Visit to St. Croix Was So Memorable That She Wrote A Book About it 56 Years Later: 'Once, Upon An Island'

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Part of the book cover of "Once, Upon an Island", written by Laury A. Egan. By. LAURY A. EGAN.

Imagine arriving on St. Croix for the first time, ambushed by a flurry of bright colors and peculiar sights and sounds. Then, imagine for a moment that you were 16 years old, never having spent a single day under the Caribbean sun.

That is the story of Laury A. Egan, the author of the book "Once, Upon an Island" in which she shares a fictional version about her weeks spent on the U.S territory 56 years ago in August of 1966.

Ms. Egan had traveled to St Croix with her mother who, being an artist, was working on a portfolio for the A.H. Riise Gallery on St Thomas. They would travel back there again in 1967 staying just over a month each time.

“I was 16 years old which is the same age as the principal character of the book and I really wanted to be a writer and I decided that someday I was going to write a novel set on St Croix, because I thought it was really interesting, particularly how Americans and Europeans when they visit how that affects them and why they choose to move there.”

“So, I had it in my head for 56 years and I finally did what I was supposed to do,” she chuckled.

Ms. Egan, now 72-years-old, started working on the book in 2013, reviewing it several times before finally finding a publisher. The publishing process began in January of 2022.

An excerpt from the book reads: “The taxi sped along Prince Street and skidded to a swaying halt in front of the Pink Fancy, a small hotel with astonishingly bright bubble-gum-colored walls. After my mother and I stepped onto the sidewalk, the driver quickly disgorged our belongings from the cab’s trunk, placed them at our feet, and hopped in the driver’s seat. His car emitted a cloud of blue exhaust and took off.”

It outlines the moment that a young girl saw the Pink Fancy Hotel, [now the Sugar Apple Bed & Breakfast](#), for the first time and her thoughts on how she had arrived there. The chapter goes on to recount the things she saw and how she felt about her temporary home and the state of her mother who was still reeling from the death of her son, all while trying to navigate her way through the rest of her life.

“She’s sort of confused and upset and she meets this Czechoslovakian woman at the Pink Fancy and they strike up this really unusual relationship and their stories begin to intertwine,” she recalled.

“It’s also a coming-of-age story about a 16-year-old girl who was staying at the Pink Fancy which was a small hotel at the time,” she shared.

And while the tales in the story may be fictional, the details about how she remembered St. Croix more than half a century ago remain true to her experience.

She said, “I think readers will have fun with it. I’m getting a lot of positive feedback from people that were on the island at the time who’ve read the book so, I feel like I’ve got my details right.”

Ms. Egan told V.I. Consortium that it’s the favorite of her ten written literary pieces, describing the book as a “pretty interesting portrait of St Croix.”

“I think this is a very interesting book and it should be a nostalgic visit for many people and even though younger people may not know the places, I think some of them are still there that are mentioned,” she added.

In her decades as a writer, Ms. Egan has authored other fictional work to include: Wave in D Minor, Doublecrossed, Turnabout, The Swimmer, A Bittersweet Tale, The Ungodly Hour, The Outcast Oracle, Fog and Other Stories, Jenny Kidd, and Fabulous! An Opera Buffa; (poetry) Beneath the Lion’s Paw; Snow, Shadows, a Stranger; The Sea & Beyond; and Presence & Absence – all of which can be found on her website www.lauryaegan.com.

The book is printed on demand and is available [on Amazon](#) and at Undercover Books in Christiansted.

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