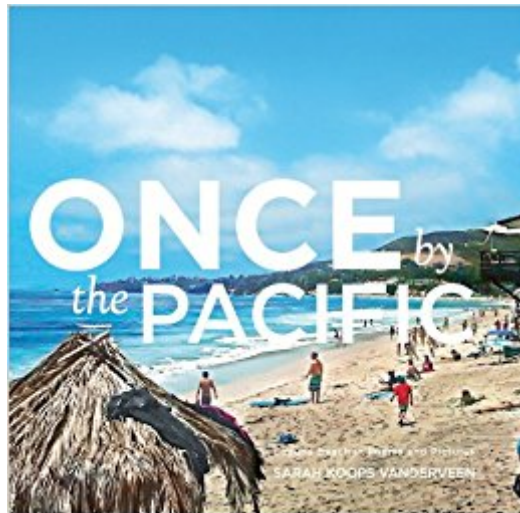




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Once By The Pacific: Laguna Beach In Poems And Pictures



Synopsis

Laguna Beach became famous as an artists' colony in the 1920s, infamous as a mecca for hippies and surfers in the 1960s, and it still attracts free spirits and seekers of beauty. Among those inspired by its light, landscape and people is poet Sarah Koops Vanderveen. In *Once by the Pacific*, she captures the rhythms of real life in a much-mythologized place that is ultimately, in her words, quirky, lovely, and authentic. Also with work by world-renowned photographer John Van Hamersveld.

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Customer Reviews

Sarah Koops Vanderveen is the former editor of the Mars Hill Review, a literary journal focused on the intersection of faith and culture. She is a member of Redbud Writers Guild and lives in Laguna Beach with her husband and two sons.

"Hakama Glory Day"
Cold, green-glass water.
Little waves, the sun on my face and--ah!

Dolphins.--Sarah Vanderveen, *ONCE by the PACIFIC*
When my wife, Sarah, and I moved to Laguna Beach 10 years ago, we were surprised that such a small percentage of locals use the beach every day. To us, it was the reason for living here. It's easy to get caught up in the urgencies of life and completely miss the daily beauty of the journey. Potential future destinations can cloud our vision. Sarah and I force ourselves to be aware and focus on how lucky we are to live in this town every day that we are here. In January of 2010, my wife decided to create a dual mechanism that would force her to write every day and pay attention to where she lives. She would create a poem a day,

take a picture (or find one) and blog about it to keep herself honest. She did it, and then spent another year editing and publishing that body of work into a new book that is just being released called *ONCE by the PACIFIC*. Some of the poems and images are whimsical--focusing on the beaches, local flora and fauna ("Coyotes" is one of my favorites) and some, more serious. There are two poems about former transient and honorary locals: "Cowboy, Rest in Peace" and "Heart and Torch: In Memory of Rick Griffin, an Honorary Lagunan if Ever There Was One" that are more serious. They are short, but they vividly share an experience nonetheless. Cowboy was a local hobo who was killed by a car in Laguna Canyon a few years ago. He was the most famous of our homeless set. The imagery brings me back to interactions with him in public places around town: "The Icon of Heisler Park. the skinny, jangly, boot-wearing standard-bearer of the way things used to be: Cowboy, rest in peace." Rick Griffin wasn't really a local Lagunan, but the famous hippy surf and rock artist visited and stayed at times. Sarah was able to access a photo of Rick from Easter one year that John Van Hammersveld allowed her to use. "I look at your eyes in a black and white photography, your hair and beard as wild as John the Baptist's might have been, and wish you could tell me what you're seeing now." Life in our village has its serious moments and times that are transcendent. There are other days that seem like they are cut from an episode of Peter Pan. Sometimes local poetry can help remind me to be grateful.

This book is beautiful and true. It's a book that incites its readers to reflect on connection, on the wonder of creation, on what it is to be a parent, a person in community, someone with eyes wide open. Whether you live on the beach or in the woods or in the city or down the street from a strip mall, this book will open your eyes to see what is beautiful in the landscape around you. You will open it and let yourself rest in it, again and again.

Beautiful coffee book!

This book is a gem, not just for those who love Laguna but for anyone who loves the ocean and all that goes with California's beautiful coastline. *Once by the Pacific* is a vibrant mix of smart, inviting poetry and winsome photographs that immediately take you to the beach side charm and peace of Laguna. Vanderveen does the rare and impressive work of fitting the energy of this unique town into her prose and pictures. If you love people, beaches, flowers, hiking, poetry, sunshine, and family, you will be delighted to own this.

Recently, I was rereading essays by Colette on flowers and fruit, and I was struck by the translator's comment: "Nothing is more exacting than love and no one's love was more exacting than Colette's." The idea of artistic vision infused with love, born of generosity, appeals to me. One feels this love for place in Sarah Koops Vanderveen's portrayal of Laguna Beach, in her eye for the life-positive, the mundane moment reclaimed and made holy, and in her delight with nature. Her voice combines a child's wonder with an adult's wry sensibility. Her touch is gentle. Here is a welcome antidote to popular images of the OC. Here is one of my favorite poems, and when I read it, I feel blessed:

The Good Gardener
Oh! The good gardener has been here today
pruning and watering and he left
a fragrant little jumble of gardenia and plumeria blossoms on the doorstep

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