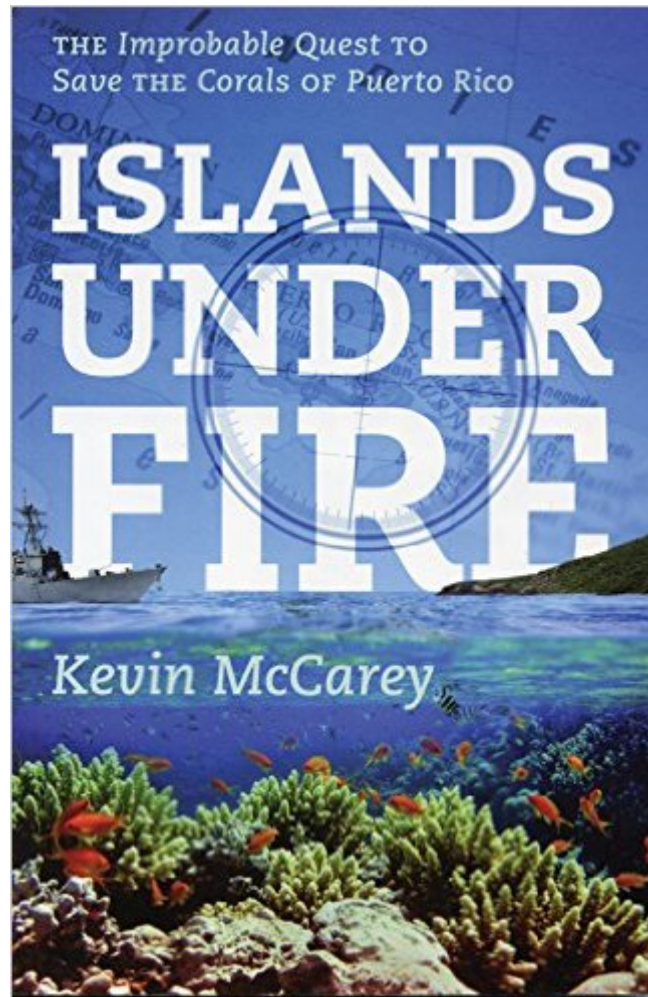


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# Islands Under Fire: The Improbable Quest To Save The Corals Of Puerto Rico



## Synopsis

A portrait of an often overlooked part of AmericaâPuerto Rico and the Spanish Virgin Islandsâthis is the little-known story of how the U.S. government, in particular the Navy, almost destroyed a pristine coral reef to provide a target for gunners. The authorâs true and humorous account of his role in this sometimes bizarre tale reveals how locals, politicians, and mariners came together to save a coral reef from certain destruction, and how the need to protect the fragile marine environment can bring meaning and direction to anyoneâs life, young or old. The conservation efforts represent a perfect example of what highly motivated citizens and political leaders can achieve when taking action to protect what they love. The author, hired as captain of a small research vessel, led the underwater search for evidence of the coral reef damage that would be used to convince the U.S. government to stop its bombardment of the island. While he did not have a direct role in the legal activities of Washington, DC, his efforts to collect factual evidence that would be used by the lawyers proved to be of immeasurable importance. His role enabled the Culebrans, the residents of this tranquil island paradise, to gather proof of the destruction, which ultimately convinced everyoneâincluding President Nixonâto stop the carnage. This triumphant tale serves as an inspiration for anyone wanting to make a difference in environmental conservation.

## Book Information

Paperback: 268 pages

Publisher: Square One (April 1, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0982694083

ISBN-13: 978-0982694084

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars See all reviews (34 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,820,551 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Ecosystems > Coral Reefs #62 in Books > Travel > Caribbean > Puerto Rico #1288 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Environmentalists & Naturalists

## Customer Reviews

If you know Puerto Rico this book is going to bring you back there. If you've been to Culebra, your going to love this book. It is very well written and very entertaining. Get the maps out because you

are going to want to follow them across Puerto Rico all the way to Culebra. This is a true story, its serious and it is accurate. I have read this book several times and I know these places. Today, Culebra has several of the best beaches in the Caribbean and some of the best coral reefs for snorkeling and diving. It's fantastic! We should be very grateful to have this thanks to these guys and gals because we almost lost it to the Navy.

This was a really fun book. While it was interesting to read a true account about how the U.S. Navy used an inhabited island in the Caribbean for target practice, something I knew nothing about, the characters and the perspective was hysterical. And even though they were real events, the story was engaging. The read went by fast.

This book is a wonderful blend of travel, memoir, history, culture and adventure! I've never been to Puerto Rico (yet), but I feel like I have after reading this book. The rich details of its people, culture, flora and of course, the abundant ocean life had me transfixed every time I opened the book. I thoroughly enjoyed it!

McCarey captures not only the Puerto Rican spirit, but does a fabulous job of painting a picture of the wonderful island of Culebra. It was a piece of writing that celebrates the spirit and uniqueness of the small island that a relatively few people know about regarding its past with the U.S. Military. It took the dedicated work and strong character of the people of Puerto Rico, McCarey and his crew and the tenacity of the people of Culebra to allow Culebra to become what it is today. Great read!

I have been traveling to Puerto Rico by ship since 1983 and have seen a lot of change; most for the better. This book captures the essence of the people and places and as much as some folks may think some of this stuff is made up I will attest to its fact. I could visualize almost every place described in the book. If you want to really get a "feel" for the Island(s) read this book.

Islands Under Fire is a memoir of the triumph of the underdog over the vast military machinery of the U.S. Navy. In it, a young Kevin McCarey, a former merchant marine, finds himself enlisted in a cause greater than himself -- the quixotic quest to stop the U.S. Navy from using Puerto Rico's Culebra Island as a training ground for artillery fire. The bomb blasts are harassing the locals and destroying pristine, beautiful coral reefs off the island's coast. McCarey's vivid, detailed descriptions show his love for the reefs: "The sheer density of life is astonishing. Giant purple sea fans sway

between pale candelabras of crown corals. A thick forest of staghorns and elkhorns stretches as far as the eye can see, and in these clear waters that is very far indeed. There are enormous mounds of star corals everywhere. And flaming leaves of fire corals."But McCarey's love isn't limited to the reef. The book is also a loving portrait of Puerto Rico and its people, who "proved that right, truth, and justice can prevail against the mightiest navy in the world." This lesson is as pertinent and important now as it was then. *Islands Under Fire* is a warm, fun, engaging read.

There are many things to love about "*Islands Under Fire: The Improbable Quest to Save the Corals of Puerto Rico*". First and foremost for me, is Kevin McCarey's lovingly accurate portrayal of Puerto Ricans. Like the author, I lived in Puerto Rico for a number of years and experienced the kindness, the histrionics, the optimism, the fatalism and the quiet determination of its people. It is heartwarming to find an author who can bring the Puerto Rican character to life in all its colors and textures. For other readers personally unfamiliar with Puerto Rico, this is a classic tale of an underdog winning against a mightier adversary---only the underdog is a group of American citizens, living on an ecologically sensitive islet, being bombed by our own U.S. Navy. Incredibly, it's a true story and more incredibly, McCarey is able to tell it with great humor and a lack of hand-wringing or sermonizing. The best reason I recommend this book is it is a really FUN read!

When I read the cover blurb -- "*The Improbable Quest To Save The Corals Of Puerto Rico*" -- I was half-expecting a serious, sanctimonious dissertation appealing primarily to environmentalists. The seriousness is there alright, but the author makes it all the more compelling because he keeps it, like a coral reef, just below the surface. It's what's on the surface that makes *Islands Under Fire* such a riveting story: characters who are simply (and complexly) human -- heroes one minute, hopeless the next. The narrator (who happens to be the author) is at the center of this motley crew and totally subject to their whims and peccadilloes. He's captain of a boat but not captain of his own fate. Despite all the frustrations he experiences, you get the distinct sense he's enjoying himself. And you start enjoying yourself as well because the author has the knack of making you feel like you're walking in his shoes. His humorous observations on topics like the surplus of Puerto Rican swear words, paint a picture of the island far more palpable than any travel brochure. Before reading this book, I had no desire to visit Puerto Rico. I do now -- for the coral reefs, but even more for the people.

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