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West Kennebunk author Cynthia Fraser Graves talks about ‘Dusk on Route 1’

The plot involves a grief stricken widow who gets lost in a blizzard in Wells on Christmas Eve.

BY [TAMMY WELLS](#) COURIER / POST

WEST KENNEBUNK — Throughout her career as an educator, Cynthia Fraser Graves was writing, a natural hobby perhaps, for a teacher of English and drama. Or, perhaps, teaching English and drama came naturally to her, as a writer.

Either way, some years ago, the West Kennebunk resident was seated at the Maine Diner in Wells, drinking coffee, when a sentence came to her, out of nowhere.

“I was looking at the neon clock and heard this phrase,” said Graves, reciting the sentence from an armchair in the living room of her home. “It went like this: ‘The neon rim of the the diner clock spun color into the dim, warm dining room; tints of red, blue and green color pooled on plates, like gravy.’”

She went home, and quickly jotted it down, and from that sentence a playlet emerged that she eventually expanded into a short story, set in Wells, that she sold in a bookstore there.



West Kennebunk author Cynthia Fraser Graves talks about her novel, ‘Dusk on Route 1,’ set in Wells, in a recent interview. Tammy Wells Photo

“People would ask when I’d expand on it,” she said, “They loved the story.”

So, over time she did. There was an early version, and now a revised edition, which was published by her imprint Androscoggin Press, this year. The novel is called “Dusk on Route 1.” It is a tale of a grief stricken widow, around 55 or 60 years old, who has a breakdown and moves in with her daughter in Wells. She gets lost in a blizzard on Christmas Eve — and the rest, well, you’ll have to read about it.

“It’s very, very local, and it took a long time to develop,” said Graves. She’d put it down for a couple of months, and then take it up again.

Graves calls it a love story, a tragedy, with magic and mystery and that “Maine feel.”

It is not her first book — her nonfiction work, “Never Count Crow,” came out in 2007. That one is about the sudden death of her husband, Eugene Graves, in 1994.

These days, Graves is working on another novel, this time about a character in “Dusk on Route 1,” Jimmy Casey, an officer with the Wells Police Department.

And if that weren’t enough to keep an author busy, she said she’s taking a blog she wrote about her year-long “conversation” with Henry David Thoreau and is transforming that into a book as well.

Graves said she waited until retirement before plunging headlong into the writing life. But there were moments while teaching at Kennebunk High School she wrote some material, usually poetry.

“I’d hear a poem in my head while driving to school and hoped I could remember it until I could get to a piece of paper,” she said.

Graves said she listens to music while writing, usually lyrical, instrumental pieces.

“(Music) opens the door to the world the characters live in,” she said.

When she's not writing, Graves teaches classes about her craft, usually while wintering in Florida, or gives talks at local libraries and other venues.

"Dusk on Route 1" is available at Remember the Maine, the gift shop of the Maine Diner, at Amazon and from the author.

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