



Two Fishing Tales, Two Love Stories

by Yvonne deSousa

For the past 63 years in Provincetown, the last Sunday in June has been dedicated to honoring fishermen.

The town celebrates the occupation upon which it was founded with a Mass at the Catholic church celebrated by the Bishop of Fall River, a ceremonial procession of marching bands, the Bishop himself, fishermen and their families holding banners representing their family vessel, and the statue St. Peter; carried on the shoulders of the hardworking men who toil the sea.

Following the procession on land, boats of the community sail, motor or row by the Bishop at the end of the town pier. As they pass, he blesses each for a safe and prosperous season.

The town's fishing ties run long and deep. It is for this reason that the celebration leading up to the Blessing of the Fleet is also filled with activities and events including boats races, parades, concerts, block parties, and food – lots of food.

This year, however, two local women have used their talents to honor the town's fishing story in their own special way. Unbeknownst to each other, Julianne Papetsas and J.J. Dutra each published books that came out last fall and detail the love story that is the life of a fishing family.

Julianne Papetsas was born and raised in Provincetown, graduating from the soon to be closed Provincetown High School in 2003. Like most local kids, Papetsas always appreciated her hometown and treasured the stories her grandmother and great aunts would tell her about what life was like in Provincetown when they were young. She collected these stories and began writing **Seraphine** in her junior year of college.

Seraphine is a fictional story of a Portuguese fisherman born on a crossing of the Atlantic, who lives by, works on, and raises his family with the sea. The protagonist spends his entire life on the tiny spit of land that separates the harbor and Cape Cod Bay from the ocean.

In her novel, Papetsas makes it clear that it is a collection of local tales she heard through the years, woven together in one character's story. It was not her intention to write an actual biography or a historical representation, but to write "something that many people could relate to and recognize, to capture the voice of Provincetown as it is our soul, and to capture the beauty of the sea."

In **Seraphine**, she has done just that, creating a work where one can find comfort in remembering a time when the world was simpler, hard work prevailed, and children could lose themselves in the wonders of the natural environment that surrounded their life by the water.

In writing about this one fictional fisherman, Papetsas has inadvertently written a love story, a story of a man's love for his family and love for the work he does.

As with many love stories, the novel includes a villain. The villain in **Seraphine** is the changing times, as the hero realizes he is no longer compatible with modern ways. The sea itself is the only constant this hero knows.

It is no coincidence then, that J.J. Dutra's nonfiction story of her fishing family, *Nautical Twilight*, is also a love story with a very clear villain.

Technically, J.J. Dutra is a wash-ashore by local standards with "honorary native" status. Arriving in town a few years after completing nursing school, with the hopes of making money with seasonal work, Dutra found more than just a decent income in the tourist season. She met, began dating, and fell in love with David Dutra, a local fisherman.

Many will tell you that in order to love a fisherman you must also love the sea and the life. It wasn't long before Dutra was smitten with the water. Soon, she was married and fishing with her husband. She worked as a nurse on land, but would often fish during her days off.

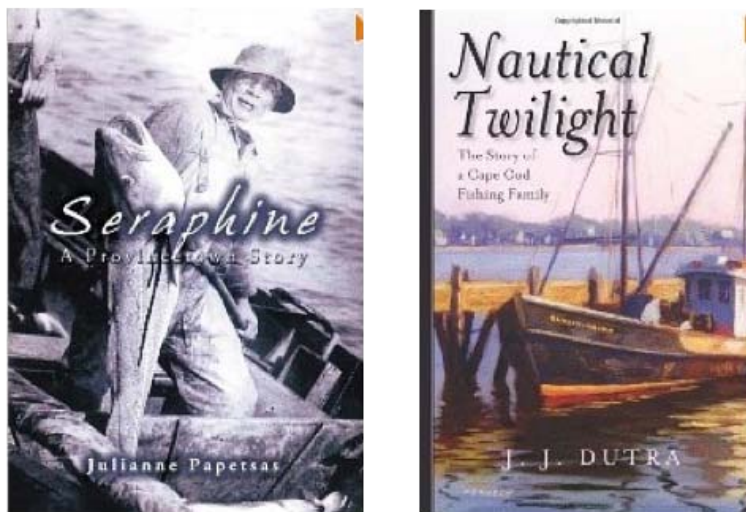
She tells the story of their life by using the vessels she and David owned and operated as a timeline. When they met, David was building the dory he named the "Fanny Parnel." Around the birth of their first son, the family bought and refitted the "Wildflower."

And with their second son came the "Richard and Arnold." This last vessel is still in operation after being hauled out this past winter for extensive work, including covering the wooden boat with a protective fiberglass layer.

The Dutrass have always understood that the life of a fisherman would never be easy, and would always require long, strenuous days without a dependable paycheck. But it is their life and they love it.

The villain in **Nautical Twilight** is the enormous mass of government regulations that claim to be instituted to protect the species, but have begun to wipe out small vessel fishing.

The irony is that with the continuous changes to regulations that make little or no sense, and the enormous, never-ending costs associated with maintaining the regulations, often only large boats that can quickly deplete the species are able to keep up.



Available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) & [BarnesandNoble.com](https://www.barnesandnoble.com)

Dutra has always loved writing. The motivation for **Nautical Twilight** came from the writing she was doing to government representatives, agencies, and newspapers.

"I was just so angry and passionate about what was going on that it felt like all I could do was write. I also had stories to tell and it felt like now was the time to put them on paper and let others know what was happening to our small fisherman," she explained.

Yet **Nautical Twilight** is not a political book as much as it is the actual story of trying to survive; a battle for survival being faced by fishing families in far too many locations. It is a battle being waged in Provincetown.

When this year's Blessing of the Fleet takes place, it is no longer celebrated solely to pray for the safety and prosperity of local boats.

Now prayers are offered for the survival of an industry and those who will fight to maintain this way of life. On that day, memories of ancestors who brought this love story to local families are also cherished. Thankfully, we have the work of Papetsas and Dutra to help keep our stories alive.

This year's Blessing of the Fleet will be held on June 24th.

Several activities in conjunction with the event begin on June 21st in a celebration known as the Provincetown Portuguese Festival.

For a full schedule please visit www.provincetownportuguesefestival.com

Yvonne deSousa has previously been published in CapeWomenOnline, the Provincetown Banner and the Cape Cod Times.

Her work has also been featured in MSWorld.com, Multiplesclerosis-relief.com and on Montel Williams MY MS Diary Facebook page.

Her [blog](#) uses humor to help promote healing for people affected by chronic illness.

She was born and raised in Provincetown.

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