

# Surfcasting For The Soul

by Member  
**Celeste Ferendo**



Stuck at home in the coldest season (I lost my job due to the virus) I've had more spare time than I've had since I was twelve. Since March I've refinished the stairs, built a chicken tractor, cleaned the closets and cabinets and... well... you know. We are all living this nightmare.

Looking out my window, watching the birds gracefully feeding on the seeds and suet I provide, I've had time to think about my life and the things that gave me joy and peace. Yes, my son, my work, my friends and family are included. But I'm an introvert. And the one outdoor activity that always brought me peace was fishing. Sitting by the shore with a line in the water was a time for quiet. It was a meditation.

When I was a little girl, I watched my father spear fish off the jetty in Avon, New Jersey near my home town. Along the rocks there were many men fishing with rods. I was fascinated.

My parents were always working and struggling with bills so I was pretty much on my own and very independent. Money problems created tension in the house so I spent a lot of time outdoors.

When I turned twelve, I took my birthday money, rode my bike into town and bought a rod, reel, and a few hooks and sinkers at a local discount store.

I started riding my bike several miles to that jetty and to a little bridge in Shark River Hills. There were bait stores along the way.

At age thirteen I often cooked for the family so if I had a good catch, I made dinner. I particularly liked blowfish, fluke and snappers. My Dad brought home the big fish like blues and bass. He would take my brother with him on the party boats while I was left to my own devices, riding my bike and fishing around the rocks, the inlets and the marinas.

But I didn't mind because those times alone by the ocean were the most peaceful of my youth. The hours passed so quickly and my mind was clear and free from worry. On a summers day I might fish for eight hours and no one ever asked me where I'd been. Those were different times indeed.

Then came high school and college and my mother's struggle with leukemia. I had to work my way through school starting at 16 and my fishing days ended abruptly. After she passed it was an uphill struggle to find my way and to work and finish my degrees in Art and Theater.

I spent the next 40 years as a costumer in New York show business and raised a wonderful son. It was tough and though I worked long hours I had to be frugal. There just wasn't any "spare time" to fish.

At 53, I met Lou. We started dating and one day he took me to a quiet beach on Long Island. He brought his tackle along. He put his spike in the sand and a line in the water. After a while he went back to the car for something. I noticed a slight movement of his rod. I jumped up and lifted the rod. I felt the tug and started reeling in. After a very short battle I landed my first striped bass. It wasn't very big but for some reason I said out loud "This is my mythical fish."

I don't know why I said that. I'm not even sure what I meant. But I did know that an old addiction kicked in and tomorrow I was going shopping for my own rod and reel.

Lou grew up in North Providence and every summer we drove to Rhode Island to visit his old friends and my cousins (my grandfather grew up in Westerly), the car packed with a little clothing and a LOT of fishing gear.

We started looking for places to retire. In 2014 we moved to Tiverton and I began my love affair with Rhode Island.

I began teaching and mentoring locally. I work with the High School drama club. I sew for friends and clients, but best of all I fish. Alone. On the beach, off the rocks, even at the Canal. There is something about it... something beautifully solitary and peaceful.

Once a friend who knew I was successful at fishing called to ask if I would take him and his guy friends with me for a day of fishing. These friends were nice, but they were clearly out for a party. There would be beer and food and chatter. An introverted fisherman's idea of hell. I guiltily declined, but I did point them toward the fish.

You see, I don't fish for sport, only for food and for the quiet. I fish so I know that my catch was once wild and free and not raised in a crowded fish farm. And it wasn't caught in a huge net with thousands of other fish, many of which were thrown back dead because they weren't marketable.

I respect my catch and I release gently when it's not a keeper. Most importantly, I faithfully follow all of the fishing rules so the next generation can fish and perhaps even revel in that same cathartic meditation I did and find peace and an appreciation of life itself on Rhode Island's beautiful shores.