

AMERICAN SAUDADE, INC



SS Lucy Evelyn – Captained by John Costa (my great uncle) One of three sailing vessels owned and operated by my family. The last of a long tradition of the Brava Packets. (circa 1940's) Visiting New Bedford, MA

Opp's Manual & Guide

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MY JOURNEY TO SAUDADE

My sailing journey began early; I first stepped onto the water with my dad, teaching me to sail a Jolly Roger 8' dinghy when I was ten. By the time I reached twelve, I was confidently sailing Narragansett Bay solo, on my 12" O'Day Widgeon that my sister affectionally named Yellowbelly, a skill honed during countless summer days at our family summer home at Rocky Point Beach. At fourteen, I had the incredible opportunity to build a Herreshoff-designed 20-foot sailboat alongside my grandfather. That boat still makes waves today, serving as a parade float for a Portuguese club in Pawtucket, RI.

My passion for the sea led me to join the U.S. Navy, where I served on nuclear submarines and as a Navy Diver. After transferring to the Naval Reserves in 1980, fueled by my love for diving, I pursued a commercial diving career in that field. I enrolled in the Commercial Diving Institute, and shortly after, I was hired by General Electric/Mobile Oil, a joint venture, as an Engineer/Diver. Having already obtained my marine engineer license and with my experience in nuclear submarines, I was well-prepared for the challenge. I worked onboard the Diving Support Vessel (DSV) Explorer off the Georges Banks, exploring oil and natural gas for a few years while balancing my studies. While ashore, I was involved in yacht sales, brokerage, and delivery and sailing offshore, like the Fagawi Race, the Newport to Bermuda Races, and yacht club PHRF regattas. This experience ultimately allowed me to sail with the S2 Yacht Factory Racing Team. While living in Florida, I contributed to offshore powerboat racing by building boat engines for the Force 10 Racing Team.

My commitment to serving my country was reignited when I was recalled to active duty with the Navy during Operation Desert Shield/Storm. This experience revitalized my deep love for ships and the sea and led me to join the Military Sealift Command (MSC). I continued my maritime career as a marine engineer in the commercial sector, culminating in an extensive professional career that spanned over 40 years.

Recently, I have also been sharing my knowledge and experience as an instructor in Naval Science and Engineering at the NROTC programs at Harvard University and MIT. Teaching the next generation of maritime and engineering enthusiasts has been a fulfilling chapter in my career, allowing me to pass on the wisdom I've gained through years of marine engineering, ship, sailing, and service.

In the gentle embrace of a new year, the yearning for adventure and the sea beckoned me again. For years, the dream of sailing serene blue waters had flickered like a guiding star in my heart. Having visited the Cape Verde Islands in the late '90s for the United Nations World Food Program, I sincerely appreciated their beauty. Additionally, during a layover in the Azores en route to Saudi Arabia to join a ship on the Red Sea, I was reminded of the allure of these enchanting islands. As

I envisioned the sun-kissed shores and the uncharted waters stretching across the Atlantic from the majestic Azores to the crystal-clear waters of Cape Verde and beyond, I was propelled into action, determined to turn that dream into reality.

The year was 2024 when I embarked on a quest not merely for a vessel but for a tangible means to fulfill my lifelong aspirations of offshore cruising. My search was driven by visions of silver sails against endless blue horizons, and it led me through a myriad of options. I meticulously evaluated dozens of boats, each with a story and a promise. Ultimately, my journey brought me to five remarkable vessels, each meriting a closer look.

The second was a captivating Formosa 41 Ketch/Cutter I encountered in the quaint town of South Freeport, Maine. This boat, well-regarded as a bluewater cruiser, caught my eye. The journey to South Freeport tested the limits of my anticipation; a three-hour drive led me to the shores where dreams docked and hopes set sail. Block Island Maritime Funding Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to resurrecting forgotten vessels, owned the boat. Their mission involved receiving donated boats, restoring them to their former glory, and selling them to fund other maritime-centric initiatives.

Over the next few months, I fully engaged in discussions and negotiations surrounding the vessel. During this period, a transformative realization began taking shape: I envisioned turning this purchased sailboat into something more significant: a nonprofit organization dedicated to fulfilling my maritime dreams and empowering others within the community. This epiphany shifted my pursuit from a solitary vision into a collective journey. Unfortunately, the negotiations for the Formosa did not achieve the desired result, so I continued my search. My previous experiences greatly influenced my motivation to establish American Saudade Inc. Before founding ASI, I founded a nonprofit called Veterans Strategic Legal Resources, Inc. (VSLR) in 2008 after completing a certificate in paralegal studies and training in maritime law. While at the VA hospital, I recognized that veterans needed legal representation, which inspired me to create VSLR to provide pro bono legal services to those who served our country.

As my quest for the perfect vessel continued, I finally discovered a remarkable Pacific Seacraft-Crealock 37, in the town of, New Bedford, MA the town of my birth. This sailing vessel stood out for its beauty and impressive bluewater capabilities, making it an ideal choice for embarking on oceanic journeys. Renowned for its sturdy construction and sea-kind design, the Crealock 37 is a vessel built to withstand the rigors of ocean sailing, providing security and comfort to those aboard. Its spacious interior offers a haven, embodying everything a sailor could wish for in a long-range cruising yacht.

After thoughtful contemplation and research into the essence of my mission, I settled on a name that echoed this journey of aspiration and legacy: "American Saudade." The term "Saudade embodies a profound longing, a bittersweet nostalgia for what is lost, and a yearning for what is yet to come. It encapsulated my dreams, my family's heritage, and the new chapter I was inviting others to join.

Thus, the seeds of American Saudade Inc. were sown. What began as a personal quest became a mission rooted in community, passion, and history. The sailing vessel American Saudade emerged not merely as a means of travel but as an invitation on a boat that would carry not just my dreams but the dreams of others, fostering camaraderie, exploration, and a renewed appreciation for the wonders of the sea. Together, we would navigate the world, our sails filled with hope and our hearts buoyed by the spirit of adventure.

My family's lineage as sailors runs deep, intricately woven into the fabric of my identity, and with a rich history of ship ownership from the 1800s, transporting people and cargo from the far reaches of the world, my great-grandfathers, grandfathers, father, numerous uncles, and countless cousins devoted their lives to the sea. They forged a path through the waves as part of the Cape Verde Brava Packet Trade and the U.S. Merchant Marine, carrying forward a legacy I had, perhaps unconsciously, embraced. Recognizing this profound connection to my ancestors and acknowledging my role as the last professional seaman in my family renewed my commitment to honor their spirit by ensuring that more individuals could experience the joy and freedom of the sea and sailing.

As I reflect on my journey from sailing Narraganset Bay to building sailboats with my grandfather to serving on nuclear submarines to visiting over 43 countries on ships of various size and complexity to leading a nonprofit supporting veterans, and now to educating future leaders, I see the threads of passion and commitment that have woven together to shape my vision for American Saudade Inc. I am excited to blend my love for the sea and sailing with community empowerment, creating a legacy that honors my family's maritime history and the spirit of service that has guided my life. Together, we will navigate the world with our sails filled with hope, inviting others to join us on this remarkable journey.

"A good sailor doesn't get themselves into situations where they have to prove they are a good sailor."

Vince DaSilva

