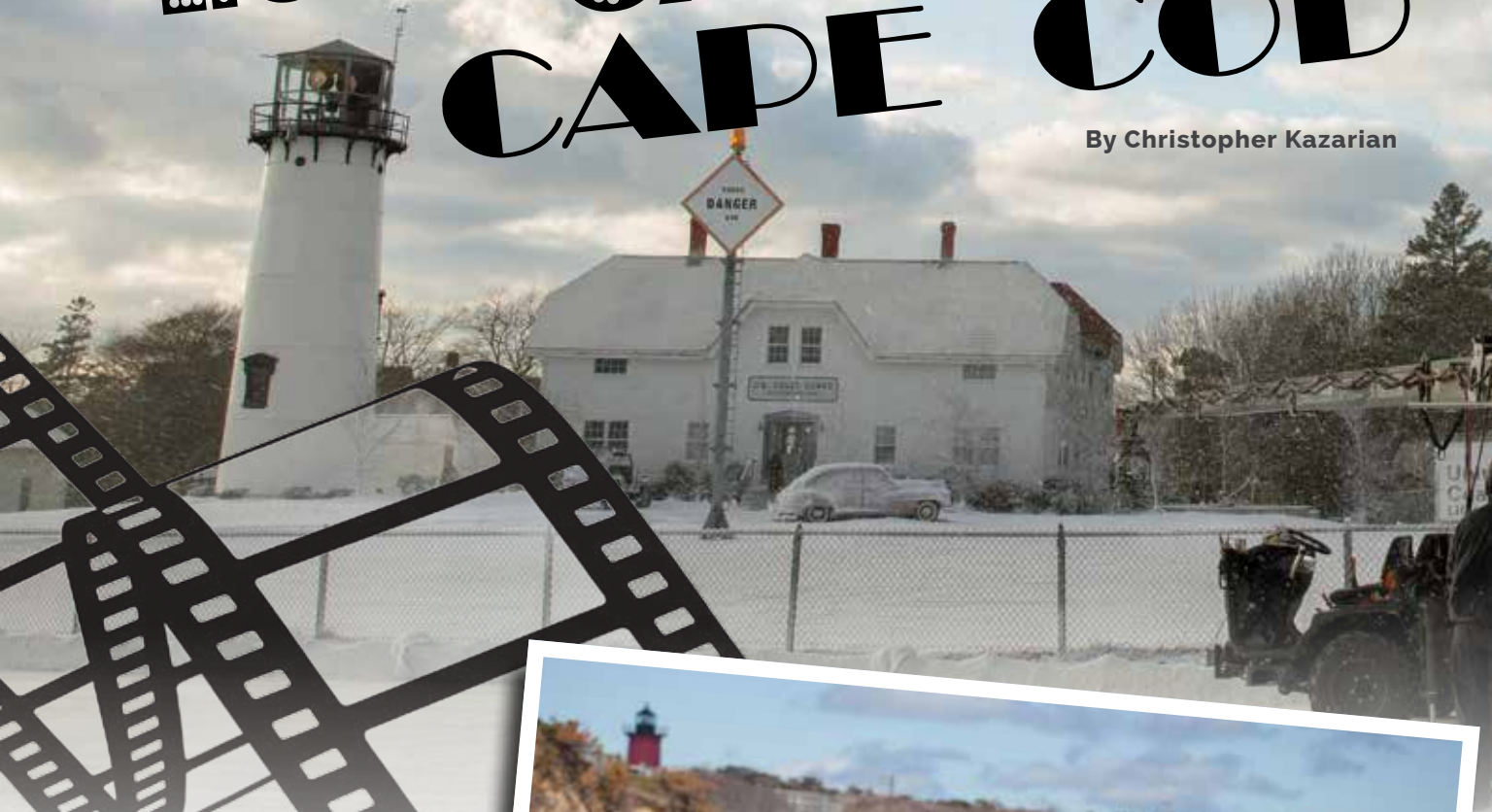


LIGHTS CAMERA CAPE COD

By Christopher Kazarian



Right: Celia Imrie (left, in the role of Joan Erikson) and Karen Allen (right, in the role of Joan Anderson) walk toward Nauset Light during a scene from YEAR BY THE SEA. The stunning National Seashore is why filmmaker Alexander Janko chose to shoot on Cape Cod.



Of all the art forms, there is a power to film unlike any other. Movies make us laugh, cry and think. They inspire us to great heights. And they give us different perspectives on the world we live in.



When done right, films evoke a sense of place. Think “Field of Dreams” and Iowa. Or “Rocky” and Philadelphia. Or most any Woody Allen movie and New York City. In recent years, Boston has moved prominently onto the Hollywood map thanks to films like “Gone Baby Gone,” “The Town” and “Black Mass” that have proudly showcased our Massachusetts neighbor to the north.

For the most part, Cape Cod has escaped the spotlight (“Jaws” notwithstanding) when it comes to moviemaking. That is until a year ago, when two separate film crews made their way over the canal and set their sights on a section of New England often thought of only as a vacation destination. Those crews weren’t here to work on their tans. They were here to tell stories that will hopefully move audiences and perhaps inspire visits to Cape Cod, for the first time or the hundredth time.

“The Cape is a character in this movie,” says Alexander Janko, the director of “A Year by the Sea,” which was shot in the spring of 2015 in Wellfleet, Orleans, Chatham and Eastham. “It really is, from the standpoint that we shot Nauset Lighthouse, we shot seals, we shot Oyster River, we shot Indian Neck Beach, all the topography. Even when we were shooting interiors, we made sure we did it with the Cape in the background.”

It is that setting that inspired “A Year by the Sea” author Joan Anderson to come here nearly two decades ago when she was at a crossroads in her life. She was an empty nester; her two sons were grown and married, and her husband had accepted a job out of state.

Above: Photo credit: Claire Folger, ©Disney Enterprises, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Shot on location in Quincy and Chatham, Massachusetts, Walt Disney Pictures’ heroic thriller, THE FINEST HOURS, is the true story of the greatest small boat rescue in Coast Guard History.

AN ESCAPE TO CAPE COD

Instead of following him, Anderson decided to relocate from Nyack, New York, to Cape Cod, spending a year by the sea, like the title of the book she would eventually write detailing her spiritual journey.

“Cape Cod to me is a sanctuary,” Anderson says. “There is still so much left on the Cape that is untouched. If you know how to find it, you can have a spiritual, sacred experience...it puts your mind in a real situation where clear thoughts can come through and you can indeed claim your life back and change your life.”

And that is what Cape Cod did for Anderson, whose memoir about her year-long experience became a New York Times bestseller and eventually made its way into Janko’s hands.

A film composer by trade, Janko has credits that include “My Big Fat Greek Wedding.” He had always wanted to write a movie he could also score, and while reading “A Year by the Sea,” Janko had an aha moment. “I had to make this movie,” he says.

Much of Janko’s passion had to do with the book’s underlying message of self-discovery. “I think encouraging people, but women in particular, to really go inside and think about their lives and think about what they are doing is a good thing,” he says.



YEAR BY THE SEA co-stars (left to right) S. Epata Merkerson, Karen Allen, and Celia Imrie toast to friendship while overlooking Nauset Harbor. The movie chronicles one woman's journey as she seeks to reclaim who she was before marriage and children.

The primary character in the film, of course, is Anderson, who is played by veteran actress Karen Allen (“Raiders of the Lost Ark”). The role was one that Allen, who has a 25-year-old son, Nicholas, instantly connected with. “Suddenly, when your kids are gone, a profound shift takes place,” she explained. “The beautiful thing Joan Anderson did with this book is that she portrays a woman who basically kind of owns what is going on in a very primary way and goes about finding a way to deeply explore that next phase of her life.”

Her character is closely aligned with another, inanimate one – Cape Cod. “She comes there to get free of this constriction of life,” Allen said. “There is something about the sea and the experience of living life near the water that can be very, very profound. It did have an influence on her and had a very calming, very healing, transitional feeling, where it helped her explore some of the inner material she was working with.”



Photo credit: Claire Folger, ©Disney Enterprises, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Caption: Ray Sybert (Casey Affleck) and Tchuda Southerland (Josh Stewart) struggle to keep their ship, the SS Pendleton, from sinking in Disney's THE FINEST HOURS, the heroic action-thriller presented in Digital 3D (TM) and IMAX (c) 3D based on the extraordinary true story of the most daring rescue mission in the history of the Coast Guard.



YEAR BY THE SEA writer/director Alexander Janko discusses a scene with lead actor Karen Allen. Best known for her roles in RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, STARMAN, and THE PERFECT STORM, Allen plays Cape author Joan Anderson in Janko's film adaptation of "A Year by the Sea," Anderson's New York Times best-selling memoir.

THE OCEAN'S FURY

While the sea has a soothing effect in "A Year by the Sea," it is just the opposite in the Disney blockbuster "The Finest Hours," which details the Coast Guard's heroic 1952 rescue of 32 men aboard the SS Pendleton, which had split in half during a February nor'easter.

That daring rescue started in Chatham when a four-man crew skippered by Bernard Webber faced the ocean's fury aboard the CG36500, a 36-foot lifeboat originally built in 1946. Now 70 years later, that boat – since restored and which resides peacefully in Orleans' Rock Harbor during the summer months – is about to receive its proper due thanks to "The Finest Hours."

"We're already starting to see a big increase in the number of people wanting to see the boat because they have read the book," said Eastham's Richard Ryder, operations manager for the 36500, referencing the eponymous novel written by Hyannis native Casey Sherman and Michael J. Tougas.

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Shooting for the film, which features a star-studded cast that includes Chris Pine, Casey Affleck and Eric Bana, kicked off in September 2014 and ended three months later in Chatham's Stage Harbor, one of several Massachusetts locations visited during the production.

"It was a perfect place to shoot this," said producer Dorothy Aufiero. "I began going to Chatham once we got the rights to the book. You know there is a charm to it that you can't find anywhere else. It is so picturesque and it has the smells and the sea air. It is quaint. It is just old New England and has a nice feel to it."

With the movie premiering at the end of January 2016, that quaint little town on Cape Cod has become a little more visible. Aufiero said if this movie is successful, it will likely put the 36500 on the map.

Beyond that, the Boston-based producer hoped "The Finest Hours" gives the Coast Guard the attention it deserves. "This was such an incredible story what these four Coast Guard guys did. Back then the motto was: 'You have to go out, but you don't have to come back,'" Aufiero said. "I think this movie shows there are really genuinely good people out there. It is a positive story and it has a positive message."

And that Hollywood story is one that starts and ends here on Cape Cod. 



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