

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL

Memórias – Preserving the Stories of Lowell's Portuguese Community

Oral History Interview with John J. Leite, February 20, 2016

Biographical Note:

Born in Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1933; parents from Graciosa, Azores, immigrated to the U.S. ca. 1926; both parents worked in textile mills in Manchester and Lowell; father a loom fixer, mother a spinner; they settled permanently in Lowell ca. 1936; members of St. Anthony Catholic Church, they had three daughters and one son, John J. who was educated in Lowell's public schools; his father was a trombonist who played in and managed Lowell's Portuguese Colonial Band; Mr. Leite joined the band as boy, playing the trumpet and later the trombone; after serving in the U.S. Army in post-war Europe, he returned home and matriculated at Lowell State Teachers' College; after graduating from the college he taught in the area's public schools, performed as a professional trombonist in well-known local bands, and formed his own band; beginning in the 1970s Mr. Leite became secretary/treasurer of the Lowell local of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), AFL-CIO, and after its merger with other locals in 1995, he was elected president of AFM Local 300.

Scope and Contents:

Interview conducted by local historian Mehmed Ali; focuses on John Leite's family background, growing up in Lowell's Portuguese neighborhood "Back Central" in the 1930s and 1940s, activities at St. Anthony Catholic Church, Portuguese music and musicians in Lowell, and Lowell's changing musical culture. There is a great deal of material on the personalities and musical playing styles of a number of prominent Portuguese musicians in Lowell from the 1950s into the 1990s. [For more on John J. Leite and his role in the American Federation of Musicians, Local 300, see "Oral History with John Leite, 1999," interview by Gray Fitzsimons, Historian, Lowell National Historical Park]

INFORMANT: JOHN LEITE

INTERVIEWER: MEHMED ALI

J=John

A=Ali

A: Okay, this is interview with John Leite February 20, 2016. And John, thanks again for being willing to sit down with us.

J: Oh, anytime. Sitting down with you is a pleasure.

A: [Chuckles] So John first a little bit of background information. When and where were you born?

J: Manchester, New Hampshire. (A: Okay) March 31, 1933. Born on 98 Westbrook Street, which is a four-story tenement block on Westbrook Street. The building is still there. They were going to have (--) They had a red X on it for a while. So I took a picture of it. And I went up with my camera and right to the address, 98 Westbrook, and I took a picture of that right, in case they were going to knock it down. Then I find out later they developed it.

A: They redid it over?

J: Instead they developed it into a, you know, more housing. (A: Okay) But yah, I was born there, not in the hospital. Back in the days you were born wherever you lived. And my mom was not healthy enough to breast feed me. So Mrs. MacIsaac, how could you ever forget a name like that, was my wet nurse. (A: Wow) She lived in one of the buildings behind.

A: And that was much of a Portuguese community in Manchester?

J: Yah, because of the mills. (A: Okay) You know my (--) You got to understand that my (--) I'm the youngest of four. I had three older sisters. The first two sisters, Wilhelmina, the oldest, who was nineteen years older than I was right; then twelve years nothing, then Mary. Those two were born in Lowell (A: Okay) because they were working in the Lowell mills. My dad was a loom fixer. He could fix anything. My mom first started off as a bobbin girl, then a spinner, and then a weaver in the Lowell mills. Then the business moved up to the Amoskeag up in New Hampshire. So they had to move wherever the work was right? They moved up there into that tenement building and Helen was born up there. She's the one just above me, four years-five years older than I am. We were both born there. Then the work changed again and we come back down here. So I was three years old when I came to Lowell.

A: Okay.

J: I was born in Manchester. Age three I came back to Lowell, or the family came back to Lowell.

A: Now do you know which mills your parents work before they went up to Manchester?

J: I think they worked in them all but the Amoskeag was the largest. (A: Okay) You know back in the day you worked wherever the work was you know. And if one mill got a little slow you got a job in another one. You know, they were getting paid dirt money so they had to go wherever they could make the most money to support ultimately four kids. Two before they moved up there and they came back with two more.

A: And what about the mills down when they moved back down. Do you know which places they worked at?

J: Silk Mill, what they called the Silk Mills. That's where the Lowell Historical Park office is now, Market Street, Mill No. 1, Mill No. 2.

A: Okay.

J: And worked mostly there when they came back.

A: Now we're going to try to focus on Portuguese community. (J: Right) So I'll ask a bunch of these kinds of questions.

J: Sure.

A: Were there certain names for, for example the Silk Mills that were derived in the Portuguese language? So let me just give you an example. So the Greeks used to call the Boott Mills, they used to call it [Tabooty]. And I was wondering if the Portuguese called it anything different.

J: Silk Mill. That was the Silk Mill.

A: Now did your parents speak Portuguese to you when you were growing up?

J: Oh yes

A: Okay. And where were they from originally?

J: Graciosa, Azores.

A: Both of them?

J: Both of them. My mother was from the Praia, which is the beach. And my father was [from] the Fonte do Mato. That's like on a little hill, you know, a little hill. Graciosa is the second smallest of the archipelago of nine islands of the Azores. So it's really tiny, you know a small island. But my parents were not friendly there before they came over here.

A: No?

J: They knew one another because it was just a small island, but they lived in two different Freguesias. Those are parishes okay, but I mean they knew one another. You know when they came here they were, I don't know how old my dad was when he came here. They didn't come together. My dad was the baby of nine children. The two next oldest were twin boys. They took my father to Brazil.

A: Really?

J: And my father hated it there.

A: Why is that?

J: I have no idea. All he would say was he hated living there in Brazil. Probably he lived in a favela [Brazilian-Portuguese meaning shanty town or slum] or something, who knows, you know. I don't know. He didn't want to talk about it, so one of those brothers paid for my father's passage to come up to the United States. Where did they go? They came to Lowell because most of the Graciosan people came to Lowell, Mass. [Massachusetts]. Because word of mouth, "Hey there's work in the factory." You know, "You have to work hard but it's a job." And so then he came back here and got into the Portuguese community on Back Central Street, Saint Anthony's Church. They re-met one another. They got married they were young kids. They were like eighteen and nineteen, you know, and they had my sister Wilhelmina like almost right away. And then [whistles] twelve years, then Mary four years, Helen five years, four and a half to five years me. I was my father's prize.

A: Now you talked about the people from Gracioso coming to Lowell.

J: Graciosa!

A: Graciosa, I apologize.

J: There's not an "o" at the end. It's an "a" at the end.

A: Thank you. Did (--) The other islands, did people go to other cities, kind of concentrated from other islands?

J: Yes. Fall River and New Bedford are mostly Sao Miguel. [Speaks in Portuguese] It's a different dialect, totally different dialect you know.

A: Really, okay.

J: And you know every island has a dialect. It's like here, you know, you go to different parts of Lowell. You know you go to Pawtucketville, right. [Pokes fun at the French-Canadians] The Pawtucketville over there, the French one there, the Canuck. "I'm a Canuck me." "Throw the baby some candy up sneeze." You know what I mean? [A: Chuckles] You know, and then you get the different parts and different dialects like every place in the world.

A: Now within Lowell there were even some different groups representing different facets of the Portuguese community, correct?

J: I don't know what you mean by groups.

A: Well like wasn't there also people from the Madeira?

J: Oh sure, of course. Yah, the Madeirans, the Madeirans they settled in the Lowell area. They also were mill workers too. There were not as many Madeirans as they call them, as there were from Graciosa in Lowell.

A: Okay.

J: Ultimately more came, but they never became a greater number than the Graciosa people. (A: Okay) Okay, for whatever reason I don't know. Madeirans also I think went to I don't know, I think it was Southern Mass. [Massachusetts] someplace, maybe New Bedford. I'm not really sure of that.

A: Okay.

J: Because of fishing you know, and stuff, the fishing industry was big in New Bedford. You know the whaling and all that, the whalers and all of that stuff, but I don't know. There were never as many. There didn't seem to be as many, you know, Madeirans as there were Graciosans. And ultimately a few of the other ones drifted in, but mostly Graciosa from Lowell.

A: Okay. Do you remember other kind of, what were the other groups represented?

J: Well there were groups. There were others from other islands, but I'm repeating myself now. Graciosa had the greatest number that came here. Mainland Portugal, they didn't come here.

A: No.

J: No. No. I never knew any from mainland Portugal growing up.

A: And what about anybody from Brazil that you met when you were younger?

J: No, not back then man, no. No. Now there are more Brazilians in Lowell than there ever were.

A: Right.

J: But I mean back then no. I mean my two uncles went to Brazil. They stayed there, you know.

A: Good. Just checking, making sure that's [tape recorder] working. And then what about in, within the city? Um, obviously the south end, Back Central neighborhood was the kind of core community.

J: Right.

A: But did Portuguese live in any other parts of the city?

J: Yah, Swede Village.

A: Okay.

J: You know where that is?

A: I do, off of Gorham Street?

J: Right across from Edson Cemetery. (A: Okay) Bowden Street, there were quite a few families there. When we moved from Manchester, I think the first move was Bowden Street. We lived in Mr. Rebello's house. We lived at 58 Bowden Street. It was a two-tenement, right? He lived in 56 and we lived in 58 upstairs. You know and we lived in his home. My dad rented you know, space, the upstairs. And he had a vineyard in the back. And I used to help him with his, you know, with the grapes and all of that stuff. He was a nice guy, you know. And the first (--) Once I got big enough to really help him he said, "I'm going to buy you a present anyplace you want. Anything you want, right? I said, "I need a sled." I didn't have a sled. So he took me down, and I don't remember the name of the store, but you know on Merrimack Street between Shattuck and Dutton, now there's the park with the old train station with the arch thing. Just to the left of that, that little store, not the subway but next to the subway, that little store has been a million different things. That used to be a toy store. (A: Okay) And they had all of these sleds hanging on the wall, right. And I'm looking, I'm saying, "I would like that one," right? And the salesman says, "Oh, that's the most expensive." And I said, "Well maybe I shouldn't take that," you know. He said, "No, no, no, you picked it! You picked it. You can have it." This was all in Portuguese of course. "You picked it you can have it. I told you I'd buy you whatever you want," right? My father found out it was the most expensive. He says, "You tell him to take it back. You tell him to take it back. That was too much money." I don't know how much it was, you know. And Mr. Rebello said, "Look, my money, I bought it for your son. That's the end of the story." And my father said, "All right. All right. All right," you know. It was a Donald Duck sled. It had Donald Duck and the three little ducks on the middle panel. I thought that was a gas man!

A: Roughly how old were you?

J: Six, seven, (A: Okay) something like that, six or seven. Around that age, six, seven, eight, something like that, because I was going to the Wiede Street School. It's no longer there. It was on Gorham Street, corner of Wiede. W- I think it's [spells] W-I-E-D-E. I think that's the name, how you spelled it.

A: Okay.

J: I was small. I don't remember. And I went to that school until the fourth grade. Fourth grade my sister Wilhelmina, my oldest one, had purchased a two-tenement house on A Street, on lower A Street, (A: Umhm) one house up from Powell, okay. And so they had the upstairs tenement available. So we all moved while Mina who had her family lived downstairs. By now she's got kids too. So I became an uncle at age three, you know. The oldest of hers was Dolores. She became a nurse, married a doctor. He later died and she's retired now and stuff. And then the next one down was Gabe. Gabe Gouveia, right. He was there the night of the interview stuff, right, and he wore a fedora. He likes to wear all these fedoras. And Bill, the next one, the youngest brother who unfortunately now has Parkinson's, he was the one in the wheelchair at the Portuguese talks in the Boot Mills. The other kid in the wheelchair was my cousin, my second cousin (A: Yah) Fernando Barreiro. They are younger than I am, you know. But anyway they were living there and we lived upstairs. And that was fourth grade. I was in the fourth grade when I, when we moved to, to A Street.

A: Where did you go to Laura Lee School?

J: No, no, no, I went to the Lincoln School.

A: Oh the Lincoln, okay.

J: Fourth grade. The old Lincoln School!

A: Sure.

J: You know they tore it down. They tore it. They cut the top off first. They had a big huge roof, very high roof and at some point the city cut that off and made a flat roof out of it. I don't know for what reason, and now they have a brand new Lincoln School. My fourth grade teacher was Miss Keegan, tall blonde. I was ten years old. I fell in love first time in my life, right? She was gorgeous, right? I used to clap the erasers outside for her and I used to hang around and clean up, right? Clean the baskets. Do everything for her. And then thirty some odd years later I'm in a store. I think it was the old Grants, right? (A: Yup) And I hear, "Oh John," This high pitch, "Oh John!" And I turned around and said, "Miss Keegan!" She says, "You remember me." I said, "I've been in love with you for all these years!" [Laughs] "For over thirty years! Where have you been in my life!" Oh she was a sweetheart. She was just (--) She was just as beautiful. She had kind of graying hair now, you know, but gorgeous, just gorgeous. She never married.

A: Yah, one of the teachers that couldn't get married if you wanted to keep your, you know, your vocation.

J: Yah, but I mean anyhow. So anyhow I went there and then I went to the Morey. It was a junior high back then. (A: Umhm) Seven, eight and nine, grade seven, eight and nine. And then I had a bunch of kids that I still remember, the Lefebvre brothers. The grandfather owned the Lowell Cover Rubber Thread over where McDonald's is now on

Plain Street. And Dick Howe, the former Mayor who passed away last year, right? We went up to the ninth grade. And ninth grade there was a graduation like, just like high school.

A: No kidding.

J: Yah. And I had a trumpet. I had to play a trumpet solo. Doris Fine was the pianist. Some names you never forget. This was a long time ago man. Miss Doris Fine, she was a classical pianist. And I worked on this Solo – Columbia Polka with Mr. Giblin, John J. Giblin. He was a Lowell High School band master. He always wore a uniform, and white uniform with the braids, the gold braids. (A: Really?) He was a very proud man. He played Cornet.

A: Did it have epaulets?

J: Oh yah! And he had a tongue like a snake. Oh could he tongue. Oh my God! And I used to sit next to him. And he sat there, I used to sit here. If I missed a note he'd give me a noogie like this, [makes sound], in that knee, right? And I'd come out limping. My father would take me there. I'd come out limping. "You didn't practice enough!" I said, "I'm practicing two and a half hours a night, Dad." "Make it three hours." Right! And then I finally learned not to come out limping, right. But I mean he was a wonderful teacher, just a wonderful teacher. I loved the guy, right. And anyhow, so he got me to do this Columbia Polka. [Sounds out music notes]. Pretty darn good for ninth grade, right. And anyhow so I got through that and at the end it was a high A. And I'm saying oh, that note I can't miss. No matter how great I play if I blow that one I'm dead in the water, right? So I got that [sounds out music notes], and I hit it so great I wasn't going to let it go! I was going to die first, right? And Doris Fine is like this, you know, when are you going to come off it, right? I held it and held it and finally went [sounds out music notes]. And she went Ta Da! (Piano Chord)

A: And this was a performance for what?

J: For my junior high graduation. 9th grade.

A: Oh, oh, for the graduation.

J: Yah!

A: Let me take you back to Bowden Street. Now was this area semi-rural at that time or was it fully developed?

J: No, it had mostly two-tenement houses. There were a couple. There was one on the corner. Dowd owned it. This family named Dowd. They were there for years, right? That was the first big house on the left. On the right, I forget what was on the right, the first one, but then there were two-tenement houses all the way down the street, all double-deckers. And that's before the development at the back, you know.

A: Which became Shaughnessy Terrace? Are you talking about that?

J: Yah, before that, even before that. Now there are condos on Bowden Street.

A: Oh right.

J: But they're way down in the end.

A: Right.

J: Shaughnessy Terrace and then you go over where Julian Steele Project was, and they tore that down. Back then over there, if you go down Bowden Street, take a right. I forget the street, and a left, and Mr. Andrews, he was a Portuguese guy. (A: Yah?) Andrews Oil (A: Okay) right? And he had an aviary at the back of his house with birds from all over the world.

A: Really?

J: They were gorgeous birds from all over the world. And he had a parrot upstairs. The living place was upstairs, right? So I used to get the money, cash to pay for the oil. So my father gave me a little brown envelope. Remember they used to have brown envelopes in the bank. You know if you got cash they'd put them in brown envelopes, right? And so I used to walk there. And I'd ring the bell and the parrot would say, "Come on up, come on up!" This is the truth, right? And I'd go up the stairs and, "Got the money, got the money?" [Both laughing] Nobody would be home, right? The door was unlocked, right? "Get the money, get the money!" Said, "Okay, okay, calm down, here's the money!" "Enough! Enough!" I said, "Yes, yes, everything we owe. It's right in the envelope." "Okay, bye!" This is a true story. You can't make this stuff up man, right? Oh Jesus! So funny man, but Mr. Andrews had a sixteen cylinder Cadillac Convertible.

A: Ooh! So was he considered well-to-do within the Portuguese community?

J: Oh very well to do! In front of Saint Anthony's Church, right, if you picture it now, you look at the church, now of course they have that big parking lot to the right, but to the left there's a driveway coming out. So you could go all the way around, right? Mr. Andrew's would park his car, right, blocking that driveway. That was Mr. Andrew's spot. Nobody ever dared park there, right, that's Mr. Andrew's spot. He wore a fedora, beautiful suits. His wife wore fancy hats with the big plumes and all that kind of stuff, but they were very, very nice people. They weren't punky you know.

A: Pretentious.

J: No, no, they were just nice Portuguese people.

A: Yeah. Now were there Portuguese, now you know, the kind of local laurels. Of course every Portuguese family kept a little farm and grew grapevines et cetera, but was there Portuguese families that actually had larger farms that would feed (--)

J: Joao Maria. I forget his last name. They call him Joao Maria out in Tewksbury where 495 is now. (A: Okay) He had a huge farm, right, and Avila's Farm over where Chelmsford High School is. (A: Okay) I worked there as a kid. My father decided at age ten or eleven. I don't know how old I was. He says, "No more free summers. All of us work, the rest of us work all year." He took me up to Avila, right, the old man, this was her second husband. And that's where Chelmsford High School is now, okay. He put me up there and he said, "You work the summer. You don't have to pay him." So Sonny, the son, the youngest son and I were about the same age, right? We used to do the, you know, pick out all the fava beans, all that stuff, right. We did all the farming you know? We ran the tractors. We had to stand up because we were too short to sit down to run them.

A: What did OSHA have to say about that? [Laughs]

J: OSHA, there was no such thing as OSHA. Nobody knew what OSHA was, right? And so you just did it, right? Sonny still owns that little "V" there where Graniteville Road goes to the right and Old Westford Road goes to the left.

A: And there's a couple of old horses there or something?

J: Yah, well the old horse finally died. (A: Okay) That sway back was so far down. He finally died. He got another horse, but Sonny still owns it. The town has been trying to buy that and he will not sell it. He lives on Davis Road now, (A: Okay) off to the left. He has a house down in there with a big barn in the back. He won't sell that little piece of land. But anyhow that's where I worked. And yah, he had a huge farm. That was, everything where the Chelmsford High School is now, the football field, soccer field, everything, that was all his farmland. (A: Wow) It was a huge farm.

And there's Joao Maria in Tewksbury, near Clark Road as I remember. That somehow for some reason sticks in my brain, Clark Road.

A: Well Clark Road is the one that runs in front of Stadium Plaza.

J: Yah, yah, it was on Clark Road, somewhere off of Clark Road someplace up there, and where 495 crosses and all of that. Those were the two biggest ones that I remember.

A: And were those people from Graciosa?

J: Joao Maria was. I don't know if Avila was. He might have been a Madeiran. Now don't forget this is her second husband. So I don't remember who the first was, I was too young to remember.

A: Now what about, there was a little group down kind of closer to the mills. Not in Back Central, but down on Tremont Street, down near Suffolk Street area? Moody Street?

J: Moody Street? [Pokes fun at French-Canadians] “Moody Street me, no, that’s the French Canuck there.” [Both chuckle] I don’t know any Ports on Moody Street.

A: Yah, right down there. There was a guy Sousa who has a filling station there? His wife’s name is Lillian. I think she’s still around. I forget his first name. He’s gone.

J: I don’t know. I mean that’s probably so far back I wasn’t driving then. I don’t know.

A: Yah, yah.

J: There’s Spinney’s Garage. That’s still there. The grandkids run it.

A: That’s close to A Street?

J: C Street, the corner of C and Powell. I worked there. That’s another place my father took me when I was fourteen or fifteen, (A: Yah?) for the summer, right. “All right Tommy, make him work, do the cleanup, whatever you need. Don’t pay him.” My father was famous for getting me jobs that didn’t pay me. I don’t know what that bit was. Don’t pay him, you know. So I worked at his garage. Tommy had six kids. They had six kids. Tommy Jr, I don’t know if it was actually Junior, Tommy might have had a different middle name. Now his son is running it, Steven. So it’s the grandson of the original one that’s running the garage. But yah, I worked there two summers. And after the second summer, jeeze I’m starting to turn out brake jobs and you know this kind of stuff. So I went to Tommy, you know, old Tommy. I said, “Don’t you think you should pay me something? I know my father said don’t pay me, but now I’m turning out work.” “Well the mechanics have to double check it.” I said, “Yah, but they’re not doing anything. They just saying, click, click, click, that sounds good kid. Yah, running good. Thanks. Okay, next job.” Because in the beginning I started scraping all of the dried oil and crap out of the crank cases. I used to have to do it. I sat at the corner of the garage. I used to come home with all this crap. My mother was a saint, and she was working. Anyway, after two years he said, “All right.” He paid me a dollar a day for nine hours a day six days a week. Now mind you we lived on A Street and this was C Street, two streets, right. On the corner of A and Powell, on the opposite corner there was a little store, Manual Silva Store.

A: Okay.

J: Manual Silva’s daughter lives, she’s the last house over here across from us.

A: Oh okay.

J: She married Birke, Michael Birke. That's his daughter Tracy, something like that. Anyhow, you think on Saturday when I got that envelope, right, with the six dollar bills, right, you think I would open it up and stop and get some candy or a Coke? No sir. I wouldn't dare! I came home Friday night, or Saturday night, everybody had opened their pay, right, it was cash mostly then. My father would say, "okay, oil man, coal man," whatever it was, ice man, all of these things. Okay. Well we have five dollars, six dollars left whatever, right? "Who needs shoes?" So we all go like this. Whoever had the biggest holes on the bottom, because we used to put Hi Ho box tops in there, you know, to protect. It didn't really protect from the water, but the water didn't get your feet as fast. And one week it would be Mary, the next week it might be Helen, the other one might be John, you know, whatever. He ran it. He was very democratic about it, but he held the iron fist on the top of democracy. [Laughs] But anyway, yah, everybody shared the work. I washed dishes, right. I learned how to sew, crochet.

A: Really?

J: My father said, "Everybody does everything," right. My sisters would lug the 5 gallon oil jugs up from the cellar. When we lived on A Street once we changed to oil stove from the old wood stove, we used to have to stuff the pieces of wood in the thing. I remember the old irons. It was a handle like a "D" and you can unlatch it and you put the iron itself on top of the heat, and then you hook the handle up and that's how you ironed you know. And then we moved to the oil stove, the five gallon jugs. Now that was down in the cellar. So that's you know, going second floor, first floor, cellar and lug up the five gallons. My sisters had to take turns too. Helen, and Mary, and myself we all took turns. And I used to love dishes. I hated putting them away. So we had the big stone sink. There were about I don't know a foot and a half deep. And my hands would be in there. My hands then would come out the way they look now with all wrinkles, [laughs] you know, but I'd rather wash than put them away.

A: So what do you think your father, or maybe both of your parents wanted to instill in you folks by having you do all of these jobs and put you out to (--)

J: Everybody is equal in the family. Everybody shares. Everybody works, which is why he had me working at such a young age, you know, according to back then and even now. But everybody shared in everything. Shared in the money, whatever the money there was. When I graduated from Lowell High in 1950, he bought me a Vega Trumpet. It was \$250.00 then. That's like \$2500 now. I don't think he made \$2000 a year in the mills, but he saved a little here a little there, you know. And I never forgot that.

A: Did the (--) Do you remember how WWII changed the Portuguese community at all?

J: Well I didn't know anybody. Well I had a cousin who went into the Air Force and he was a rear tail gunner on a B17. You know that little bucket they sit in the back end of the plane? He was a tail gunner. Fortunately he survived all the flights that he had, he was part of many missions, and he wound up working for the United States government up in Point Barrow, Alaska. It has a point like this, point, the top point in Alaska. They

had some kind of a secret air base up there or something. He did communications, whatever. He sent us a Webcore tape recorder. The thing was this big man, like two and a half feet by about a foot and a half, the old reel to reels. Heavy as hell and it had the eye, the green eyed bulb. That would tell you how you're zeroing in on the volume and stuff, right. And he used to send us Alaskan music from the natives.

A: Really?

J: Well he knew I was a musician. So I could hear the Alaskan (--) And he would (--) I think he wanted to make some time with my sister Mary, because he used to send everything to Mary. And so she would you know, record the voices and record all of us you know, and send the tape back so he could hear the voices of our family, you know. He later died.

And then I had another one, Joe. He was in the Army. There's a picture, one of the pictures that I gave to Kevin Correa that was used, I was about seven or eight in the picture with the overcoat thing with the little dumb hat with the little brim in the front, right, the round cap with the brim, and my two sisters and he was in there and my mom and dad. That was in the driveway of A Street.

A: Okay. Okay. Now do you remember rationing, or blackouts, or anything else?

J: Oh yah! Oh yah, we used to have to put black curtains on the windows. And when you'd hear the [makes a sound] on the top of the schools, Pine Street School used to have one, right, one of those sirens. They had them all over the city. [Makes the sound of siren] You'd close all of the black curtains. You know, so we'd had blackouts. Another reason we needed the black curtains too is my sister Mary got Scarlet Fever.

A: Oh.

J: And she couldn't have any light in the room. We had to totally darken the room. I remember I was a young kid.

A: What about food and rationing?

J: Well you know, the cars had that "A" on the thing for the gas, gas rationing. And you know, everybody used to hide stuff here and there. Because you'd get (--) You know people would come in, officials, or something come in to your house from time to time.

A: Really?

J: Yah. And my sisters had a baby crib for theirs little dolls and stuff. And my father put an extra thick mattress, you know, and he'd put extra sugar in there or whatever he was trying to hide, you know, in there. He would pick it up here and there, you know. They had, it's like today, I mean there's always a way to pick up something, you know, to survive.

A: Now where did your (--)

J: Don't forget I was born in 1933.

A: Right.

J: However I'm also famous, right, for relieving the country of prohibition.

A: Why? Were you born on that day or something?

J: Not that same day, but the same year. [Both laugh]

A: That's right.

J: So that allowed me to be drinking all of these years.

A: That's true. [Both laughing] You paved the way! Now where did your family go shopping for food?

J: The markets used to deliver. There used to be, there was a market, I think it was Sousa's Market on Back Central Street, and later on Danny Silva, but he came later. He was on the corner where there's a liquor store now, the bottom of Back Central Street and Charles.

A: Yup.

J: Right, it's a liquor market. It used to be Danny Silva's Market.

A: Okay.

J: But before him there was Sousa's and another small one there. I don't remember the name, but they used to deliver. My father would (-- I don't think he called them because I don't think we had a phone. He used to stop there after work and say I need this, and this, and this, and this, and they would come deliver it right upstairs, second floor, in orange crate boxes. You know now oranges come in those wooden boxes? Bring them up and they'd put them in the closet for you. Yah, honest to God. Tsongas Cleaners used to bring the dry cleaning to the house. (A: Okay) Paul Tsongas, his father. They used to bring the dry cleaning right to your house.

A: Now Sousa's Market, would they bring groceries and meats and produce?

J: Everything, everything.

A: Okay.

J: Everything.

A: So there wasn't a separate butcher that you guys used?

J: Well later on it was Danny, but I don't remember, because I didn't get involved in that. You know, I was either too little or I was working.

A: Now would you go with your dad, or mom down to Back Central to shop for anything particular down there?

J: No, most of it was done by my dad. My mom would make out lists and give them to my father.

A: Okay.

J: You know, because she never drove, ever.

A: Okay.

J: Even the picture, we (--). There's a picture of our family, the five of us, and I said Wilhelmina was not in it because she already had her growing family, you know, the picture in front of a car, the side of a car. We're all lined up. That was never our car. We didn't own one, you know, we didn't own a car until a Nash. We lived on Bowden Street. My father bought this four-door Nash with the wheels on the fenders, right, and the mirror.

A: Beautiful I bet.

J: Oh it was gorgeous! And it had little shades you could pull down in the back. Esther Stirk used to live next to us. And once I got bigger you know, we used to go in the back seat, pull the shades down and play kissy face, you know. Esther Stirk, she was blonde, beautiful girl. Nothing ever happened with that, you know, we were just young kids doing stupid stuff. But that was a big Nash, beautiful. And somewhere there's a picture in the family of me as a baby in front of that, in the grill, in front of the grill of that thing. But that was a great car. I'm sure he bought it you know from, it was a Portuguese. Besides Tommy Spinney's Garage there was a guy out in Tewksbury and I never knew the man's real name but they called him, "Toque Agora" which means play now. "Toca Agora," play now. They called him Toca Agora. I don't know why. And he had a huge lump on the side of his neck. Some kind of a growth and back then they just, it grows there you can keep working you know.

A: What was the nickname derived from?

J: I have no idea. I never knew. It's just you know, it was Toca Agora.

A: Did other people have nicknames?

J: They all did. (A: Yah?) Look at the first conductor that I remember the Portuguese Band, that I ended up conducting, right, was Joe Capiche. His name was Ferreira, [repeats] Ferreira. [Says in Portuguese] Ferreira, right. How do you get Cahapiche. That's not a word

A: What does it mean?

J: Nothing! Nothing! It means nothing! Joe Capiche. That was, that's it. Hey Joe Capiche! They called him that and nobody knew what the hell it was except that's his name. Capiche, it must be his last name. It was Ferreira. (A: Okay) Why? Who knows? Frank Peche, that's an easy one, Frank Fish. He had the market down on Central Street at the bottom. There's still a store there across from where Barry's Bakery used to be. Now that's a hair dressing salon.

A: Yup.

J: Across from there. There's still a market there, a little market.

A: It used to be Martin's Fish, right?

J: Yah, but that was Frank Peche, Frank Leandro. He owned it. He was a smart guy then. He used to get up at 3:00 in the morning, drive down to New Bedford get the freshest fish off the dock. So you get your fish there, it was absolutely 100% fresh that day. It was no tomorrow or the next day after or four days before. That morning he got fresh fish. So all the Ports that would go down there, they knew the fish was fresh. They called him Frank Peche, Frank Fish. And he wound up, he was a smart guy, he wound up buying tenements, right, buying them up renting them, renting them, selling them. [Unclear] I don't know how much money, but it was quite a bit. And he would went [whistles] back to the Azores.

A: He did?

J: I don't know which island he was from.

A: Yah, yah, interesting.

J: Oh yah, he was a smart operator. He was a real operator.

A: Now Portuguese was your first language at home. (J: Yes) How about when you went to school? Did you have any difficulties?

J: No.

A: Did you, were you playing with kids that spoke English before you went to school if you remember?

J: I don't really remember. Of course don't forget I had older sisters too. So they were already in the school system speaking English.

A: Okay, would they speak English to you when you were a kid, (J: Yah) verses when you guys talked to your parents you'd switch into Portuguese?

J: Well at home it was Portuguese.

A: Okay.

J: Okay, when I was growing up. When I was a young kid it was all Portuguese. And I'm glad of that, because I can still understand and speak it. So I was glad for that, but once my parents started working in the mills they started picking up English, right, once they were able to speak English they never spoke Portuguese outside the house again except in the church, the feasts, or wherever there were Portuguese gatherings. They felt it was an insult to speak their language, their Portuguese language in stores, unlike a lot of nationalities do today. (A: Umhm) You know they thought it was an insult. My mother always said she never wanted to go back. They used to say, "Do you want to go back to Graciosa?" "I never want to go back there." I don't know what it was. I mean in Graciosa in those days when they were growing up the girls went to fourth grade, and the boys went to the sixth grade. Boys had to be smarter, because they had to learn how to run the farm, the fishing, whatever they were doing, right. That's all they had there, farming and fishing, right, or building construction stuff. And the girls just had to go enough, learn enough to be able to communicate. And their job was when the father came in from the fields, or from fishing, they used to have to wash the father's feet.

A: Wow.

J: I don't think my mother liked that too well. She lived in a house, which I ended up finding, when we went to Portugal and the Azores; we found the house, the same exact house. And there was this wall, and there was all these point rocks you know. My mother used to run on top of those things. (A: Yah?) And her mother used to say, "Violante, Violante, get down from that wall!"

A: Meaning?

J: Come down. She (--). I don't know. The points had to hurt even with whatever shoes you had, but that was like her freedom thing, you know. I think that was like running up on that wall this is, I'm escaping from all the chores that I have. I don't know. She never really talked about it very much at all. And when they say, "Wouldn't you like to go back and visit?" "No, I'm an American."

A: So not even to visit?

J: "No. I'm an American." End of story. She would cut it off right there. "I'm an American."

A: How do you see the role of women in the community in those earlier days?

J: Subservient.

A: Okay.

J: Like the Italians and the Spanish and Germans, whatever, the women were subservient to the husband, you know. I mean my father never touched her you know, or any of that kind of crap like some of them did. But my father was a very good father. He was very hard, and I felt his wrath a few times, physically felt it, but as I got older I'm glad he did what he did. The worst thing that happened I think at school was at the Morey Junior High School. They used to have double desks. (A: Umhm) And Burton Lightbody used to sit next to me. How can you forget a name like that, right? His father was an insurance salesman or something and my father worked in the mills, right? So anyhow we had double desks and we had the ink wells with the scratchy pens. And the two girls in front of us had the banana curls, right?

A: In their hair?

J: Yah, you know, curled down like this. They looked like cones, right [makes a sound]. And so there's the banana curls hanging right near our ink wells. And I'm sitting there looking at this. And I looked at Burton and he looked at me. Then we took them and dipped them in the ink well. Well Mary Margaret Murphy, "Bulldog Murphy" we used to call her, looked like she ran right into a wall like boxers, you know, with the flat face. [Yells] "John and Burton, go to the principal's office!" What? The girls didn't complain. They were nice kids. They were friends of ours, you know. "Mrs. Murphy, that's okay, that's nothing. We'll just snip the ends off." "I told them to go to (--)" So we go to Bucky Dennett, he was the principal. He was crippled. He had a crippled hand. And Pop Luce, who used to have a building out back, that's long gone now, for manual training. We learned how to make stuff out of wood.

A: Was that in the little red house on Wilder Street side of Morey?

J: Yah. It was a separate building.

A: It later became the Larks Nest. It was owned by (--)

J: I have no idea.

A: Okay.

J: It was a wooden building. That's all I can remember.

A: Yah, yah.

J: And we used to make (--) I made a double, a biplane out of wood. We made a lot of cool stuff, right? Anyway he had, Bucky Dennett had him make a rattan that fit into his crippled hand, and it was about four inches wide and about two feet long. And I don't know what kind of wood it was. They didn't have Masonite then, but it acted like Masonite, right. [Makes whipping sounds] And he said, "Both your father's tomorrow morning here." Now Burton's father was you know, and insurance salesman. He can make his own appointments. My father worked in the mills. You are out of work you don't get paid. You had no personal days or any of that crap. You miss work you miss your pay. So my father was pissed off about that already, right. So anyhow we go in there, "Hold out your hands," six in each hand. (A: Ooh!) My hands were purple right from the beating and I didn't cry in there, right, because I was swearing at him inside my head. I called him every "f" word, every, I made up words, right, okay, in my head so I wouldn't cry. I was determined not to cry in front of that man. And then I got out, got in the car, I sat in the back seat. My father had a four-door Chevy or something. I don't know. No, a 41 Buick, Century Buick. The thing was really, eight cylinder straight cylinder. I got in the back seat. "Sit in the front." And I'm saying, "Oh, I'm not even going to make it home," right. So I sat in the front. The Buick was wide. I sat right next to the door, my door, like this waiting for that arm to come, [makes sound] right, nothing. And when my father was silent that was dangerous when he didn't speak. I took a whipping that night, that day because of a stupid little thing in there, you know. And now the woman whacks some candy out of a kid's hand and she's probably going to get fired for that.

A: Right. Right. Different days John, different days.

J: But anyhow, I loved him you know, I respected him. I respected him more than anybody else ever. (My Dad)

A: Now were your parents involved in any social groups, organizations? [Phone rings]

J: Let me just (--) I think this is a robocall.

Side I ends
Side II begins

A: Okay. So we're recording again. Okay, go ahead John. I was asking you whether your parents had been involved in any social clubs, groups, etcetera, organizations.

J: They weren't big on that. My father was involved with the band of course.

A: Yeah.

J: You know, and my mother worked in the kitchens up at Holy Ghost Park.

A: Okay.

J: You know, that's before, not the new fancy building they have now. It was a wooden one. When you first (--) The first gate you go in the building was right to the right.

A: Okay.

J: A long building, old wooden building, you know. And they used to have to (--) my father was on the committee. Somehow he got on every committee and so that meant I was on it, right. And they used to take, before each feast we'd go the Danny's Market. Now it's Danny Silva's Market on the corner there, and the guys used to go down and Danny would get these big chunks of meat. I don't know what kind they were. Big chunks of meat, put them in these pans, like big porcelain pans. And the old guys would marinate, right. This is on a Friday night they'd marinate them, okay. And they'd sit back in the refrigerator, they'd sit all night with the marinating thing, dadit, dadit, dadit, right. Then on Sunday morning we'd get all of those pans, walk them across by hand to Barry's Bakery and he partially cooked them in there, right. Then we'd come back and put them in this panel truck, right, and go up to the Holy Ghost grounds and carry them in there. And then the women would dice the meat and put them in the soup and cook, finish cooking the thing.

Prior to that, we had to go to Westford to a farm. It used to be cows and then it got too expensive. They used pigs for the blood. (A: Okay) And the reason that they hang the cows upside down and they'd slit the throat and then fill pans with the blood. And we used to take all of these pans and put them in this panel truck, right. And then it became pig because cows were too expensive. And we got all of this blood in these pans and we'd take them to Danny's Market, put them in the freezer and it would coagulate like Jell-O, okay. And then Sunday, the feast, early in the morning we'd go up there, right, and bring all the pans and the women would cut them up and throw them in the soup. (A: Hm) So it cooked in the soup, right. So it tasted like liver, right. And I remember when I was in high school I used to get some of the high school kids to play with the Portuguese Band. Dick who became a State Trooper, right, and Frank Page, right, who was in high school with me also, they both played sousaphone like a tuba. And so you know, they fed the band, right, because the band, we got like fifty cents a day or something to play the six hour gig, right. So we're eating, right, and Dick said, "Oh man, this liver, this is the best liver I've ever, you don't even have to chew it! It just kind of, it goes like it disappears in your mouth!" "So you like that?" "Yeah!" "Oh go and ask the ladies. They'll give you more." "Will they give me more liver?" Oh gee, he'd go back, "Can I have some more of that liver stuff?" And the old ladies are smiling, right, "Sure boy! Come on sonny I'll give you some more!" [Laughing] He ate three bowls of that, right. He says, "Wow, I got to ask my father to get some of this stuff. I don't know where you got it." I said, "You know what that really is?" He said, "No." I said, "Dried blood." "Yeah right!" "You ask anybody else, right. Ask my father. You trust my father." "Yeah" "Hey, my father Belarmino." He came over. "What's this?" He said, "Dried blood. What, you didn't know that?" [John makes sounds] I said, "You dope. You said it tasted great." [Both laugh]

But anyhow there was a lot of work back then to get everything up because there was no cooking. They could cook up there, they had stoves, but they couldn't do all of that preparation.

A: Sure.

J: They didn't have big refrigerators. So Danny's Market, you know, Danny Silva used to allow the committees to do that. So my dad was involved on the committee besides playing trombone.

A: So let's gravitate over towards music, which has been such a big part of your life John.

J: Okay.

A: So tell us about your father if you know how he got involved musically. Did he play music back in the old country?

J: I'm not sure. No, not till he got here.

A: Okay.

J: Not till he got here, because he was a young kid when he came from the Azores. You got to remember he went to Brazil before he came up here. No, he took it up here. I don't know why he picked the trombone. Maybe because somebody had one, you know. And when I wanted to start my musical career, it was in fourth grade with Miss Keegan, right.

A: Okay.

J: And I had the sheet, right, to sign up for band. Boy it was going to be great. They had the crossing belts like the police have, the white ones, right, with a badge and a World War I helmet painted silver.

A: Now was this for the junior, the grammar school?

J: No, the fourth grade, fourth grade band.

A: Fourth grade band.

J: Fourth grade band.

A: Public school.

J: Yup. World War I helmets painted silver. I thought that was a (--) and a badge and the belt! Give me, let me sign up! So I take the sheet home, to sign up. I don't know, my father was on the first shift, second shift, third shift, whenever he got a chance he looked at it. I said, "I'm going to sign up for band." "Oh good. Let me read this." [Speaks in Portuguese] He looks and he says, "No." I said, "porque?" "No drums!" I signed up for drums. Every kid wants to hit a drum right. I said, "Oh yeah! I won't play anything." He said, "Good." And I'm saying, "Gee, I don't know how that worked." I thought he would say okay, right. [Laughs] So it wasn't until the eighth grade, I'm thirteen now I think, and I'm at the Morey School. And the Morey School Band is having the day off. They're going to the elementary schools and I'm sitting in class. I say, "Who's the dumb one now," right? So I went back to my father [clears throat], excuse me, with a sign-up for the eighth grade band to take lessons. And he looks, "No drums!" I said, "No, no, anything. I didn't even put the instrument in. I'll play anything you want me to play." So he had an extra old trumpet, he didn't have an extra trombone, an extra old trumpet. So he started me on trumpet. Then I went to Mr. Giblin, right, learning the triple tongue stuff and all that. So then I got in with, then they put me in the Portuguese band between Joe Miguel, a Portuguese guy, he had a trumpet, and tongue like a snake too. Boy could he tongue, and Abel Alves, they sat me between the two first lead players. And they said, "Okay kid; get as many notes as you can." I used to take that [fly crap music] home, they called them fly shit, right, because of the stems. When these composers used to write mostly Lança, he wrote most of the stuff that all the bands played. Other people did too, but he wrote most of the stuff.

A: Lança?

J: L A N C A, and the C has a little ping underneath the C, like Graciosa.

A: Yes, cedilla.

J: So anyway, he used to put the stems on the opposite side of the way the rest of the world did them, right. And if you had a note above the staff, you know, ledger lines, he didn't, he didn't bother putting the ball on the note. It took too much time. So he'd just take the stem and come down from that line. So you had to know that was the note. You know, when you're a young kid you wouldn't notice that, you know, that kind of thing. So anyhow you get used to it. You know, and then by the time I was fifteen I was playing lead trumpet in the high school band. (A: Yah) Because I graduated I was seventeen, but I was sixteen through most of the (--) my birthday is March 31st. So I was sixteen years old through my senior year until March 31st. (A: Umhm) So I started playing lead trumpet. And I took over lead trumpet in Chelmsford High School, not Chelmsford High, Lowell High School. And from then it was more Portuguese Band.

A: Yeah. So let's rewind a little bit. Tell us about your father's involvement with the band, or what's your early (--)

J: He was the manager. My father was the manager.

A: Yeah?

J: And I have a picture. [Retrieving the picture] Second from the right in, (A: Okay) right there, that's my dad.

A: Okay.

J: Belarmino. B E L A R M I N O.

A: What's that?

J: That's his first name.

A: Okay.

J: And to his left, the guy with no hat, that's Annibal Casselli. He was a barber. He had a barber shop at the bottom of Wamesit [Street]. You go down the Wamesit hill, right there on the corner.

A: Okay.

J: There was a barber shop and he was the secretary. He'd be giving you haircuts and he had a cigarette hanging out of his mouth the whole time. [Makes sounds of something talking with cigarette in his mouth] "Annibal I can't understand what you're saying. Take the cigarette out of your mouth, will you?" And then to my father's right, yah that's Abel Alves. He was the lead trumpet player, became, now in that picture he was conductor.

A: Okay.

J: Because Joe Capiche died.

A: Okay.

J: Okay. So he took over. And then that's Joe Freitas on this side.

A: Okay.

J: He was another officer. He's an alto sax player. He lived on Waite Street. You know Waite Street? You know on Chelmsford Street, Stanfield Tire? (A: Umhm) Right across and the street goes up like this?

A: To Powell.

J: Yah, that's Waite Street. He lived up there on the right. Ah, they were the (--)

A: So there was quite a few Portuguese living around that Chelmsford Street area huh?

J: Oh yah, yah.

A: Yah. So (--)

J: We used to, Frannie Furtado and Eddie Silva, Eddie Silva played trumpet. He lived on Winthrop Avenue, one street over from A Street. And Frannie Furtado lived on that house on the corner of Waite Street, Chelmsford Street, right on the corner, right there.

A: Okay.

J: And there was a field next to it. Now there's another house there I think they put up. He lived right there on that corner house.

A: Okay.

J: And Eddie didn't play in the Portuguese Band. He just dropped out after, after a while.

A: Yah.

J: Frannie, Eddie and I were altar boys (A: Okay) at Saint Anthony's. Father Grillo was the priest then.

A: Tell us what you remember about Father Grillo?

J: Oh, great man, wonderful, wonderful person, right. He never did any of that stuff that some priests did to kids and he respected the parents, he respected the kids, he respected us as young kids, you know, giving up our time serving Mass and stuff. The thing that got me to become an altar boy was because I used to sit with my mother and my father, and my other two sisters, and the woman, I don't remember her name now, up back who used to sing solos, she had a tremolo [makes sounds of a tremolo]. You know, I was a little kid, I was eight, you know, what the hell was that right? And my mother would give me beliscões, that's pinches in the butt, right there, ting! And she used to hurt. She was a little short skinny thing. Boy she had powerful hands. She was a weaver, right. (A: Yah) She had powerful fingers. She'd pinch me in the butt. Oh it used to hurt like hell. So finally I'm saying gee, I'm getting pinched because I'm looking at this wobbly singer, right. So I went to Father Grillo. I was eight and I said, "Father Grillo I'd like to become an altar boy. Am I too young?" He said, "Oh no, no John," you know. "No, we'll do the training and we'll teach you. You have to learn the Latin. All the Masses are done in Latin." They spoke (--)

A: Okay, not in Portuguese?

J: No, in Latin, but they spoke Portuguese you know, when he'd talk to the people.

A: Yah, the homily.

J: Yah. Yah, when he [shared] stuff with the people, you know, when he did his little talk with the congregation. But I mean the Mass itself was all in Latin. “So you got to learn all the Latin first, you know, all the responses.” “Yes sir, yes sir.” I used to take it home and practice, right. Now I’m on the altar and I’m looking eyeball to eyeball with that wobbly singer. So you know, I’m not getting any more pinches in the butt. That’s why I became an altar boy.

A: [Laughs]

J: But once I became an altar boy Father Grillo was such a wonderful man, right. He really cared about every kid, and we used to have a lot of kids. Now they can’t get altar boys, you know, lay people are up there on the altars and stuff.

A: Right.

J: But the three of us, Frannie, Eddie and I, became altar boys. Then as we got into high school Eddie didn’t always come. I don’t know why, but I used to walk from A Street where I lived, over the hill, and there was a field behind Frannie’s house.

A: On what street?

J: On Powell, you come up over the hill, down to Frannie’s house which was on Chelmsford Street. It was a hill. And his bedroom window, because it came like this, the window was like almost on the ground, because the house was built into the ground, right. And I’d tap him, “Come on Fran. Come on, come on.” “Okay. Okay, I’m getting my clothes on,” blah, blah, blah. And we’d walk to Saint Anthony’s Church. Serve five days a week during the week.

A: Before school.

J: Five o’clock Mass.

A: Wow.

J: So we were getting up, I was getting up at 3:30, right, getting dressed, waking him up. I don’t remember how long it took us to walk from there to (--) that’s a pretty good walk.

A: Yah, especially when you’re a kid.

J: Yah. So anyway by now, well by now we’re in high school serving that Mass, 5:00 Mass. And we used to walk down and serve the Mass, and Father Grillo was very appreciative of that, you know. And so as we got to be seventeen, sixteen, seventeen, we’d also, the whole thing of being an altar boy was to serve the 11:30 Mass on Sunday. That was the big Mass. Boy if you made it to be an altar boy you know, at that Mass you

have reached the epitome, the epitome of altar boying, right, and we did. And so at the end of that Mass he'd give one of us a key and we'd go to the wine cellar in the house where he lived right next door, and whoever he gave the key to could pick out the bottle of wine. We'd bring the bottle of wine back, right, and he'd open a bottle of, a box of hosts, you know, not blessed and we'd eat them like eating paper, right, and sucking down wine, right. [Laughs]

A: That was kind of a reward?

J: Yah, and he would tell stories and stuff like that. I mean he was just a wonderful man, you know. And never once did he ever, ever make any advances to any of us.

A: Yah.

J: You know.

A: Any stories about him that you remember, whether personal or things you heard?

J: Well I mean I think I kind of covered that pretty much. I mean I don't remember any other stories. The Bishop, one of the Bishops came one time. I don't know who the Bishop would have been back then. Cardinal Cushing maybe? No, it was before him.

A: It would have been Cardinal O'Connell way back.

J: Yah, it was probably him.

A: Yah, he was I think, I think Cardinal Cushing took over in 1944 I think.

J: Well that would have been him then, Cardinal Cushing. Yah, it would have been him that came to the church.

A: Okay, yup.

J: And celebrated some Mass you know. And we'd go. The three of us were the oldest altar boys then. So we got to do that, you know, and get to kiss his ring in the Sacristy you know. But that's all I remember about him, you know, other than the fact that he was just a wonderful person.

A: Yah, good.

J: And he never made any advances, never ever once.

A: Hm, yah. So let's go back to the Portuguese Band. Do you know some of the history of it? How it got started?

J: Well it got started long before I remember. There was a band in the 30s I guess.

A: Okay.

J: They have a record of it down the band hall.

A: What do you mean?

J: What they call the Red Club or the Blue Club. I don't know. I can't get those colors, right, the corner of Charles and Chapel.

A: I think that's the Blue.

J: They call it the Portuguese American Center.

A: I think that's the Blues.

J: Yah, that's the Portuguese American Center, which used to be the Band Club. You called it the Band Club.

A: The Band Club?

J: Yah, we used to rehearse there upstairs.

A: Okay. So was that controlled by the band, that property?

J: No, there was a committee of some kind, some sort, but everybody called it the Band Club because that's where we used to rehearse.

A: And was it called the Band Club, or was it called the Portuguese name?

J: Good question. I'm not sure. The Portuguese Band Club, I always remembered it as The Portuguese Band Club.

A: But would they say it in the Portuguese language, or would they call it in the English language?

J: Both.

A: Okay.

J: Both, because the band, you know, used to be (--) Sure, they had guys playing cards in the back room, you know, upstairs in the back room, you know, which is now where the bar is.

A: Okay.

J: Of course they extended it more (A: Yah, yah) in the back you know. But it used to be just a small room where the old guys used to smoke and drink and play cards. And then they pushed the building back and expanded it. And like they did to the other side from the front they added all of that brick stuff in the front.

A: Yah, yah.

J: But I did go there. I went there with Frank Sousa and the gutter man, Carlos [owner of a gutter installation company in Lowell], and we had lunch. And Luis Gomes, who was the first conductor of what they call the Holy Ghost Band now, the band that's there now, the Portuguese Band now, (A: Okay) the Holy Ghost Band. He was the first conductor who had come from I'm not sure which Island. (A: Okay) Luis Gomes, and I had not, and he wrote a march called ["Heróis de Mucaba,"] And I was invited to this lunch with Carolos and Frank Sousa and somebody else I didn't know at the time. Somebody else was coming. I didn't know who it was. And we were in the bar side, right, ordering lunch and he comes down and sits down. Luis Gomes, I said, wait a minute, he was the "Heróis de Mucaba!" He said, "Oh, you remember!"

A: How old is he?

J: Oh let me see.

A: Older than you?

J: He must be around my age I guess. I don't know, I'm getting so old now everybody is younger than I am, [both laugh] but nice guy. So we had a nice lunch and all of that, but that was in the area that used to be the smoking thing which got extended.

A: Yah, yah.

J: We had a nice lunch anyhow. And as far as the band itself you've seen the picture that we're on our album and all of that, you know.

A: Umhm.

J: We had Portuguese people. We had all people from all over. I had (--) the two, my father was trombone player, the other two trombone players were Jewish cousins at Lowell High.

A: What do you mean cousins?

J: They were cousins to the Bernsteins.

A: Oh, oh they were cousins, not cousins to you.

J: No, no, no. The Bernsteins were cousins.

A: Okay. So early on there was different ethnicities in the Portuguese Band?

J: Oh sure. This is the 40s. I'm talking the 40s.

A: So how do you think the other ethnicities got involved in the Portuguese Band?

J: Well those got involved because I brought them in.

A: Oh you brought them in.

J: Yah, I was in high school and we needed more trombones. So I got the two friends from Lowell High.

A: And what was the reaction to the rest of the band?

J: Ah, it doesn't matter. It didn't matter. We had Ray Ball who had a hearing aid, you know, and when he didn't want to hear what somebody was saying, he'd just you know, turn it off and he'd just smile. He was kind of a fat guy with a clarinet player, and Bob Skinner a French Horn player.

A: Now this was in the forties?

J: Yah. (A: Okay) Bob Skinner, French horn player. John Gleason who owns Gleason Insurance, he used to be all over Lowell, Tewksbury and all of that stuff, right. They were just bought out. The son sold it to Safety Insurance, Fred C. Church. (A: Okay) John Gleason, French horn player, he subbed with the Pops. (A: Okay) You know a very excellent player. Very, always, we always called him Mr. Gleason you know, he just had that presence. Always dressed in a suit, right, never, never a spec of anything on him, right. He was perfect. He was just another gentleman okay.

A: Now were all of these outsiders brought in by you? I mean when I say (--)

J: Well Gleason wasn't brought in by me. I don't remember who brought him in.

A: Okay, he would have been older than you?

J: Yah, he was older. (A: Okay) And let me see. Then Richie DeFreitas came in a little later, a little bit later, because he's five years younger than I am I think, five or six years.

A: I think he said he came in in 19 either 49 or 50, or something like that. May have been later.

J: Yah, that's when the picture (--) I don't know if he was in that picture.

A: I forget.

J: I don't even remember if he was in that picture.

A: Yah, that's all right. We can look at it later.

J: Yah, but anyway he came in later. I remember he played a duet, a clarinet duet with Davy, I think it was David Gomes on clarinet, the both of them. They were like I don't know, eight or nine or ten. [Makes sounds like clarinets]

A: So during that period, when you were in your teens essentially, right, you played all Portuguese music?

J: Oh we played American music too.

A: You did even then.

J: Oh yah, sure.

A: Okay. When do you think they started playing American tunes?

J: Oh, before I got there.

A: Okay. Okay.

J: You know, before I got there they used to do stuff from the old composers, Clark and, well I can't remember all of their names now, but they played American band music. You know, because don't forget John Philip Sousa was Portuguese, right. (A: Yup) And he had a Sousa Band, and he didn't play all Portuguese music either, you know. So they used to pick up on whatever kinds of things that they were doing, or whatever was available, you know.

A: Okay.

J: But for the Feast most of it was Portuguese music and you could throw in, they would throw in some American stuff here and there. Marches, nobody cared, you know, who they were made by, you know, who wrote them. So yah, no, but even as the years progressed when it got, when I left to go to Germany in 51, well I didn't go to Germany in 51, I went in the Army in 51. And I didn't go until 52. They had already, there was an infusion of more English American type stuff stuck in there, you know. My future brother in law, Mary's husband who taught social studies and played Clarinet and Sax, was the one who convinced me to go to Lowell Teachers. So when I came back I went to Lowell Teachers, then Lowell State. (A: Yup) And that's where I met my wife Melba. And she keeps on reminding me she's my child bride. She's five years younger. And I ran into a lot of other musicians who were from other parts of the state who had been in the service and came in as freshmen. So we were older than the seniors. Our class was the first class that was older than the seniors. There was this huge influx, of guys from

Lowell High that I went to Lowell High School with, we all went our separate ways and we all come back as freshmen at Lowell State five years later. Try to figure that out. That never would have happened. You could never plan something like that. And guys from Somerville, from Lawrence, you know, from Quincy. Guys from all over came to the school, we lifted the music department you know, way up back then, because we were already all gigging.

A: Yah.

J: And so I started bringing in some of those guys into the Portuguese Band when I took over.

A: Okay.

J: And we had a powerhouse band.

A: Now you talked about, even before, right, around the time you went to Germany there was a kind of an infusion of American, some American songs into the repertoire. Who was promoting that, or do you remember the songs?

J: The audience.

A: The audience!

J: Sure. You know, don't forget, I mean as a musician in order to survive you have to play what the audience wants, not just what you want, you know, and that makes a difference. Because now the younger people are getting their own likes and dislikes, kids growing up, right. Okay, we grew up with Portuguese music but we want to hear some other stuff. You know, and that's how the music business is.

A: Do you remember?

J: If you don't evolve you die!

A: Yah.

J: You know, this music business has been that way since I've been in it. And when I was at Lowell I started with Dick Madison and it was the old Lawrence Welk style. [Makes music sounds] That style of music. When that started dying out we went to the swing bands. [More music sounds of swing] When that started dying out a little bit we went to the Tijuana phase, right, seven piece.

A: And you're talking about the Portuguese Band.

J: No, no, not the Portuguese Band.

A: No, okay.

J: The business itself. I'm talking about how, why, I'm trying to answer your question. (A: Yup) Then we went to the Tijuana, because that's what the people wanted to hear in the 60s, Tijuana Band, Herb Albert and Tijuana, right. We worked more with that band than we did with any of them, because people wanted it so much. It was happy music you know. And then that died out and we went to the jazz rock, right, nine piece. The girls with the miniskirts and the high leather boots, two girl singers, right. And then we went to more jazz rock, not so much the girls, just one singer. You have to keep evolving or you die.

And it was the same thing with the Portuguese Band. People wanted to hear other stuff you know. (A: Okay) Let's face it, from the time some of the people who were older than we were, right, by the time they had heard Flavience, it's a, you know, big rhapsodies, right, they probably had heard it since the time they were little kids. They want to hear something different. Okay now the Portuguese composers would start composing other stuff. (A: Okay) Lança was from Valley Falls, Rhode Island, I think. (A: Okay) I remember going down there with my father.

A: Did you meet him?

J: Oh yah, yah. He could write so fast. No wonder it was like hen scratching. Holy crap, [mimics] you know, but (--)

A: Were there any composers from Lowell?

J: There must have been but I don't remember.

A: Okay. Was there a Portuguese music store?

J: No, but there was (--). Now I forget the name of it. There was, Metro Music came on a lot longer, long after, but there was (--). I bought a euphonium on, it was on Central Street. I bought a euphonium, an upright euphonium. It was like a baby tuba.

A: Okay.

J: And then I loaned it to a friend at Lowell State, a singer. He wanted to screw around with a horn, and then he, I don't know what happened.

A: [Chuckles] Now where did your father buy you that expense trombone, that \$250.00 trombone?

J: That was a trumpet.

A: A trumpet, sorry.

J: Don't forget I played trumpet then. (A: Right) Through Mr. Giblin, (A: Okay) somehow his connection. I don't know where he got it.

A: Yah, yah.

J: You know, but the name is right here, the music store in Lowell back in the 30s. I can't think of it, but there was a music store then. Then later on Metro Music came in.

A: Where was that located?

J: It was on Central Street.

A: Okay.

J: They were in Lawrence and Lowell.

A: Oh okay.

J: Gingrasso owned it, Nick Gingrasso, he was a violin player and his son Joey played piano, great jazz piano player.

A: Italian?

J: Yah. They owned, the one in Lawrence opened up first and then they opened one on Central Street right around where the open canal is now.

A: Okay.

J: You know (--)

A: Across from the Strand?

J: Well next to.

A: Next to the strand, okay.

J: Over the canal somewhere there in that block. That was a great theater too, the Strand Theater.

A: Yah, yah.

J: I was on the committee with Karen Carpenter to Save Our Strand.

A: Oh yah, yah.

J: SOS, Save Our Strand.

A: Charlie Tsapatsaris.

J: Yah.

A: So the Portuguese Band, um.

J: We played all over the place.

A: Yah, tell us about what (--)

J: Fall River and New Bedford, Gloucester, these are towns with big Portuguese populations. Gloucester was a huge Portuguese population because of fishing, (A: Okay) fishing industry. So it was Fall River, New Bedford, Taunton, Gloucester, Taunton had a city band. They called it Taunton City Band. It was a Portuguese Band.

A: Okay.

J: And Goncalves was the director. He was a trombone player. He had a son Jackie Goncalves, the trumpet player, young kid like I was. Boy he was a hell of a trumpet player. And we used to the Battle of Bands back then. That used to be fun. That was so much fun, right. The people love it you know, because you'd play a song and then you wait and they'd play something, try to play something harder, right. Okay, all right, let's get up such and such. [Makes music sounds] How about that, right! And this one time we were doing this back and forth and they played, we played Bugler's Holiday, three trumpet players.

A: Okay, and this was, this was in Taunton?

J: No, no, no, this was up here at Holy Ghost Park.

A: Holy Ghost Park.

J: We played Bugler's Holiday, three trumpet players, right.

A: And who, who were you going against?

J: Taunton City Band.

A: Taunton City Band, okay.

J: Goncalves, and we played Bugler's Holiday with our three trumpet players.

A: Describe that song.

J: [Sounds out trumpets] Now I'm having a brain fart.

A: Complicated?

J: No. No, it's very easy, but I can't think of it. But anyway we played it then their three trumpet players got up and played it, right. So we had rehearsed, myself on trombone, Lenny Bennett and George Ingals playing the same trumpet thing on trombones, [sounds out trombones] and that thing, right. And so we did it on trombones. And I went, you know, and he went nothing. I got nothing. [Both laughing] No answer. So he went [claps hands]. Oh I mean they would play a long rhapsodia which is tiring on trumpet players chops, right, as good as his son was, right. Twenty-five, thirty, thirty five minutes, right, and the chops are hanging. So I say, okay intro to a march. [Sounds it out] And give it back to them and their chops are hanging. It was all in such good fun you know. And I think it was that same year that I had Eddie Bennett who was a trumpet player on the pickup truck. This was all designed - the thing we had. This was like our final piece at the end of the night on Saturday. And so at one point I said to Ritchie, you're going to take over. And then the band, you connect the band and the dirge. Everybody was doing it from memory. [Sounds out] and so forth, right. Meanwhile Eddie Bennett is way in the back of the Holy Ghost Park. Where you go in that street and take a right. And the park goes this way, right. (A: Yup) He was at the end in his pickup truck. And in the back of the pickup truck he had a 55 gallon drum okay. We had a hearse car like the long ones with the luggage rack in the back, right, and the round fenders. Not with the, not with the tire. It was just the big round fenders. I was in the back seat on trombone. Frank Page has a sousaphone sitting on the front fender here. Frank Hickey was playing clarinet there. He just came in for the day. He didn't even know what he was going to do. Sit on the fucking car, right, you're going to play clarinet. Well what am I going to do? You'll figure it out, right. Eddie D'Amico was a great trumpet player, was on the luggage rack, right, and he had skull and bones flag sticking out of his naval, right. And at a prescribed time, right, I said to Lennie, "go," Eddie Bennett. And he sticks a double barrel shotgun in the 55 gallon drum and lets two chambers go. [Sounds it out] There's a fricking explosion everywhere. [Makes sounds] right, and then [makes more sounds] and here we come in the car, right, like this with this sousaphone player, and a clarinet player, Eddie D'Amico in the back like this standing on the luggage rack with his trumpet, right, and I'm inside with my trombone, right. Drive the car right up into the, there's used to be a slab. The bandstands used to be opposite one another now. Now it's all totally different. There's a cement slab and a bandstand here and a bandstand there. Drove right up between both bandstands and then Ritchie cuts the [unclear] and Eddie [sounds out music], you know, I'm playing the Saints, right. The crowd went bananas.

The other band, Jackie, the trumpet player, they all get down, everybody, the whole, both bands, right.

A: And this was the Taunton City Band?

J: Yah, they came down, our band is down, right. We're all just playing the Saints, everybody having a hell of a time. The audience went crazy! It was just good clean fun.

You know, competition you know, when you were going at one another, but then when it's all over man this is just a fun gig you know. And it's just (--)

A: Now? That sounds awesome.

J: The tradition was something that you know, I don't know if any other group ever did anything that crazy. I don't think so.

A: Tell us about, so you were with the Portuguese Band, but then you were doing all, around the same time you were playing in the clubs.

J: Yah. I started at the Cosmo, which you know is Market Street. They tore the thing down. It was on the right hand end of that building. The Sac Club was on one, which used to be the Hi Ball Café before it became the Sac Club. And on the opposite end, the total opposite end, that's there the Cosmo was. And that's where I met Kerouac. I already told you that story.

A: Yah. Tell.

J: I had a trio, trumpet, piano, Sidney Richardson, a classical pianist, right, and Ray Roby, my buddy on drums, just the three of us. And back then I used to go to, Record Lane was another music store, but that was more records than it was instruments, but they had all the latest songs, song sheets you could buy, piano sheets, piano vocal, what they call piano vocal, right. And you can go in there and buy a song for fifty cents, right. So I used to buy two copies, because there were no Xerox machines. There were no copy machines then, right. And it was cheaper to buy two copies. Then I'd give one copy to the piano player. Now this is piano music. So I had to transpose it for trumpet, right. And the drummer it didn't matter, right. And we used to play all of the latest songs, and we kept the crowd happy Friday and Saturday nights. We got paid \$3.00 a night, right, and I can't tell you until you turn that off I'll tell you what else happened there. But then Kerouac used to come in and visit all of the clubs when he was in Lowell. Chuck's was the biggest club.

A: Okay.

J: Chuck's "Flamingo" that was on, do you know where that was?

A: That was on, Flamingo, was that on John Street?

J: No, Merrimack.

A: Merrimack, right. Okay, Merrimack.

J: That's where the Archambault Towers are now.

A: Okay, yah.

J: That was one level, right, street level club.

A: That was Manny Bello though.

J: I don't think that was Manny. Manny Bello was John Street.

A: I think he had the both of them. I think, not sure.

J: Not in the beginning. (A: Okay) Maybe he took it over later, but I don't think he owned it in the beginning.

A: Umhm.

J: Anyhow there was the Flamingo. Chuck's was on Moody Street there. All right, and opposite Chuck's was Moody Gardens, or Silver Star. And a couple up, one door up or something was Moody Gardens or Silver Star. I forget which was which. No, Moody Gardens was on the corner and Silver Star, played that.

A: Was on Suffolk Street.

J: No, it was on Moody Street.

A: Yah?

J: No, Moody Street. (A: Okay) I remember me, right, back then me. That was Moody Street [pokes fun at French Canadians], and that, they played Country Western. (A: Okay) And the bass player just had a washtub upside down with a hole in it and a knot, and pulled a regular rope, right, like clothesline rope up and a broomstick handle, right. [Makes music sounds] And the higher he wanted to go the more he pulled the broom handle back to tighten the rope, right, to get higher pitches, right. I can remember that like it was yesterday. Because we used to, on our breaks we'd go around all of the other clubs, you know. They used to let us go in the front door, the side door, which was the back on Archambault Towers going out of the city, this end of the building. That's closest to where the stage was over here.

A: Okay, okay.

J: So even though they knew we were only fifteen, (right?), they knew we were playing another club, we could go in there and we could just have a Coke and listen to Tony Tripp, drummer from Lawrence, Madeline, piano player. She wore long black capes, right, and Armand Gaoles, his name was really Gyolish. He was Portuguese, but he wanted to come off like he was Italian. He'd always say "menga man, menga man." He was a trombone player. He had a crappy sound, but boy he could read anything. You know these acts would come in, they'd hand him a violin part, right, they hand him you know any sax part. Hey, he could transpose anything. And he had a nasty habit with you

know. Sometimes you have to go to the bathroom. And you're doing the show, they used to have the mutes, you know the things you stick in there. You have them in your hand and you'd go [makes a sound].

A: Piss in the boot, in the mute.

J: Yah, piss, right, in the mute, his own mutes you know. But anyway, and then (--) I always remember the name of the one across the street this way.

A: Was it the Spanish Villa?

J: No, it's been a bazillion (millions) things since.

A: Laconia?

J: Laconia. That guy, for some reason I can never remember the name. Laconia and another union guy used to play coronet there, an old guy. Oh, what a nice sound he had. And then years later Jigger Jarvis from Chelmsford used to play there, trumpet player.

A: Now were there a lot of Portuguese guys in these kinds of popular bands sprinkled out through the clubs?

J: Richie was getting older now and he was playing, you know, not in the same years as I was (A: Yup) but later, later on.

A: I was thinking about the Ares, Frankie [Ares], Hank [Ares], George Ares.

J: Well George Ares is Ritchie's era.

A: Yah, okay.

J: But they came later. Frank Ares was the older, oldest of the brothers. He played. He did some Country and Western stuff in the joints. There used to be a few Country and Western places like Moody Garden, Silver Star. They used to do Country and Western things. And the Passé Temps Club, a lot of groups played in there you know.

A: Okay.

J: Yah, so many clubs. The Laurier Club was a supper club. That was a beautiful (--) That had a hydraulic stage. That was a true classy supper club, and that was off, I'm guessing now it was off Merrimack Street past City Hall where there's a bank, I think it's a Santander Bank now, it stands alone. (A: Umhm) Somewhere in one of those streets, it was down there and it was in there. When we were in college we used to rehearse. Bob Knoop had a group. Bob Knoop and His Group he used to call it. And we used to rehearse in there. It was just a beautiful place. And of course the Blue Moon out on, not the scaggy place out in Tyngsboro, the one in Lowell.

A: Yah, on Wood Street and Middlesex.

J: The corner of Wood.

A: Yah, Princeton Boulevard.

J: Princeton, Princeton Street.

A: And Wood. So (--)

J: I played there too, and Armand Gaiolas played there.

A: Did your musicianship in the Portuguese Band, did that help you translate it into your popular?

J: Absolutely, 100%.

A: Explain it as you see it.

J: I'll tell you there are guys that came as I took over the band after, when I came back, right. My brother-in-law John Foley, the teacher, and his nephew Leo Foley. John, who unfortunately died too early, he was a clarinet and sax player. Leo Foley, who is one hell of a player, reed player, right, he still will tell you today that he gives the Portuguese Band credit for his reading abilities, to be able to read music as quickly as he does. He'll tell you today and he's sixty something years old. Yah, they all, you went through that and it was (--). The Portuguese music was difficult until you got to know how to read it. And it was good for your ear because the notes weren't always printed exactly the way well you thought they should be. So you had to rely on what it sounded like in your ears, you know. And of course that's a high "G", what's the matter with you? What, you have to write the ball of the note too? You know, that's, the old Lança used to say, [speaks Portuguese – don't need them, you don't need them. Look the stem is right there. It's on the wrong side, but it's there. You know, and it's just, it was just such a simple genuine type of music, and it helped you learn to listen at an early age, you know, because I was brought up with it. You know, and you heard all of these melodies in your head, right. And then when you'd start to play them, that's why they sat me between those other two guys to get as many notes as you can, because they knew the ear was going to take you to the right place, you know. And yah, that was the basis of being able, a very good site reader. You know what that is, right?

A: Yah.

J: You take music you never saw before and you [claps hands to a beat] and play you know. I did a thing one time, New England Intercollegiate Band. They were having it in Lowell and I auditioned for it. And I had to go down to MIT. By this time I had switched to playing trombone and bass trombone.

A: Wow.

J: John Corley was the bandmaster there. And I was studying with John Coffey. I went from Giblin when he died, I was still playing trumpet and I went to John Coffey in Boston, who was the bass trombonist of the Boston Symphony in the 40s and 50s. My audition went very well, I made First Chair Trombone in the New England Intercollegiate Band while at Lowell State.

A: Now what about some traditional Portuguese instruments? Things like mandolin and stuff. Did that end up working its way into popular music?

J: In Portugal it does.

A: What about here in Lowell though, during that time period 50s, 60s, 40s?

J: Well they were always (--) The clubs always had little Portuguese groups that come in.
(A: Okay) Cambridge is big in Portuguese Community too.

A: Okay.

J: Cambridge has a big Portuguese Community. The church, Saint Anthony's Church was a Portuguese Church in Cambridge. (A: Okay) It's a huge church. We used to (--) That's another place we used to do processions you know. We'd go there and play, play the procession into the church and the Masses were like an hour and a half, you know, sometimes two hours by the time the priest stopped talking and if they had a special priest come in, right. So they had all of these houses, right, in their cellars they had regular bars. They were not legal. These Portuguese guys had these bars in their cellar of the house and they'd sell beers like for fifty cents you know. And you'd go in there and have a few beers before the people came out of church. Then you'd go back [makes sounds] now I'm all set to do the rest of this gig. You know, those are "Marcha Graves." Those are marching like this. And that's tiring and wearing. It's like playing a concert while you're marching you know.

A: You did those in Lowell as well?

J: Oh yeah. Marcha Graves are for processions.

A: Okay.

J: You know most of the marches are in 4/4, which [makes music sounds] and then the music is difficult. It's as difficult as the rhapsodias for Christ sake and you're playing in the street, marching in the street at that slow tempo you know. Oh Jesus. Gloucester was the toughest, Gloucester Hills. We used to have to do the processions up there, the Feast, the blessing of the fleet, [repeats] blessing of the fleet. The Cardinal used to come.

A: Really.

J: And do blessing of the fleet. That was towards Labor Day I think, or something. And those, that was, awe that was tough, because that's all, Gloucester was all hills. You know, up one hill down the other hill. Up one hill down, that's the church. Not yet. Down the other hill back around the back of the church and up. Oh man! Jesus. I had steel chops.

A: Was there other types of processions besides that?

J: We used to do the Greek things (A: Yah?) in Lowell. Yah. I mean they were all at night and they give you these little strips of manuscript. Talk about bad manuscript. Some Greek wrote out these songs, right, and these little strips of manuscript paper, right. And we're playing at night, right. Then there was a church on Worthen Street, I think it's down now.

A: Yup, Saint George's.

J: Yah, we used to go from there down to the Transfiguration, the big, we hit all of the Greek churches, right, playing all of this Greek music. And the first time you do it, it's like the first time you played Portuguese music. Your eyes are squinting. Thank God you're young, you have good eyes, but still when it's dark out, right. So everybody was trying to figure out a way to get the light on the head. Now they have these bands with these lights, right (A: Yah) you can put on your head. They never had those then you know. Abel Alves put a flashlight on top of his band hat [laughing] and had the hat down here so he can see to play his trumpet. Oh yah, we did the Greek parades, the processions I guess they called them.

A: Yup.

J: We did the Polish ones. The Polish had their own band.

A: Okay.

J: But they always, you know, they always want to have more, more than one band you know, because back then people used to go to these things, stand out in the street. Like Lowell when we used to do the Memorial Day Parade, you couldn't stand. You couldn't find a place to stand along Gorham Street, and Central Street, and Merrimack Street. They were six deep.

A: Now with the Memorial Day Parade, was there more than one Portuguese Band participating in that?

J: Not when I was playing. It was just us.

A: Okay. So there wasn't another group around.

J: Not then. (A: Okay) The Holy Ghost Band, which is the one they have now, that came after we stopped.

A: Okay. Okay, and what year did you guys stop?

J: 65.

A: Why did you stop?

J: We were all in other parts of states, we took teaching gigs all over the different places in different cities and it just wasn't feasible to continue it, you know. And then nobody else wanted to pick it up back then. And Luis Gomes comes along from one of the Islands, I'm not sure which one and then they got a few guys together and then more guys started coming from the old country. And when they had (--)

A: Did people from the, some guys from the Portuguese Band go over to the Holy Ghost Band?

J: From our band?

A: Yah.

J: No. Well that's not true. When they first started it I did some gigs with them. I don't know if Richie did. He might have. Leo Foley, the guy I was telling you about and Wayne Branco and Lou Stamas. We had a handful of guys that went to help them out in the beginning until they got going.

A: What year did they start? Do you know?

J: I think it was the 60s. I think it was the 60s, (A: Yah) because we were still going right until the time that we stopped in 65.

A: And the folks from the Holy Ghost Band would have been the more recent immigrants, verses people that had been born in Lowell?

J: No, more recent immigrants.

A: Okay.

J: There are none that I knew of that were here while we were here.

A: Okay.

J: They came over. And as they came over from (--) You know the other thing is the trombones in the Islands in Portugal were pitched in a different key (A: Oh yah) than the trombones here.

A: So how did that affect the music?

J: You're pitching C concert.

A: Huh?

J: Well it didn't affect the music because the music was written for them that way, C trombone.

A: Okay.

J: You know, but then once they got here they all wanted to play the horns that were made here. So then it eventually all ironed itself out.

A: And so, because I don't understand the music here, so how would that affect? Tell me more about this because I don't really understand it.

J: Okay. Trombones now, and tubas, and euphoniums, all the low brass stuff you see around, around my desk here (A: Yah) right, those are all concert, what we call concert pitch in F clef, even though you're going to read more clefs if you have the knowledge too, right. And the trombones coming over, the Bb concert series, is a primary note on these horns. (A: Okay) [Sounds out], that's it okay. [Sounds out] okay, that's Bb concert series. Your horn, you pick it up and that's the main series. The horn is built in at B flat. Over there it was built on the note C, one note up, okay. So already the notes are being written for an instrument pitched in the key of C instead of pitched in the key of B flat. So the guys coming over here, they got the music here, [speaks in Portuguese], you know. Well that's the way we do it here pal. So then they had to eventually learn to transpose and then they started buying horns that were built here instead of using the ones out there.

A: Interesting.

J: Over there. Now most of them, except for the Islands, I don't know how they are in the Islands now, if they're still pitched in C concert. I'm not sure.

A: John, a final couple of questions. How do you think the Portuguese Community has changed over time?

J: They're not working in the mills anymore.

A: That's probably not a bad thing.

J: No, no. For me it's changed a lot because I have, and I'm not saying this because I'm proud or anything, I have not been a church goer in many years. And not because I don't think people shouldn't go, you know. George Carlin said on Facebook somewhere, "You know, I should be able to practice my religion without you forcing yours on me," something to that effect you know. I'm just not a practicing Catholic. I believe whatever you want to believe in is fine. Just don't tell me what to believe in, like Carlin just said. So in that sense it's changed for me. People coming over (--) You know the world today with things like Facebook, you know, all of these things you can get into, and tweets and twarts and all those different things, right, the world is so small now you know. Today within two seconds I could be writing to somebody in the Azores and I do. When we went over we met a woman housemaid, her name was Leite. She wasn't born Leite. She married a guy who was Leite, right. I still communicate with her. Facebook.

A: Yah.

J: First it was email, now it's Facebook, right. She sends pictures of her daughter and stuff, you know. The world has gotten so small that the similarities are no longer there. You know, I guess if I was living on Back Central Street now and still going to church on a regular basis, maybe nothing has changed. They still have the Red Club, the Blue Club. They still have the soccer stuff going on. They still have a band, which I'm happy for. I'm happy for all of those guys that are playing and doing the gigs, you know, but I'm just so far removed from it, except for my, we did the recording and hopefully I'll be able to you know, get some more money to do another recording, some different music.

A: Yah, yah.

J: But for me it's like night and day. I still love it. I still respect it. I respect the Portuguese as a community, as a lifestyle, as I don't know, my heritage, right. I still love my heritage. I'm so happy I was brought up Portuguese and I know another language. I learned German only because I was there three years. And I can get by in Italy, because when I was in Italy for two weeks when I was in the 7th Army Symphony, I had three Jews go with me, right. We rented a little Volkswagen, and I spoke Portuguese the whole time we were in Italy for two weeks. One of them, the viola player who just retired two years ago from the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, after 38 years came to Concord, Mass. [Massachusetts]. He came up from New York and we met. We had a nice three-hour lunch, right. He says, I still don't know how you spoke Portuguese for two weeks in Italy and they understood everything you were saying? I said, "I just moved my arms more." I made bigger gestures that's all, but that's all I did. I spoke Portuguese to them and they understood me, you know.

A: Interesting. Now was there any, when the folks came over after World War II, the kind of second immigration or it could have been the third, but the post war immigration from the Islands, was there a seamless transition for them integrating into the community, or?

J: Once again I'm you know, I'm kind of removed from that, but from what little I know from the talking to Frank Sousa and Carlos the "Gutter Helmet" man there he calls himself, they just came in and they (--) Look, this gutter man owns a company putting up gutters you know, on your house. They just come in, find something that they're good at and they do it. And when my parents come over at the turn of the 19th century, they came in early 1900s. They got married in 1918, or something, they came here and they did whatever there was. It was mills, that's all there was, right? They didn't have a trade but they had farming, right, and fishing, but they didn't have a technical trade of any kind. So my father was good with his hands, he became a loom fixer, you know, and my mother learned the spinning and weaving and all that kind of stuff. But there just doesn't seem (--) And because of the world being so small now, before these people come here now they already know what it is here. There are no secrets anymore. When my parents come over on the boat, [speaks in Portuguese]. They see the Statue of Liberty, "Whoa, what is this?" Going through Ellis Island they all got documented. Don't get me talking about these illegals now. My parents had to get documented, right, their names are still down there, right. They come on this island, "Oh my God what is this," you know? And they got on a bus or train. I don't know how the hell they got up here, right. But no, I mean it was seamless for them because there were others here before.

A: Um, okay.

J: Who taught them the ropes, you know, come here. Oh there was the housing for the mills. Right, it was the mill girls housing, right? The men they had to just find a place, you know, with relatives or friends. But you know today they already know before they get here you know. I mean it's like when we went to Portugal and the Azores, I spent two solid months on the computer designing our two-week itinerary day by day, almost hour by hour. When we got there it was, it was easy, right. All of a sudden I got on the plane, this Portuguese speaking plane, right. That was one month after 9/11.

A: Um wow!

J: My oldest sister Wilhelmina was still alive. She said (--) [Phone rings] If this is that guy again. [Answers phone] Oh, to synopsise it, no I don't think there's any problem with them integrating themselves into communities here because the internet has cleared up anything they might have, any problems they might have had. They know where the people are. They can contact them within minutes, or less than a minute you know. And so no I mean.

A: Good. Well John thanks very much for sharing all of these great stories today.

J: Yah. Well hey, it was my pleasure.

Interview ends

