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ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**INFORMANT: GABRIELA OLIVEIRA  
CONDUCTED BY: BARBARA FERTIG  
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**O = OLIVEIRA  
F = FERTIG**

**LFP BF-A004**

F: Uhm, start out, if you would, by telling me where you were born.

O: I was born in Portugal, in one of the [Azoreans] I-Islands

F: Uh-huh. Which island?

O: [Pico].

F: [Pico]. (O: yeah) Actually I've never met anybody from Pico before. Ahm, and when did you come here?

O: When I was six.

F: So you came with your parents?

O: Mm-hm. And my brother.

F: And your brother. And, why did you come here; why did the family decide to come here?

O: For a lot of different reasons; one of which was um, my father's health. He didn't do too well in the islands. (F: mm-hm) Needed the different type of climate. Another reason was for--I guess economic opportunity. There wasn't much there (F: mm-hm) in Portugal. Well, those are the two main reasons. (F: mm-hm) And-- (F: mm-hm) for, to provide education for the children.

F: Did you come straight to Lowell?

O: Yes we did.

F: You had family here?

O: We had an uncle here, yeah.

F: Mm-hm. Uhm, so you were educated completely in the Lowell school system?

O: Completely.

F: Mm-hm. And talk English just like one of us, but also talk Portuguese just fine. So Portuguese must be spoken in your family.

O: Yes.

F: Mm-hm. And, how did you get involved in [Lupa]?

O: Through the family. My brother was involved and my father was involved with (F: mm-hm) it, too. So I just kind of happened upon it, too.

F: Tell me what involvement with [Lupa] is. I mean um--

O: Okay, it provides a transition for the newcomers and--the Portuguese newcomers into the area. (F: mm-hm) A lot of times they come into the area and they don't know where to go. Like for instance like a medical appointments; or um--they just don't--they're not familiar with the, with the area and its resources, and we provide that. (F: mm-hm) A lot of times Mary, the social worker, she'll take them to the doctor's and translate for them. And get them hooked up with the services in the area.

F: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Uhm, so it's any kind of social service at all that, that, that, that people need?

O: Yup. (F: mm-hm) Especially like when they come from Portugal they don't know the language, and a lot of them are older, too and it's hard for them to develop the language. (F: sure) And Mary provides that service for them. (F: mm-hm) She gets them hooked up with, you know, the area services. And she'll go to the schools and get the children enrolled, and help them get en-enrolled. (F: uh-huh) And provide a basis for that.

F: Uhm, d-do you also do anything about helping people find jobs?

O: Yup. She'll, she will go with um, some of the, the people, the clients and maybe fill, help them fill out an application, and do things like that.

F: Now, uhm, d-Mary is the one I've met here I guess. (O: mm-hm) Uhm, when she isn't here do other people fill in for her? It sounds like there, you must be very busy.

O: It's busy, but um, but now we have another part-time person, too. We'll try to get her um back into (F: mm-hm) the job. (F: mm-hm) She was away for a while.

F: Did [Lupa] help your family when you came here? Did you--

O: No. (F: no?) It wasn't open then.

F: Oh, it's happened since then. (O: yeah) Is your father then one of the organizers of it?

O: No, he's not. (F: ah) He just, he d-, he um, became involved with it about four years ago.

F: Mm-hm. Can you tell me who did organize it?

O: I'm not really sure. (F: ah-huh) Mary probably could tell you, but I don't, not really sure.

F: And you're the president.

O: Right now I'm the acting president. [both talk at once] We don't have a president. I'm really the treasurer.

F: And do you have a board of directors as well?

O: Yes, we do.

F: And, um, do they have regular meetings?

O: Yeah. We have them usually about once every six weeks or so.

F: Uhm, and I suppose you have to raise funds.

O: Yup. A lot of times we have festivals and raise some funds, but that doesn't, that doesn't help out a lot; (F: uh-huh) so we, we, we have to go through the grants and stuff. Write up proposals and--

F: To the state?

O: To the state. (F: state)

F: And the federal?

O: No, (F: no) the state.

F: Uhm, Father Silva tells me that the festival of St. John is sponsored by [Lupa]. (O: yes) Can you tell me a bit about the festival? (O: mmm--) Well, start out by telling me uhm wh-wh-whether that takes place also in the Azores, or in Portugal.

O: I suppose it does, [laughs] (F: yeah, you--) it does but um I'm not too familiar with that aspect of it. (F: mm-hm, mm-hm) But um, yeah, we have that every year here. (F: mm-hm) And the board of directors, we um, we organize it. It's a very lengthy process. (F: uh-huh) We s-, we have a lot of, a lot of booths, a lot of um, we sell a lot of food and wine, beer and we have a uh, a bazaar. I don't know if you're familiar with that.

F: No. Where do you hold this?

O: At the St. Anthony's Church parking lot. (F: oh, you do) Yeah, we ha--usually have bands (F: mm-hm) there.

F: Is there a procession?

O: There is. That's usually--it's usually a three day activity. (F: ah) So and like Friday night, Saturday and Sunday. And Sunday is usually the procession.

F: And, um at other times are there, what, band concerts? Concerts of different sorts. I mean--

O: Well, we have that at the festival, too.

F: The fe--that's what I meant, (O: yeah) that's what I meant. (O: yeah) At the festival, [both talk]

O: There's dancing. Usually at night the band will come in and they'll dance.

F: Uh-huh. And do, does the local Lowell Portuguese band also participate in that?

O: The marching band?

F: The marching band. Yeah, mm-hm.

O: Yeah, they do.

F: Do you know who the director is of that? Just off the--

O: Actually um, Louis [Gomes].

F: Louis [Gomes]. (O: yeah) Oh good. I think that I am seeing him. So that's fine. Uhm, is there, is there a statue of St. Johns in, at, o-of St. John in the church?

O: Actually I don't think so. No.

F: No. Uhm, do you, d-does the celebration of the festival fall on, on the saint's day? Or near it?

O: N-near it. It's usually, (F: uh-huh) we ha-, we have it in June. Usually it's--try to get it on the--close by. On the, on a, (F: ah-huh) on a weekend. (F: mm-hm)

F: N-and that contributes some amount to the, to [Lupa's] treasury, but it (O: it does) also, good public relations?

O: It's good public relations. (F: yeah) It gets the folks out there in the community. (F: uh-huh) It's really a very festive atmosphere.

F: And do people--are, are, are there Portuguese people who find out about [Lupa] that way? How do people usually find out about you?

O: Ah, word of mouth. Word of mouth, (F: yeah) yeah. And it's, it--basically it's just the elderly that we help out. Because they don't have--there's a lot of the um families, they have their children that will help them (F: mm-hm) translate or do some outreach; but a lot of these elderly, elderly people don't have that. (F: mm-hm) So they come to [Lupa]. (F: ah-huh)

F: Uhm, are most of your people here in Back Central, (O: yeah) then? (O: yeah) So it's, it's very much a community organization. (O: very) Ah-oh, y-, oh you should tell me who your other officers are I guess.

O: Okay, right now I'm, you know, we're short of some officers. [both laugh] (F: uh-huh) Um--basically it's Manuel [Martinano], and Tony Costa. We, we, recently we had a few resign so right now we're lacking (F: mm-hm) directors. Trying to do some outreach to get some, too. (F: mm-hm) That's difficult because it's a voluntary directorship or whatever. (F: mm-hm) It's hard to get people involved.

F: And um, do the, do the people who run [Lupa] also live here in Back Central? Or--

O: No. (F: no) I live in um Chelmsford.

F: So you have to commute into, (O: mm-hm) to everything (O: yeah) that you do. (O: yeah)

O: One of the othd-the other um directors is Mr. [Oblino Medina]. (F: mm-hm) I think that's it for now. Basically it's not many. We're only four of us now running it, so it's kind of difficult.

F: Let me, let me just, if you don't mind switching topics, I would really love to know what traditions are important to your family. Are there things that, do you kn--are there traditional foods that are important to you or [breathes in deeply] ways of celebrating Christmas, other holidays?

O: Well, Christmas is pretty special to us. (F: mm-hm) We um, we celebrate everything basically on Christmas Eve. (F: mm-hm. what do--) We'll have the family over and just gather

around. Our friends will come over and, to celebrate, talk and eat, and have a nice time. And then we'll go to the midnight mass. That's pretty traditional. [both laugh] (F: uh-huh) And then we'll come back and open up all the gifts and stay up until like-- (F: yeah) stay up until like five or six in the morning and then basically sleep the rest of the day. [both laugh]

F: Um, are there special foods that you have when you have people over on Christmas Eve?

O: Well, actually uh my mother--it's tr-tradition to have codfish on Christmas Eve. (F: uh-huh) We have that. Basically I really don't like it but-- [both laugh and talk]

F: How is it fixed?

O: I really couldn't tell you. (F: uh-huh) Sh-mother does that.

F: Is it fresh cod or salty (O: yeah) cod? Fresh cod. (O: yeah) Uhm, do you have any favorite Portuguese foods?

O: I'm probably the worst person to interview because--not really. [both laugh]

F: Do you have any favorite American foods?

O: Yeah, yeah. Actually, I love seafoods though. That's, I guess, Portuguese, too. (F: uh-huh I guess it is, yeah)

F: Okay. Is there anything else that I didn't ask about [Lupa] that I should have asked?

O: [pause: 5 sec.] Mm. Not that I can think of. Basically we um, we help about seventy people a month. That's, that's important to know. (F: yeah, I guess it is) Uh-huh. It's usually like the same. They, They h--people usually come back, too.

F: Are some people necessarily just dependent upon you to--on a continuing basis?

O: Some are. Some are. (F: mm-hm) Because there, there, like I said there are elder-- (F: mm-hm) elders, so. (F: mm-hm) They tend to use it as their ma-- (F: uh-huh) you know, main resource.

F: Uhm, and then younger people would come to you to do, to do things like get their kids into school and so forth.

O: Yeah. Basically that's basically a one-time service. With like the younger-- (F: right, and then they--) Once you get them hooked up with the services (F: yeah) they're, they're all set. (F: uh-huh) But it's the elderly that we have--we keep assisting. (F: mm-hm, mm-hm) Because they re-they really don't have anybody else to help them. So.

F: Do, are they, are they fairly comfortable among a network of friends here in Back Central, or are they kind of i-isolated f-family by family, these older people who you help?

O: Um, it's a mixture. (F: ah) You know, some are isolated. (F: mm-hm) Others have like, close network but again you know they're all usually the same age, so they (F: mm-hm) tend to rely on [Lupa]. (F: mm-hm)

F: And I guess I should ask you, too, among the people who come to you who are, who are very newly immigrated, um are they mostly coming from the mainland, from the Azores or from Madeira?

O: Uhm, (F: d-) basically mostly from the Azores.

F: I think we've locked John out. [both talk]

O: One minute.

[tape stops]

F: --linguice.

O: Basically she just fries it up. Keeps the flavor in it. (F: uh-huh) Yeah.

F: Is that what most peo-- Does she add it to soups and things like that? (O: no) No.

O: No. [barely audible] She doesn't. That's I guess is the other um Portuguese sausage. It's g--it's called chorizo. (F: mm-hm) And that's what they ah use in the soups and the-- (F: oh, that's it! okay) Yeah.

F: And what kind of cheese? Are there Portuguese cheeses? I don't know (O: yeah, they um--) anything about them?

O: There's one that's called, well it's from St. George's Island. And that's really a s-um spicy cheese. (F: mm-hm)

F: Spicy?

O: Well, sharp. (F: shar-ah) Yeah. It's really--and it's delicious. We have other milk cheeses, too which is-- (F: mm-hm, mm-hm)

F: I noticed a cheese down at Martin's um Fish and Produce that looks like--I mean, it's a white cheese. It looks like a cream cheese. Is that what it is?

O: Yeah, that's--yeah, it's like a cream cheese. (F: yeah) It's, it's, it's a little s-saltier, and it's delicious. (F: mmm)

F: Okay, Jack, you finished? (Jack: nope; almost though; very close) [laughs] Well, turn us loose, please! (Jack: --so I can turn the exposure here, that's all) Oh, all right. Okay. Well--

I'll let Gabriela off the hook.

[end of tape]