

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
SAAB CENTER FOR PORTUGUESE STUDIES
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: JOHN LEITE

INTERVIEWER: GRAY FITZSIMONS

DATE: February 8, 2023

Biographical Sketch:

John Leite was born in Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1933. His father, Belarmino (1892-1970) and mother, Violante J. (Sousa) Leite (1894-1979) were born on the island of Graciosa in the Azores. They immigrated to the U.S. in the mid-1920s, initially settling in Lowell, before moving to Manchester, New Hampshire, they worked for a number of years at the Amoskeag Mill. Belarmino Leite worked in the highly skilled job of loom fixer and Viloante Leite worked many years as a spinner. Around 1936 they returned to Lowell, living there the remainder of their lives. They had three daughters and one son, John J. who was educated in Lowell's public schools. Belarmino, a trombonist, played in and managed Lowell's Portuguese Colonial Band. John Leite joined the band when he was a 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:

As in two other oral history interviews with Mr. Leite, this Interview includes a great deal of information on Mr. Leite's career as a musician and some of the well-known composers, conductors, and musicians whom he knew and with whom he performed. But unlike the other interviews, this oral history covers his recollections of the Portuguese "Back Central" neighborhood in Lowell and his childhood, into his early teens, as an altar boy at St. Anthony's Church. It also includes additional information about his parents, their work in the textile industry, and their home in South Lowell.

J=JOHN

G=GRAY

G: It's February 8, Wednesday. I'm at the home of John Leite, and here we go.

J: My dad was a loom fixer, and he made a piece of equipment somehow to make the loom run better. Right?

G: Right.

J: He didn't get a dime for it, you know, I mean the powers that be did.

G: The company did well.

J: But he could fix anything. It didn't matter what it was. And my mother started as a bobbin girl. Then she went as a spinner, and then she became a weaver. And I would visit the mills once in a while. I mean I remember the noise you know. They must have all gone deaf. And the shuttle going back, [makes sounds of shuttle going back and forth], you know, the weavers. And if there was a break in the line you had to go [makes sound]. And she had fast hands. Incredible and getting paid crap for it. And the companies are making millions of dollars on the silk. That was a silk mill.

G: Yah, this was the Newmarket Mills, right? The Silk Mills.

J: Yah, Newmarket. They called it the Silk Mills. Across from Athenian Corner. That one there.

G: Your dad, and your mom, they were there a long time, right?

J: Yah, they were there. First, well Wilhelmina was born really early, when they got married. And then Mary came along twelve years later. And then Helen four years after that. And then the last four years, myself. But with Wilhelmina, she was a secretary in Robey Shoe. You know where that fifth-floor thing is in the mills from Jackson Street to Middlesex Street?

G: Yes.

J: Those mills there?

G: Yes, the Appleton and the Hamilton Mills, formerly.

J: Yah, and you go underneath and out. They sell records up there, Dave [David Perry].

G: Right, Mill No. 5.

J: Yah, No. 5, well that's where, exactly where Robey Shoe was.

G: Oh, is that where? Robey Shoe, on that same floor?

J: Yah, I remember that. Because he told me, Dave Perry, the record guy, told me that they found a last, you know a true last, in the wall, on that floor. I said, well I worked there after I, just after I got out of high school.

G: Did you work at Robey Shoe?

J: Yah.

G: I didn't know that.

J: I was a shipper/receiver with the older guy who was there, and I was you know, learning.

G: But your sister Wilhelmina worked there?

J: My sister Wilhelmina worked in the office. The shipper/receiver says, "Hey, grab a broom." "It looks clean here." "No, no, see that first row of women? The last? Go down there and clean under her." She's wide open, you know. And, you know, of course I was always doing a lot of cleaning. That was a

day full. But then I left that, and I went to Jay's Radio on Bridge Street. Right on the corner of Paige. Was it Paige, where it comes around down like this?

G: I think it is Paige.

J: On French Street.

G: On French Street.

J: Bridge Street was the main door. One of the owners, George Ash, was the Mayor of Lowell. And he was a part owner.

G: Oh, was he really? I didn't know that.

J: Yah, of Jay's. And they had a store in Lawrence. So, there's a kid in Lawrence, Louie and myself, used to put TV aerials up on houses. You had to take four ten-foot galvanized poles, clamp them together so you'd have forty feet height. Then the butterfly antenna, right. And we'd take turns going up the roof. It was a tough time, and tough thing to carry that thing up there.

G: I can imagine.

J: It was heavy. But the guy on the roof had to take it all the way to the peak. Walk along the roof to the chimney. Put the chimney straps and put it in, you know, and that's before cell phones. You know, you're yelling down, turn it the other way! No, no, no, a little bit more. Oh, okay, you got it. Okay, picture looks good. Lock it up. Come on down. And we did this on Pine Street, which was a double-decker. Of course, now they're all condos on Pine Street. And diagonally across from the school. And it was his turn, Louie's turn to go up. It was a slate roof.

G: Slippery.

J: And they're always losing slates, you know. And his turn to go. He goes up the ladder. He walked up. I used to go up on my bum, right. He'd just walk up the roof. The slate let go. He came down two stories. Boom! Fortunately, there was grass there. He got up and he says, "Son of a bitch!" And he ran up the ladder, and he ran up the roof. He was a crazy bastard. The highest one I had to go in was in North Billerica, four stories. Those aluminum ladders would bend like that as you're walking up.

G: Yes, I remember. I know what you mean. I've done it.

J: Four stories, that's a long way up. And then going up to the peak, and going over the strapping, and all that stuff.

G: It's a young man's job.

J: Jeeze, I was eighteen.

G: Well actually, here's the thing. I was going to ask you, you were born in Manchester, right? And then you guys moved to Lowell I think in 38 or 39?

J: Helen and I were born in Manchester, the one closest to me. The one that's four years older than I. The first two were born her [in Lowell].

G: Yes.

J: You know, Wilhelmina and Mary. And then Helen and I were born in Manchester. They went where the work was, The Amoskeag Mills.

G: Yes, Amoskeag, right.

J: So, they had to go work at Amoskeag Mills, and we had cousins up there anyhow. So, we had connections in Manchester. But then they moved back to Lowell. I was three.

G: So, the thing is, I found through the City Directories that your family moved to Bowden Street in South Lowell.

J: Twice.

G: Yah, I know, exactly. I was going to ask you about that.

J: First time was fifty-six and fifty-eight Bowden, a double decker. Mr. Rebello owned the house, and he had a grape garden, grapevines in the back. And I used to help him pick the grapes. So, this one Christmas he said, "I want to buy you a sled. You don't have a sled." There used to be a toy store downtown across Shattuck Street and where the bank is now. Then there's like a little sub shop, or something in there at the corner. The next store, which has changed about a million things. That used to be a toy store.

G: Was it?

J: And he said, "Pick any sled." They're all hanging on the wall. I picked a Donald Duck sled. It was cute. I liked it, you know. So, he bought it. He comes home, he brings it home. My father looked at it. He says, "How much was that sled?" Asking Mr. Rebello. And he told him. He said, "Why did you spend so much money?" He says, "Hey, he's a good kid. He's your son, but he's a good kid. And he helps me with the grapes. That's it. I bought it. You don't have to buy it." And so, I had a Donald Duck sled parading around Bowden Street. We lived at fifty-eight [Bowden Street], upstairs.

G: So, Mr. Rebello was Portuguese, right?

J: Mr. Rebello, of course.

G: And do you know where he was from? What island?

J: No.

G: Okay, that's all right.

J: No, I'm sorry, I don't. I was little.

G: No, no, of course, I know. But, your parents moved back to Lowell. Did they know Rebello beforehand, or did they just find an ad for this two-family house?

J: Well, you know, in the church. The church makes the connections. And so, you talk to Father Grillo, you know, somebody always knows. Oh, Mr. Rebello has a place. You know, that's how. It's a network like today.

G: Let me ask you though, when your parents moved to Manchester, they didn't continue to go to Saint Anthony's did they?

J: Oh no. No.

G: They were at a church up in Manchester.

J: Yah. Don't ask me the name of it. I have no clue.

G: No, no, that's okay.

J: I was just born.

G: 1933. So anyway, so your parents moved back to Lowell. And my question is, they didn't move to the Back Central neighborhood. They moved to Bowden Street.

J: Yah, that's what was available.

G: Right. But I was wondering, what are your earliest memories of Back Central, the neighborhood?

J: Well, I told you I had an aunt and uncle there.

G: Your aunt was on Chapel Street.

J: Yah, but I had an uncle and aunt on Back Central Street, that big, long Nolan Block.

G: Oh, the Nolan Block.

J: On the right-hand side. I don't know how many stories, four or five stories or something.

G: I think it's four.

J: There's a market on the corner. And my uncle lived there, my father's brother, José . And he was sickly. And his wife was a [whistles]. As a kid, you're walking in there, and it's a dark hallway. And there's one sixty-watt bulb hanging down on a wire, right, from the ceiling. And as a kid you're walking up. It's scary. You're walking up the stairs, fourth floor, right. It was after Mass, right. And then as you walk along there's a hallway. And the hallway has all these windows on Central Street. And she had garlic tied to all the locks.

G: Garlic?

J: Garlic.

G: Why?

J: To keep the spirits away! I'm telling you she was a strange lady. So, we finally get into the apartment, and my father says, "Mude mulher!" She [my aunt replied] "Não vá!" My father got pissed, right. And he walked right past her. She was a bitch. And he opens the door, and he closes the door and visits with his brother, you know, because he was really sick. I don't know what he had. But she was just a whacko. And she would have fought my father, you know, if we weren't all there.

G: She was a tough cookie still.

J: Yah, that's how I remember her. But he, José , was a wonderful man.

J: And he was a wonderful man, you know. Anyway, it was scary to visit that place. The other place on Chapel Street was brighter, and it was only two stories.

G: Was it a double house?

J: Double decker, yah.

G: Double decker. Did a few families live there, or just a couple?

J: Well, there were two-families in a double decker. You know, they'd go by how high, how many floors, and you put another family in. I'm sure there were some places that had families in one place. I didn't know any of those.

G: So, this was your aunt on Chapel Street.

J: Yah.

G: Which aunt? One of your father's sisters?

J: My mother's aunt? I think it was like a grand aunt, or something.

G: Got you, okay.

J: Something like that. She was a nice lady. We used to go to another relative, further down Chapel Street. I forget who it was. And the guy used to make his moonshine. Most of them did. Most of the old guys, they made their moonshine. And I've been there as a little kid, and I see the old guys going, taking shots and a bite of a fig. You know, you get a fig, you get a date, you know, and you take a shot, and then you take a bite, and you take another shot, take a bite, you know. My dad could do that like poof. He was good at doing it. So, as I grew older, and now I'm fifteen and I'm saying, hey "Pai, agora?" Yah, all right. And I take a shot, right. And I said, "I'm going to do this. Took a bite of the date, took a swig. Oh gee! It's great!" It was barely a drop. Oh Christ, it burned so much. This was moonshine. Oh my god. So, I said, "Why do you guys drink this?" And he says, "You don't know how to drink it." Slow, little sips. Bite of the date, another sip. Bite of the date. Well, some of them used to zap it, you know. The second one they'd do it slower, you know. First one they go, zap it. And then the second one, okay, now we'll eat the dates. But, you know, that's my biggest memory. Well, the other memory of Back Central Street is the Portuguese Band.

G: Yes, I was going to ask you about that.

J: I started playing trumpet when I was younger. And I was thirteen when I joined the band. And I was taking lessons with John, Mr. John Giblin. You always addressed him that way. Mr. John J. Giblin.

G: G I B L I N?

J: Yah. And he had a studio in the Rialto Building. And right on the corner, the tower, the second floor. It had windows, you know, on both sides. Beautiful studio. And when it started off my father would take me up there. And after that, you know, go take your lesson. And he was a wonderful man. He was a high school band director. That's how I met him. He played cornet. Lowell used to have a lot of opera houses. And he played in the pits of the opera. He had a tongue like a snake. Oh man could he tongue. And every student of his had to learn single, double, and triple tonguing. My graduation from Morey Junior High, of course it's not a junior high anymore. It's an elementary school now. They tore it down. The original one was a junior high.

G: A junior high school.

J: You go up to ninth grade. From my ninth grade graduation, Doris Fein, played piano. She was a concert pianist. The piano was up on the stage. And I said, I got to nail this thing, the triple tonguing. [Makes triple tonguing sounds] The whole thing is all triple tonguing, right. And at the end it was a high A. And I said, if I miss that everything is lost, right?

G: Right.

J: [Makes more tonguing sounds and hits high A], and I hit it, right, and I wouldn't let it go. And she's up on the stage like this. Hey, when are you going to end this thing, you know. I was so happy I nailed that sucker. I held it and held it. And then I went "yo!". And she went [makes sound]. Oh, I was so happy to hit that high A.

G: Gee, I mean you were what? Fourteen, fifteen at the time?

J: I graduated. I was sixteen when I graduated from high school.

G: Were you? Sixteen?

J: Well sixteen March 31st, my senior year. I didn't turn seventeen until March 31st. So, only two months left for high school. So basically, my whole senior year I was sixteen. So, you take four years off of that. I was young. Twelve or thirteen? Something like that. And I used to practice every day, two and a half hours. We lived in a tenement, Wilhelmina's house, on A Street; fifty-three and fifty-five A Street.

G: Yah, you guys moved from Bowden to A Street, in the Highlands.

J: Yah.

G: Did your father rent, or did he buy that house on A Street?

J: No. That was Wilhelmina's house.

G: Oh, that was Wilhelmina's house?

J: My oldest sister, and her husband Gabe Gouveia.

G: Gouveia, okay.

J: Yah, Gabe Gouveia. And they owned it, and we rented the top, second floor.

G: I see, okay.

J: And those houses were really close, right? And I used to practice two and a half hours every night, and nobody ever complained. If I were on a gig, they'd call my house to see if I was sick. Honest to God.

G: Where's John? Why isn't he practicing?

J: Yah, how come John's not practicing? He's playing a job. You know, he has to go play a job. I started down at the Cosmo, I was fifteen. I had a trio.

G: Oh! Was that your first professional gig if you will?

J: Yah. Well not counting the band.

G: Right, but you got paid at the Cosmo.

J: Oh yah.

G: Fifteen, wow.

J: Yah, I was fifteen. I had a trio.

G: Were you playing the Trombone, or the Trumpet?

J: Trumpet. I was still on a Trumpet through high school. And so, Sidney Richardson was at piano. He was a classical guy. He could read anything. Ray Robey was the drummer, my buddy.

G: Ray? What's his last name.

J: Robey.

G: Robey.

J: R O B E Y. And we were friends all through high school.

G: So, you had a trio?

J: I had a trio, yah.

G: Oh nice!

J: I owned a trio. And we used to get paid five bucks a night. The Cosmo, on Market Street, the building is almost all gone, except for the end.

G: It's all gone. Yah, I know.

J: Well, the end where the Sac Club was. Now that's a restaurant.

G: Believe me, I fought to keep that building up, but anyway.

J: It was a long building.

G: I know.

J: And where I played, the lounge was on the righthand side, okay.

G: As you faced it, it was on the righthand side.

J: Yah, there was a big lounge in the middle. But there was this small lounge, right, and it had high booths and stuff. And we'd get paid five bucks a night.

G: You don't have any photos from the Cosmo, do you, of you playing?

J: No.

G: Sorry, go ahead.

J: There was a woman there that used to do bjs for two bucks, right.

G: I believe it.

J: So, I got home two nights a week, Friday, and Saturday, with three bucks. It was a good two-dollar buy.

G: So, again, you were about fifteen or sixteen years old.

J: Fifteen, yah. And that's where I met Jack Kerouac first time.

G: Did you really?

J: Yah.

G: You met him at the Cosmo?

J: He used to go to all the clubs on Moody Street. They used to say "Moodsy" Street. You're going to "Moodsy" Street. So yah, there was a lot of clubs.

G: Yah, I understand that he used to sip a few there.

J: He used to go around to all the clubs. And he came this one night, just one time, sat down and he listened, you know. And when we ended, playing the tune, or whatever it was, he said, "Gee, you guys sound really good. Keep it up."

G: Interesting. John, if you were fifteen, that would have been in forty-eight, or so. Interesting.

J: So, anyhow, that's the first time. The funny thing is that when I eventually met Dave Amram in Europe.

G: I know, you were in Germany.

J: Yah, Seventh Army Symphony.

G: Who could believe it, right?

J: You know what my first assignment was when they put me over there? First, I had to audition for the Eighteenth Army Band in Devens, Fort Devens.

G: Yes.

J: And so, it was an opening for euphonium. You know what that is? A small tuba. There was an opening for the euphonium there. And so now I was studying with John Coffey in Boston. He was the Bass Trombonist for the Boston Symphony, you know, under Koussevitzky, and then Munch, during that time.

G: He was the Bass Trombonist?

J: Bass Trombonist, yah.

G: What's his name again?

J: John Coffey.

G: Coffey.

J: C O F F E Y. He had the studio across the street from Symphony Hall.

G: So, you studied with him?

J: Yah, I studied with him.

G: Oh wow! Is that where you learned the bass trombone?

J: Most of the guys who were traveling, there were a lot of traveling bands then, you know, name bands, Tommy Dorsey and all these guys, and guys would stop off at John to get an upgrade on, hey, I have this problem, I have that problem.

G: No kidding.

J: Oh yah, he'd straighten them out, you know. He was a wonderful guy. I was there taking lessons one time and this guy comes in with a suit, three-piece suit, and he wraps on the door. There was a big studio. The second studio was big. The first one was cramped. First one was, you know the BU Theater

across? Well on the righthand side. There's a sleezy bar down at the bottom. And then you got up to, I think he was up on the fourth floor. He had it up there, a studio, but then he moved over this way, over a men's store on this side, on the corner. He had a studio. That was a nice one. A nice big window and everything. It had little rooms. So, I'm taking a lesson with him. Now I'm older. I'm already back from Germany. The trombone, right. And this guy in a three-piece suit knocks on, in the inside window where his lesson was, there was a glass window so you could see. Oh, John says, "Who's that?" I said, "I don't know." So, he goes out there. He says, "I'm from the IRS and I understand you're selling [fake] music books and not recording anything." It used to be fake books, you know, you could get a million tunes out of the books. And he used to sell them for ten bucks. Most of the guys were selling them for twenty, twenty-five, thirty. He was trying to help the kids. You know, so he says, "Yah." "Do you have anything?" He said, "Yah, I have a thing there. See it. I got them stacked up there." And he says, "You got to pay for those. You haven't paid for any of that. You can't do this anymore. You have a two thousand dollar fine."

G: Wow.

J: So, he said, "Look kid. Here's two-hundred bucks, cash. See you later. Keep the cash." The guy walked out.

G: He paid them off. So, did you learn the bass trombone from John Coffey?

J: No, actually. Well, I did, later I did. But when I went to my first assignment after I left the Eighteenth Army Band at Fort Devens.

G: This is after you had mustered out of the army?

J: No, no, no. I had to go down to Fort Dix for training.

G: I'm sorry. You learned the euphonium at, or you were playing the euphonium at Fort Devens though, right?

J: Yah, but that's after Fort Dix. I had to go to Fort Dix.

G: Okay. That's where you did your basic training?

J: Yah. December, January, February. Three coldest months of the year. Well, one time we had M1 rifles. I was a marksman M1. I could shoot anything at a hundred yards. Those rifles were great. We're all lying down on the snow. And we had the big green coats that went down to here, with the brass buttons, and the pack and stuff. So, we're all lying down shooting the M1s. It was time to roll over. Okay, get up. We're all frozen to the ground with the buttons. So, he comes to the first kid on the squad, and he said, "Get up!" He said, "I can't." He said, "Oh yah." He grabs him by the collar like this. Rip! And all the buttons were in the ice. "How the hell did my buttons?" "Dig them out with your bayonet." So, he did it to all of us, the whole squad. So, we had to dig him out, right, go back to the building and sew the frick'in buttons on. But anyhow, after I did that, I was the only guy coming back to Massachusetts. Most of them were going to Oklahoma, Alabama, you know. "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going back home." So, I had to audition first. When I went for the audition John Coffey (--)

G: Where was the audition?

J: Up at Fort Devens.

G: At Fort Devens, okay.

J: And John Coffey says, "Go ahead and do that." I said, "I don't have a euphonium." He said, "For Christ sake, take one from your high school. What, you want me to take the audition for you?" I said, "Sure." I got a horn out of the high school, you know, and I was a trumpet player, right. So, I went up to Fort Devens. The Warrant Officer says, "Okay, you read F clef?" "No." You know, that's bass clef. I was a trumpet player. I had to read in treble clef. It's called transposed treble. It's not concert treble. And so, he said, "Well all right, but if you can play, I'll give you six weeks to learn the F clef." "Yes sir." So, I began the thing, and I whaled through everything. And so, he said, "Okay, you're in."

G: You made it.

J: Yah, I made it. I don't have to go to Oklahoma, or you know.

G: So, were you shipped to Germany?

J: I was at [Fort Devens] first. I was living at home on Sayles Street now. Sayles Street was the first home my dad bought. You know, beautiful, double, a lawn, yard, everything. Actually, the guy across the street's sister is living there now. But I used to get picked up by Bob something, a French horn player who lived in Tewksbury. He used to pick me up every morning. It was like a day gig. We'd drive up there, play the gigs. You know, the rehearsals, march around. At the end, come home. I was living at home for Christ sake. How do they think I could go out and live in the barracks at all up there. And then that was up there, I don't know, two and a half, three months. And then they had this levy, what they call a levy. It's a group of people, guys, ten. A levy of ten. And at first, they said FECOM. I said, oh Jesus.

G: They said what?

J: At first they said FECOM.

G: What's that?

J: That's Far Eastern Command. That's Korea. And then the next morning they said, "No, that was a mistake. It's EUCOM", Europe. So, ten of us out of that band were sent all over different units. And the first place I went was the music school.

G: Where was that?

J: In Dachau.

G: Dachau, oh wow.

J: So, I walk in the front door. I go up the stairs, the second floor.

G: What year was that John, by the way?

J: Fifty-two. I went over in fifty-two. Went over on a boat in fifty-two. And anyhow, I had the class, and we went to sleep that night, right. The next morning, I wake up, I look out the back window. What the hell are those railroad tracks for? What are those? Ditches? What the hell is that for? So, I asked the German guy onsite. He says, the bodies came in the carloads, you know, freight cars. Just stacked up. Bodies stacked up. If they were still bleeding, they lay them in the ditch so that they would dry out and burn faster. And I was sleeping over the ovens and the gas chamber. Three months I was there. As an eighteen-year-old that's scary.

G: Oh, it's awful.

J: You know? And then you had to say, well I'm not going to think about that, you know. Let's get to the music stuff. And the guy was a really good instructor, a German guy, musical guy. And then, the first band I went to was an all-black band.

G: No kidding. I didn't know that.

J: Well, everything was segregated through the Second World War.

G: Yes. Right.

J: Until 1940, let me see.

G: 48 I think.

J: No.

G: Under Truman.

J: Yah, but it was 47 when they started the integration. And then they started sending whites to the black band, blacks to the white band. You know that kind of thing.

G: Interesting. So, most of the players were black though?

J: Yah, when I got there. I walked in with my trombone, right. Oh, that's the other thing. I didn't have a trombone. John Coffey says, "I'll sell you one." So, he sold me a small Holton, you know. And he said, "Here's the seven positions. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. See you later." That was my lesson on a trombone.

G: Where was this again, with Chuck Carver?

J: John Coffey.

G: Oh, I'm sorry, Coffey. Gotcha! That was the lesson.

J: Yah, he said, "You'll figure that out kid." So, I get on the boat.

G: But you had that same horn that you took overseas then, right?

J: Yah, I bought it!

G: From John. Okay.

J: So, I'm on a ship, right. You know, it was awful. You're sliding. I had the bottom. These racks, there were four racks, and they were canvas. So, you know, you sit down, and it goes [makes sound]. And I was on the bottom because I was a little, smallest kid. I just didn't have a belly or anything. And they said, "You go in there." I said, "How the [expletive] am I going to get?" He says, "Figure it out. If you want to sleep. Figure it out." So, you slide in, you know, like that. And the guy on top of me had a big ass and it was hanging down here. So, I couldn't roll over. In order to roll over, I had to get out and turn around, and go back in. Oh, before the ocean storm, there was a sax player from North Chelmsford that I met, Ronnie Klonel. Ron Klonel. His mother owned a shop up in North Chelmsford. She sold cloth for making clothes, or something. And he was on the boat. He was an organizer kind of guy. And he found a piano player on the boat. You know, he said, "You're a trombone player." I said, "I just got the [expletive] horn. I haven't had a lesson yet." And he said, "You'll figure something out." So here we are. We got a band. We found a drummer. We had a band, and we started playing afternoon gigs.

G: On the boat?

J: Yah, on the boat. And so, then he said, "You know we're doing this for nothing, right. I'm going to go talk to the captain of the ship." "What the hell are you going to (--)" "Leave it to me." He goes up to the captain and he says, "You know, we'll do two gigs a day, right, entertain the troops." Fifteen hundred guys on the boat. That didn't include the crew. Just fifteen hundred of us lumpers. So, he says, "We'll do two gigs a day, right, and what we need to do is eat up here with your guys, and not down in the mess hall, and maybe use the shower or something." The captain looked at him and he says, "You got to be the biggest ass I've ever known." He said, "Why would I do that?" "Well, to keep the troops." He says, "I don't care. You know, five days over, I won't see them." So, he said, "Come on man." He said, "All right. You can eat up here with us, but no showers." So, Ronnie did that. There's a picture in Paul Marion's book of me with the piano and Ronnie Klonel.

G: Oh, is that right?

J: Paul Marion.

G: Yes, his book on Lowell.

J: Yah. He has the picture of me in there.

G: I'll have to look at that. I'll look at that again. Do you have that picture? Is that a picture you have?

J: I did have it somewhere.

G: Okay.

J: It's an old picture.

G: No, that's great.

J: But it's in his book [John Leite pointed out the date of the photograph in Paul Marion's book, *Mill Power*, is incorrect; the date should be 1952, not 1950].

G: I never heard about this guy before. You say he was from Chelmsford?

J: Yah, North Chelmsford.

G: North Chelmsford.

J: Klonel Family. A Jewish family.

G: How do you spell the last name?

J: K L O N E L, the way it sounds. Klonel.

G: Klonel, okay. Interesting.

J: He ended up, when we came back, he ended up playing on "Moodsie" [Moody] Street there in one of the big-time clubs with a Trio. Paul Desilets played piano.

G: Oh, Paul Desilets, yah.

J: I can't think of the drummer's name. Dick Derry. Dick Derry was the drummer.

G: Sorry, what did Klonel play?

J: Klonel played tenor sax.

G: Tenor sax. Oh, okay.

J: He knew a million tunes.

G: Was he good?

J: Oh, he was very good. He knew a million tunes. Someone there saying, "Hey, can you play this?" He'd play it.

G: I love the fact though, that he essentially negotiated with the captain. So you were in Germany, and then when did you meet Dave Amram?

J: Well, that wasn't until my experience at the (--)

G: In Dachau?

J: No, Dachau. Then I went to the 31st Army Band in Wurzburg. That was the black band.

G: Oh, was the band black? Were you the only white guy in that band?

J: No. There were two or three others when I got there.

G: Okay.

J: When I walked in with my trombone over my back, right, and this big dude was sitting. He looks up and says, "Oh you the white boy!" And I said, "Yah, I be the white one. Where do white boy go?" [Room] 244. I went up to the room and opened the door, and a shiv came right across my face.

G: Really, yah?

J: And I grabbed it. I didn't say anything. And I'm saying, "I hope this thing is a weighted shiv." And I went, flung it back into the other wall. German war lockers were all wooden. Stuck in. And I said, thank God it stuck in that. And I said something I'm not going to record, to the guy that did it. And I never had any problems after that. And then once you get around you make friends. There was one trumpet player, this black dude, he was a little bit older than most of the others. And wow, what a player he was. Oh gee! And they had a big band. I have some pictures of that.

G: Okay, in Wurzburg?

J: Yah, 31st Army Band. And they had bandstands, you know, with everything. In one of the pictures, I'm standing up taking a solo, and the other guy is doing a duet thing behind us.

G: Nice!

J: So, I've had that all over the place.

G: You've had that picture all over the place?

J: Yah. And then I was there, that was early '52. And I went to I think it was April fifty-two they came around looking for horn players. Oh, and when I was in Germany, at the black band, the bass trombonist of the Wurzburg Symphony, used to peddle his bike up. He had the first ever gig bag I ever saw. He made it out of leather so he could strap the trombone around his back, and peddle his way [up the hill]. Of course, all the facilities were up on the hill. So, he would peddle that bike up the hill. We

had six trombone players at one time, and he was supposed to give them all lessons. None of the other guys liked him. So, I took all the lessons.

G: Oh wow! Interesting.

J: And then he was a bass trombonist. So, then I started messing with that a little bit. And then when they came around, James Dixon, who was the conductor of the 7th Army Symphony in fifty-two, came around looking, different bands, looking for horn players. Because now the orchestra needed horn players,, it started off as a chamber group. Samuel Adler started it. And there were like eighteen people all strings mostly. And then they started adding woodwinds, you know, and stuff. And they they're going around looking for brass. And I auditioned for Jim Dixon, James Dixon, excuse me. Excuse me, James. And anyhow, I auditioned with him, and he liked it. And we got along, you know, personally it was good. He was as gayl, but you know, he didn't [let] you know. And so, I went back, and I got transferred to, let me see, I was in Wurzburg and then I went to Stuttgart. The 7th Army Symphony Headquarters in Stuttgart, on the hill. You know, they took everything on hills, because all the other German things were on a hill. And so, I was up Stuttgart Vaihingen they called it, and we were up there up on the hill. And the first guy I met was Midhat Serbagi, [Midhat Serbagi, Jr., son of a well-known Arab-American tenor Midhat Serbagi, Sr., who performed on radio and was a recording artist in the 1920s and 1930s] he was a violist. After we got out of there, he went to the Met Orchestra. And he played for thirty-eight years with the Met, lead violist, number one. And he played his ass off. And we were good friends.

And then his brother played cello. Let me see, there were two brothers. That's when I met Dave Amram.

G: Yah, in Stuttgart.

J: He had hair long hair, you know, looked like a hippy.

G: Even then, back in fifty-two.

J: And he used to have these cans about this big. And I said, he's eating this, it's like, I don't know, sand, right? I said, "What the hell are you eating?" "This is wheatgerm." He was eating the wheatgerm out of the can. "Do you want some?" I said, "No, I thought you were eating dirt. I don't want to eat that." Well maybe I should have because he's till gigging all over the world. I think he's ninety-two now. And he's still got all his marbles, you know, more marbles than I have. Jesus, he's an amazing (--)

G: He's an amazing guy, truly. I'm very fortunate to have met him, thanks to you.

J: Well, you know, he played with all the jazz greats in the sixties. Dizzy Gillespie, all of them.

G: And he composed the soundtrack to "The Manchurian Candidate."

J: Oh yah, and "Splendor in the Grass."

G: That's right.

J: That's his too. He put me in one of his books, *Kerouac Offbeat*. It's says offbeat on it. I'm on page 270 something. He gave me a page in the third.

G: This shouldn't probably be on the recording, but I want you to know, I met you for a while, and then I met Dave. I thought to myself, and he spoke well of you. I mean he just thought you were great. I couldn't think of two more different people, Amram. Is it Armenian? Do you know?

J: I think he was Jewish.

G: Is he Jewish?

J: There might be some other thing.

G: Anyway, but it was just two striking, both very striking guys. And the fact that you guys were such good friends.

J: Oh, we were very good friends. Yah, we were the best of friends. And Midhat Serbagi too. I was very close to him. We all got together one time and decided to buy a car. And we ponied up about three hundred bucks. And we went to this lot, and there was this, it looked like a Hitler car, right? It was a big four-door thing with the wheels on the fenders. You know how they used to do them? Covered, with the mirrors on top of those. And we said, how about that one? So, we negotiated. We bought it for three hundred bucks. You had to hand choke it most of the time. And the sides would come up like this, each side of the engine was long, you know. And so, we'd take turns choking it. They had to open it up, take the air bonnet off, put your hand on the top of the carburetor. Okay, go ahead. Hey! Here we go. We're all set.

G: You're tooling around Germany in this old military vehicle.

J: At one point after James Dixon left, Kenny Schermerhorn came in. He was a master musician. And he was the lead trumpet player, originally, with us. And we were going to a gig. It was Schermerhorn, Dave Amram, Midhat Serbagi, I forget, there was somebody else with us. There were five of us anyhow in this wonderful vehicle driving to the gig, right! I was going about eighty kilometers an hour, you know, buzzing along. There was no speed limit back then. I guess they have one now. There was no speed limit then. You could go over 150 if you had a car door. So, we're going down the highway and we hear klonk! I go, what the [expletive] is that? I don't know. The car was slowing down. And they're saying what the heck. Don't slow down, we have a gig! Well, what was that thing back there? We had to pull over. Somehow, I don't know how we called, there were no cell phones then.

G: Of course.

J: Somebody must have come by and seen it. And so, they got a tow truck, and they towed us to this garage. And they got the thing that fell down. It was the whole drive shaft! It just fell out of the thing. So, anyhow, we got to the shop and the guy says in German, you know, hey, no bushings. Dave spoke millions of languages, you know, including Portuguese.

G: Did he speak Portuguese?

J: Oh yah, he speaks Portuguese very well.

G: Wow, I didn't know that.

J: Yah. And so, he's talking to this German guy. And the guy is telling him we don't have any bushings for that. And I looked at him and I said, [In German] "Kann er [can he] weld it?" And he said, "Yah, he can." Yah, I know that. So, he welded the [expletive] thing up there. Oh god!

G: Sent you on your way.

J: On our way to the gig. We just made it. They couldn't start. We had the conductor. We had the first French horn, you know.

G: Of course, and you, trombone.

J: There were a million more stories.

G: No, no, John. This is great.

J: You're getting off the track here.

G: By the way, I've interviewed you before about, you know, your music and your career. I've never heard some of these before. This is great stuff. Hey, but let me ask. Speaking of clubs, going back to Back Central, I want to ask, what do you remember when you were young about the Portuguese American Civic League, the Reds?

J: Not a hell of a lot.

G: Yah. Was your dad a member there?

J: No. He was a member of the other one.

G: The Portuguese American Center, the Blues.

J: Yah, the Blues. Because we used to rehearse the band there, in the band hall, and that was before they put up the brick.

G: At one time that was the Portuguese Band building, where the Center is now.

J: Yah, the white building on the end of Chapel Street.

G: Exactly.

J: Yah, we used to rehearse, had band rehearsals there. And when they had something going on upstairs, we'd rehearse downstairs. There's like a bar area. Then you had to move all the seats and stuff, make room, and everybody would sit. And Abel Alves was (--) The first conductor when I started was Joe [Ferreira]. He was a skinny guy, a clarinet player. He conducted, you know, like a little person. He was little. And he died. And Abel Alves took over.

G: Yes, he's the name I remember.

J: Abel was a trumpet player. Abel Alves and Joe [Miguel]; they were the lead trumpet players. And when I was a kid, they put me in between them. And they'd say, just get as many notes as you can. Well within one year I was playing the part. And then when the other guy died, Abel took over. So, it was Joe Miguel and myself, you know, playing.

G: And that was all at the Portuguese Band Building down there on Charles Street.

J: Portuguese Colonial Band. That was the name of it, Portuguese Colonial Band. And we rehearsed in, we called it the band hall, that building, white building. And one time, later in life when I took over conducting the Portuguese Band, you know, I came back from Germany. And I played in the band. And I brought other guys in, friends, you know, we expanded the band. Once I got to ULowell, Lowell State, Lowell Teachers, the first year, then I had met a lot of other guys and I used to bring them in to the band.

G: Non-Portuguese, right?

J: Yah, non-Portuguese to enhance the band. You know, more trumpet players, more trombone players, you know, great players. All great players. They all played somewhere in the armed services. In the Navy, and you know, the Army, whatever. And so, you know, I was conducting that. You know,

going back to when I was fifteen, the picture on the front of the recording that we did, you know, I'm the third one on the left with the hat cocked. I always had to do something different, so the chicks would look at it and say who's that guy?

G: I know that picture.

J: But the history, I don't know if you want to know the history of the band, or where you want me to go now?

G: Here's the thing. This is not central to your life, but I'm just in terms of Back Central, and the two clubs there. One question I wanted to ask you about, the Reds and the Blues, as they came to be known.

J: I don't think they called it then.

G: No, they didn't. That didn't happen (--)

J: The PAAL, Portuguese American Civic League.

G: By the way, I don't think it became the Blues and the Reds until like the sixties, or seventies even. So, but back then.

J: Probably the seventies.

G: By the way, just one thing. I didn't realize this until I started looking into your family background, Fernando Loureiro was one of the cofounders of the Portuguese American Center on Charles Street in the late '50s. [Fernando Loureiro was one of John Leite's uncles through his marriage to Adalice "Alice" Teodomira da Cunha Leite, who was an aunt of John Leite] And they basically brought the property from the Portuguese Colonial Band, which owned that building. So, they basically, you know, there's an exchange of real estate, and that's where they set up. But the club, as you said, there was always a bar down there, and from this club they created the Portuguese American Center.

J: It was a great thing. You know, later in life when I was conducting the band, I used to bring guys in from school, college. Augie Silva was the helicon bass player. Helicon bass comes over your shoulder. I have it in the attic. He willed it to me. Anyhow, he was funny. He could drink more than anybody I knew.

G: He was a big guy, wasn't he?

J: Oh, really big.

G: Because I met him.

J: I've got to digress here. Downstairs, when we were rehearsing, right, in the club.

G: This is at the Portuguese American Center, or the Club.

J: Yah, the Band Club I call it. And Abel Alves is conducting. And then he stops and says, "Augie, how come you're not playing?" Augie says, "I have four measures of shut up." That's what he used to call rests. Yah, I have four measures of shut up.

G: Four measures of shut up. That's good.

J: Getting back to the club. Now we're upstairs. We were finished rehearsal. We're going to drink, right. And this trumpet player friend of mine, Josh Norris, who 2017 died in a house fire with three of his kids.

G: What was the name?

J: Josh Norris, N O R R I S. I met him at Lowell. He was a wonderful player. Anyhow, he was up in the hall when Augie, and myself, David Taggert, who was a valve trombone player, a college friend, Tom McGaw, he wound up teaching at Berkeley. He's retired now. And we're all drinking, right. And so, Augie said, "Whoa, whoa, stop! Stop! Vehna aqui!" (Come over here). Sit at the big round table. He says, "Okay, this is what I'm doing with this, okay. Everybody have one shot of liquor in the glass. You can't drink it all. One shot, and you got to wait, no beers, just shot, okay. And when I tell you, you drink the shot, and drink a beer." Okay. He lined them up. There were six of us. You know, hit the beer chaser. Four of them didn't last a minute. You know when you're taking shots like that, you know, it's. So anyhow, two of the guys, they were out of it for Christ sakes. Of course, they had been drinking. And so, Jack Norris, he disappeared from the hall. So, I went in the back room where the guys, the old guys were playing cards. I says, in Portuguese, "Onde ele foi?" I'm looking, where the [expletive] did he go? And there was a side door on Chapel Street, right, with a couple of steps. This is wintertime, right, big snowbanks. He was so cocked, he opened the door, tripped and he went in headfirst into the snowbank. He couldn't move. So, we're looking, and we opened the door. There's Josh's ass! We had to get down, pull him out. I took him home to this house, put him in the bed, in the big bed down the end of the hall. And his wife was here. They had six kids, but I think two or three of them were here. The girl was laying underneath that orange chair, and the kids just fell, wherever it is. About an hour later I hear [makes sound], he went running down the hall. I said, "If you're going to throw up go to the bathroom you dink." He was big, 6'2" you know. I'm trying to drag him and he's not moving. And he went right against the wall, right. So, six hours later, he said, "Oh Jesus, what a night." I said, "Here are all the cleaning supplies." "What's that for?" "You got to go wash that wall down and clean up the rug."

G: So that was life at the Blues Club there.

J: That was downstairs.

G: I know. Let me ask you one final question about the two clubs. Do you remember any difference between the Civic League and the Portuguese American Center? I mean, why would, you know, who would, would certain people go to the Civic League?

J: Yah, but you know, it's like joining the Elks, or joining the Moose, or whatever. You know, you just have friends there, you know, and your friends say, "Hey, come to this club. It's a good club." That's about all. There's no animosity I don't imagine.

G: No, no. I was just wondering for example, if basically if the Blues Club members were basically those from Graciosa, where the Reds Club were those from Sao Miguel, or Terceira.

J: There's some Madeirans too, Madeira.

G: Exactly right. Yah, so whether they tended to go to the Civic League, Madeirans, and the Azoreans tended to go to the (--)

J: Yah, because of friendship.

G: Yah, gotcha.

J: You know, friendship on the Islands. The original islands.

G: John, let me skip down. I want to ask you a couple of more things.

J: Okay, sure.

G: One is about Saint Anthony's Church, which you already talked about a little bit. And you also talked about kind of the early memories of the church. But do you remember, I mean you were there, when it was still basically subterranean?

J: Oh sure, yah. As a matter of fact [it was] 1959. And my wife and I got married October 10, 1959. And we wanted to get married in the Portuguese Church. It was my church, but it was under construction. And so, Father Silva called around to all the churches to see what, you know. And they were all busy, and they couldn't take us. And we didn't want to change the date. So, Saint Peter's, Monsignor [expletive] took us in. So, when we got there to talk, he found out that Melba was Protestant. And he says, "You can't get married in the upstairs church. She's Protestant." I said, "What the hell does that mean?" We had to get married in the frick'in bottom church, because my wife was (--). You know, that building is [expletive] gone now. So, that's what you get there Monsignor. I did it in your whole [expletive] building. You know, they were so stupid. But Melba said, "That's all right. You know, let's just get married. The plans are here. The families are here." You know, just do it.

G: Because Saint Anthony's was under construction, you had to go to Saint Peter's.

J: Yah. He wanted to send me to the Polish Church.

G: On High Street?

J: Yah, but they were booked too. He called around to all the churches.

G: Because there was a Portuguese Church in Lawrence too.

J: Yah, we didn't want to go to Lawrence. I know exactly where that is. We've done gig down there. But no, it happened. And our friend Bob sang. He's got a great voice. He sang the service. So once, you know, you don't realize you're in the cellar of the church, you know, we just do it. You know, the priest, you get married, and Bob is singing, our friend is singing, and it was beautiful. The whole thing was beautiful.

G: Hey John, let me ask you, moving to the next section [of the interview]. I want to talk to you about some of the Portuguese of your father's generation. From your memory of your father's generation, who would you say were the important figures in Lowell, or important to you.

J: Mr. Silva, Danny Silva who owned a market down the bottom of Back Central Street. It's a liquor store now. Danny Silva was a big time. I'll tell you how good he was. And across the street was the bakery.

G: Barry's Bakery at one time, right?

J: Yah, Barry, yah. When they used to have the Feast, right, all the meat would be prepared at Danny's market. They marinated it, the old guys. My father and those guys would go and marinate the meats.

G: At the market?

J: At the market. And they would leave them in the refrigerator. And then Saturday morning of the Feast, I got booked by my father to help. And we went to Danny's and carried all those pans, by hand, over to Barry's to cook them. To partially cook them. Like you say, parboil, you know? Just partially cook them in there, because then you're going to cook them up at Holy Ghost Park.

G: Holy Ghost Park.

J: So, then the van comes. You got all these pans. They're trying to straighten all these pans out in the van. Whoever was driving, I don't remember, you got to go slow, "vai devagar," not to spill anything. And so, we go up to the Holy Ghost Park, take all those pans out into the kitchen. And the women would fix it up, you know, put them in the oven for Sunday's meal. And they'd cut all of the (--) They used to use dry blood, you know, and dry blood could cut in chunks, right. Looked like liver. Oh, liver is a lot of blood too, but they cut them in chunks like about like that big. And so then put them in the soup, chunks in the soup for the taste. And I told you I had a lot of friends from Lowell. Well Dick O'Shea, who became a State Trooper, he's retired now, was a Sousaphone player, and Frank Page. They were both Sousaphone players for Lowell High where I was. So, I got them into the band.

G: The Colonial Band.

J: Yah, Colonial Band. So, Dick was a big, tall guy, 6'3" or something. And so, he's eating the soup. He says, "Wow, this soup was great. Oh, I loved the liver. Jesus, that liver was so easy. You don't even have to chew it. It mushes in your mouth. It's great. Can I get some more of that?" I said, "Yah, you want some more? I'll get you a little plate." So, I went into the kitchen. I knew all the ladies there. My mother's there. I bring it over to him, he pops them all in, right. "Ah, [expletive] great. Oh, I love this. I've never eaten liver that's so easy to eat. You don't even have to chew it." So, when he was all done eating, it was break, right. We were going to go back to play. I said, "You liked that liver huh?" "Oh, it was great." I said, "You know what it is? Coagulated dry blood." He went outside by the tree. He upchucked his whole meal.

G: So, Danny Silva was one. Who else of your father's generation would you think?

J: Barros, the Barry, Barry's Bakery. And let me see. Oh, Brockelman's Market.

G: Brockelman's, yah.

J: It was downtown Lowell, on the corner of Bridge Street and Merrimack Street. You know when you come out of Prescott Street, is one way, right? And then you go across to Bridge Street, right there, that corner. It's been a million things since then. I think it's a secondhand store now, or something. But that was a market. Brockelman's Market. And you walk in the door on this side, and the meat counter was raised way up high. So, you're looking at the guy up there. And I had a godfather who was a meat guy there.

G: Oh! What was his name? Do you remember?

J: I don't.

G: That's okay. That's all right.

J: I'm thinking when you're leaving I'll send you a text.

G: No worries. That's okay.

J: He was my godfather. He used to save great cuts of meat for us.

G: Anyway, so he worked at Brockelman's.

J: Brockelman's, yah, Market. That was a big market. You know, that was great, because people who lived downtown and worked in the mills, right, they stayed in the mill houses. They could walk to a store and get food. You know, it was a full market, full supermarket.

G: Who else, John, of your father's generation, and mother's generation, that you know, you remember as a kid were kind of important figures?

J: I don't know. My father went to the club, but he wasn't a clubber.

G: He was not.

J: No, he wasn't a club guy, because he was usually working in the mills, or at home. He wasn't a person that would go to a club and all of a sudden have nine people around him.

G: That's okay. Let me shift gears.

J: He was a more quiet guy. He could be loud. I found that out as a kid, but mostly he was a quiet guy, you know, kept to himself, his friends, relatives, and that was about it.

G: I'm going to name some people in a few minutes from your father's generation. But one other thing I really wanted to ask you about, this is kind of interesting. I didn't know this until I started studying Lowell's Portuguese, but up until, you know, basically immigration, not just Portuguese, everyone, in 1924 a very strict immigration law was passed. And it essentially cut off immigration from every place. And it didn't change until the sixties, but for Portuguese, the volcanic eruption on the Island of Faial, special legislation was passed that John Kennedy as a Senator was involved with. And so basically it liberalized immigration for Azoreans, beginning in fifty-seven. So, some of them started coming and came to Lowell in basically 1960 and thereafter, but then I think it was in sixty-five there was a federal revision to the immigration, National Immigration Law which eliminated quotas. And that meant that more and more people could come to the U.S. from everywhere. But what's interesting for Portuguese, many from the Azores beginning in sixty-five began to come to Lowell. Many of them were from Graciosa, Terceira, some from Sao Miguel, some from mainland Portugal, but the fact is there was this (-) And by the way, Lowell at that time, every decade was losing population, okay. You know, the city was depressed. But there was this wave of Portuguese, mostly from the Azores, but some from Madeira too by the way, they'd come to Lowell and many of them settled in Back Central. It's people like some you know, like Luis Gomes, he was part of that wave. Demos Espinola, and Maria Cunha, they were all part of that. But I just wondered, my question to you is, do you remember? Because you were in Lowell at that time, this was in the sixties and seventies. Do you remember this new wave of Portuguese coming into the city?

J: Oh sure, because you know, they have a band now, a Portuguese, they have a Portuguese Band. As a matter of fact, my Greek friend is conducting it, Louie Stamas.

G: Yes, I know him.

J: But it was different when that wave came in.

G: That's what I was going to ask you. What was different about it?

J: They come in more in groups, because of the law that you talked about. Then instead of one family coming, you know, it was a whole bunch of families coming in. And so, it was different because they were groups. They had their own friends and clicks. When my parents came here, you know, that was what was it? 19? 1918. I think it was 1918. And that was so different. I mean Ellis Island was a [expletive] zoo to get through. My father told me stories while they were there. It's like the Godfather when the kid comes over, right.

G: He's quarantined.

J: Yah, and you know, you on one of these lines for hours and hours. And you can't say anything. You can't talk to anybody else. Now they walk right over the [expletive] border.

G: No, no, but I think one difference is that when the second wave came from the Azores for example, many of them, they just flew right to Logan. And came to Logan and then went, you know, had family meet them, because they had to be sponsored by the way. But the families would meet them and bring them to Lowell. They didn't have to file to Ellis Island like your parents did. So that's one difference.

J: That's a big difference, because in order for my mom (--) My father didn't come with my mother. My mother came alone, with others, but he was the baby of nine. And the two next were twin boys. And when they became teenagers they said, "We're getting out of here."

G: From Brazil.

J: No, not from Brazil. No.

G: From Graciosa?

J: From Graciosa. They're saying, "We're getting out of here and we're going to take you with us, because you're the smallest. There's no reason you hang around." So, they went to Brazil. My father lived there I don't know how long. He hated it, every minute. So, one of the brothers, I think it was John, paid my father's passage, boat passage that come up to the United States, up to you know, Boston, and then to Lowell. My father never told me why he hated it, but I think it had something to do with the living there in those favelas, you know, they're stacked up on the side of the hill and it's all living like crap.

G: But again, thinking about this new wave that came in here in the sixties and seventies, from what you saw, did you see, I mean did it bring a new kind of culture, a new Portuguese culture? Did it revitalize Back Central?

J: It wasn't a new culture. It was the old culture, you know, revived. Maybe that's a better word. You know, because I did the Portuguese, I conducted a Portuguese Band when I came back from the Army, and I was at Lowell, and that's when I brought my friends in and expanded the band. And then when I left that, that's when I created the Leite Concert Winds; started doing union gigs.

G: This was in the sixties?

J: Yah, and that's when I started doing union gigs. And it was the right thing for me to do because I had been a member of the union since I was, since I came back from Germany. That's when I joined. Actually I'm in my 65th year of the American Federation of Musicians. My last convention in Vegas, I was the small locals committee chair for years. And I was giving my report, small locals, right. And I said, "By the way, you know." I think I said it was the 64th because that was a Wednesday, and it wasn't the 65th until Thursday. And I said, "I got to tell everybody here I appreciate you all. I've known many of you over the years. This is my last convention. I'm going to retire as President of the Merrimack Valley Musicians. Thank you very much." I turned around and the president, right here, said, "Turn around, look back out." I had a standing O {ovation}. And I have a recording of it. They gave me a video recording of it.

G: What year was that, John?

J: Two years ago. They gave me a video of it.

G: Wow.

J: I have it on my computer.

G: This was in Vegas?

J: Yah.

G: Where was this?

J: Westgate. Crappy hotel. It used to be the Hilton, the Las Vegas Hilton where Elvis Presley was. They had Presley pictures all over the place.

G: Oh, so this was in the older part. This isn't the, whatever that strip is out there with all the big new stuff, right? This is back.

J: No, no, this is the street behind the Paradise.

G: No, I know where you mean.

J: The strip runs here, and then one street back. It's actually the street that goes right to the airport. And on that street, it's the last thing at the end. And it's crappy because if you wanted to go someplace, you know, you got a pretty long walk. And then they started the tramway, but it doesn't stop, for whatever reason, and the Wynn Resort. And that's the one I like to go to only because in the late sixties and early seventies that was where the Desert Inn was. And they flipflopped them. The Desert Inn used to be right on the corner of that street, and the parking lot was to the right. Then when they built the Wynn Tower, right, they moved the Wynn Tower to where the parking lot was, and then they built the Encore, where the Desert Inn used to be. So, I'm very familiar.

G: I know you've been there many times. You played there.

J: I used to go out there every two years. My friend and I had a business, a junket business. I don't know if I told you. In order to get the junket business, you had to clear it with the mafia. And across where the Boston Garden, it's still there Boston Garden, it's different. Diagonally across the street used to be Polcari's Restaurant, Italian joint. And you walk in, on the left there's swinging doors like the old cowboy things, to go into the bar. And if you go around to the right, that's the restaurant. Every Monday night at 9:00 one of his lieutenants would come in. And whoever was in the bar, "Hey folks, we'd appreciate it if you'd move into the restaurant, because we're having a meeting here." And no one would say no. They'd get up and get the [expletive] out. And so, the first time we had to go, this partner and I, we're sitting at the end of the lounge. And after the lieutenant cleared it, he comes in sitting at a big round thing. And he calls, "Bring somebody up." So, Dick said, Dick Madison.

G: It's your turn now.

J: Dick Madison went up. And maybe he was up there ten minutes, whatever. And okay, go up. I went up. And Jerry would stand up and he says, "What's your name?" I said, "John Leite." "Leite. What kind of a name is that?" I said, "It's mine." And they're saying, you know. I said, "It's Portuguese." "Oh, Portuguese! I like the Portuguese." Then he squeezed my hands. So, I squeezed his hand harder. He says, "You're okay kid. Okay." [I] went back and sat down. So, now we're waiting. The lieutenant came [over and said], "You can start your business." So, we started. We had an office, fifteenth floor of Charles River Park. You know where that is?

G: So, and what was the business though. I didn't quite get it? What was it?

J: Advertising.

G: Okay.

J: Advertising. We did advertising for every TV station and radio station, you know. Dick was a very good writer. He wrote copy. A lot of copy. He's a really smart guy, and he was quick witted. And he would write all the copy for that. And I ran the office thing. We had one girl at the time. And so, we had a friend in the North End. We talked about junkets, you know, because we know a lot of people. Like to go from Revere, from Saugus and you know, they want to go pay us and gamble. Late sixties, early seventies.

G: I see.

J: So, that's why we had to go through that. And he said, "okay." Now the first week we got a plane loaded, right, 232 people, or whatever it is. I got a phone call. "Hello, Las Vegas executives. Can I help you?" "Four seats in the next flight." I said, "You know, I'd like to do that, but we're totally booked." He said, "You don't [expletive] hear. I want four [expletive] seats on the next [expletive] flight. You under [expletive] stand that?" I said, "Well what do you expect me to do with those four people I'm going to bump?" He said, "We'll take care of them. We'll send them first class, TWA, the next flight." "Okay, let me call you back." Then I called four, two guys and their wives in Revere. I said, "You get bumped for a [expletive] week. You're going first class." TWA had those lounges upstairs in the big bubble. And the booze it up there. "Oh, that's even better. Okay." "You're first class." So, there's four guys, then they did their business, whatever it was. And then after that I was golden. We started booking more of their guys than the tourists, because they liked the way we handled everything. And we had a tall blonde [woman]. And she wasn't putting out, or anything, but she was quick witted, you know, she was funny.

G: How long were you in this business? For how many years?

J: Just two, I think. Two or three? It might have been three.

G: Yah, okay.

J: You know, every two weeks one of us was out there. Sometimes we'd both go out depending on what was happening out there. You know, we'd go to the Desert Inn, and we had all those people. And some people are awful gamblers. One guy from, I think he was from Medford, owned a machine shop. And he was an awful gambler. He had a line of \$10,000. He blew that in the first ten minutes. The whole line. And he brought his wife with him. She was a nice, little, short chubby lady. So anyway, she's upstairs in the room, and he's (--)

G: Losing all his money.

J: Yah. So, anyhow, he says, "I need an extension," you know. I said, "I don't know. You're on that list you know." He said, "I know. But, you know, I'm good for it." So I went, had to go see Earlene in the back. She says, "We'll give him a \$1,000, that's it." So, I said, "Okay." I come back, "You got a \$1,000." "A 1,000? I want a [expletive] \$10,000." "All I'm going to give you is a [expletive] \$1,000. You want to go argue with them? I don't think it's a good idea, because there's some guys there that won't let you argue." "No, [expletive] it." Boom! The [expletive] grand is gone. He put up his [expletive] business. He went across the street to the [Frontier].

G: Another Casino anyway, yah.

J: [The Frontier] is gone too now. He went across the street, and he got a line of five. He blew that. He kept blowing lines. So, I told him, I said, "Tonight you're going to the show." I don't remember what the

show was. And I said, "And your wife is going." "What do you mean I'm going to the show with my wife?" I said, "She's been sitting in that [expletive] room while you're [expletive] blowing your business. You got to take her to this [expletive] show. It's paid for, but you're going to take her." So, when it was time for showtime, I went up and got his wife and brought her down. Okay, go. They went into the show. I said, you know, let her enjoy something for Christ sake. And they come out of the show, and I got them dinner. And you're sitting, and you're going to eat. He went back and he lost his business and everything. He lost his wife. Some guys were smarter gamblers, you know.

G: Yah, not this guy.

J: This guy, you know, it's a disease. When you get it in your [expletive] head, and you think you're going to keep winning. I mean I always had a limit when I did sit down. I played blackjack. And when I did sit down, I had a limit to myself.

G: That's a smart way of playing.

J: If I blow the limit, that's it! You know, next time.

G: Hey, finally, just let me ask you about a few different people here from Lowell. First of all, again, totally shifting gears, but to Father Grillo. What are your first memories of Father Grillo?

J: I told you.

G: Yes, but we didn't have the recorder running. Sorry.

J: Okay, Father Grillo was the best priest. John Silva was okay. He had the fastest Mass in the world, but Father Grillo was an older man, and he was so good to us altar boys. They didn't have altar girls back then. It was just boys. And there was never any question of any sexual advances, or any of that stuff with him.

G: John, you know how some priest can be pretty formidable? Was Father Grillo more kind of a down to earth guy?

J: Well, you know, he's down to earth because I told you about the wine and the paper hosts.

G: Yes, you'd go down to get the wine, and.

J: Well, we took turns. Whose turn is it now? Go to the wine cellar, pick something out. Come back, we sit down. This is after the 11:30 Mass on Sunday. And four of us, Freddie Furtado, Eddie Silva, myself, and Father Grillo, would sit down and just talk. It could be about anything. About school, you know. He'd talk about me. He'd talk about any subject.

G: No kidding.

J: And he was very easy to talk to.

G: Was he?

J: Yah. So, you know, it was a good (--)

G: By the way, was this all in Portuguese you were talking, speaking?

J: Sometimes, but mostly (--). The other two guys didn't speak very well. Freddie Furtado and Eddie Silva didn't get into the Portuguese.

G: So, a lot of the conversation with Father Grillo was in English.

J: Yah.

G: Yah, interesting.

J: And once in a while he'd throw a few Portuguese things in there to see if the other guys would react. He was just a great guy, and smart. Smart as a whip.

G: What did his voice sound like? Do you remember?

J: Oh, if I had to categorize it, I would say a baritone.

G: Uh huh! Yah. Did he have a pretty strong voice?

J: Yes.

G: Did he?

J: I don't want to say forceful, but it was very easy to hear and understand.

G: Yes. And what were his Masses like when he would give (--)

J: He was longer than John Silva. Nobody was as fast as John Silva. But he would be a normal, you know, like a High Mass, he'd be an hour, and hour and fifteen minutes.

G: Right.

J: But the regular masses, he'd still, it would still be an hour. And when John Silva came in, twenty-five minutes in and out!

G: What did the parishioners think of Father Grillo? Do you remember?

J: He was a man that was adored, you know. People loved him because he was a great person.

G: Yes.

J: And he spoke a lot, individually to people. People who needed some help. He was open. He had open doors. And that's what made him such a great guy. You know, you go to the Sacristy Building, ring the bell. He'd come to the door. Come on in, sit down, and talk about anything you wanted.

G: Did your parents think highly of him too?

J: Oh, of course. They were so glad I was an altar boy. And so was I, not getting pinched in the ass [during Mass by my mother]. It was called beliscão.

G: What is that?

J: That's a pinch in the ass. Beliscão. And my mom was a tiny lady, but boy she had strong hands; well, she worked at the mills.

G: She kept you in line though, right, by doing that.

J: She was a strong lady. She had strong hands, man.

G: One other thing. I don't expect you to know this, but Father Grillo came to Lowell out of Saint John's Seminary. He was at another church at one point, and then came to Lowell. He initially assisted Bishop DeSilva, who was the priest. Believe it or not he was a Bishop from Portugal, who, through a variety of circumstances, wound up at Saint Anthony's. He was the second priest at Saint Anthony's. It's rare, to say the least, that a Bishop is the priest. Buy anyway, so, Father Grillo assisted Bishop DeSilva for about a year, and then Bishop DeSilva went back to Portugal. And Father Grillo became the priest. However, the wonderful Cardinal O'Connell did not appoint Father Grillo as the priest. He had him as a, what is it called? An administrator. And I don't know why. Because again, Father Grillo got his, was ordained out of Saint John's Seminary, you know where Boston, Boston College is. But for some reason Cardinal O'Connell, who called the shots in the Archdiocese.

J: He was a prick.

G: So, did you know about Cardinal O'Connell back in the day?

J: Yah, he was a prick.

G: So, the thing is, in nineteen, sometime in the thirties, finally, after all the hard work that Father Grillo had done for the parish, he was made the priest. And do you know that there was, at the auditorium there was this huge dinner celebrating. That's how popular Father Grillo was.

J: I think I have a picture of those dinners.

G: Yah. Anyway, though it's not surprising. I appreciate your memories of him, because from what I've read about him, he was a very impressive guy, and he couldn't have been more different. Bishop DeSilva was related to the King of Portugal. Father Grillo came from Sao Miguel, was a laborer in Hudson, Massachusetts, when he was a teenager. Worked in a shoe factory and then went to a couple of different seminaries. But essentially, he was a factory worker. Learned English, you know, through night school. Worked his way up. So, he was considered more, if you will, kind of a man of the people, than Bishop DeSilva. You know, this regal Catholic figure.

J: Yah, I didn't know him at all.

G: So that name doesn't (--)

J: No. Father Grillo was the priest that I remember when I started.

G: Okay. And then, you know, the thing is, Father Grillo, I think worked so hard, his health suffered, and I think he died in '46 or '47.

J: Yah, I was in high school. No, I wasn't. Yah, I was in high school.

G: Yah, because you would have graduated.

J: '50, 1950.

G: In fifty, right. So, the thing is, one of the things that Father Grillo did, which I found interesting, he knew that he wasn't long for this world, and he wanted to make sure that Portuguese priest continued at Saint Anthony's. So, he had some contacts in Portugal, and that's how we got Father John Silva, from Lisbon, to come to Lowell, before he died in forty-seven. So, when Father Grillo died, it wasn't Cardinal O'Connell by that point. It could have been Cushing. I forget.

J: Cushing, I think.

G: But anyway, that's how Father John became the priest at Saint Anthony's. But you clearly remember Father John Silva.

J: Oh yah, when he first started there, he said, "Okay boys, twenty-five minutes. If I go twenty-six, tell me."

G: He'd tell this to the altar boys?

J: Yah. And you know, zip, zip, yup. What the [expletive]? It's over. You know, it was that quick. Even the High Mass, it might go to twenty-seven, twenty-eight, but not much longer. He never went over thirty in a High Mass. "There's no need to," he says. "Some of the stuff," he says, "you can leave out." That's what he was doing, leaving some of the mass out.

G: Apart from that though, Father Grillo and Father John Silva were very different.

J: Oh, absolutely.

G: How would you describe, what were the differences, the main differences between those two?

J: Well, we talked about Father Grillo a lot. So, that's that person. And Father John was like a new kid on the block. Not that we would know to say "hey guy," or anything like that.

G: Yes, it was more formal.

J: You know, respected him. But until we got to know him, like anybody else, you know, you go to school, you're a new teacher in the building. You got to learn the other people and how to react to certain people. The same thing with Father John. Father Grillo was so easy, but you know, Father John was easy after the fact. You had to wait. He never said it, but there was like a timeline that he would test, you know, see all the altar boys. How's this kid? Did this kid learn any Latin yet? Or this kid didn't know the phrases, you know the ding, ding? And then he would go, ding, ding, ding, and he'd make his order, you know. But I was taught and brought up that you respect your elders, regardless of who they are. And then the priest was even more. So, [Father] John was just a young kid on the block. That's how I could explain it. He was so easy to talk to like Father Grillo, but he was more of an, I don't know, an outward guy.

G: What do you mean?

J: I don't know. He was more like he came out of a college, a college senior and he's got a new gig. And he's still relating to the younger kids. John did too. I mean Father Grillo did, you know, but they were two different people. Father Grillo was a little bit stayed back, but you know, you see this respect come right away. Father John, the respect had to be there, but you're testing. You're always testing.

G: I see.

J: And that's what happens with any new person you meet. We sit down and talk, and you see where that person is coming from. And are you full of [expletive]? Well, this conversation is over. You know that kind of thing.

G: So over time though, I mean, because he was the longest serving priest at Saint Anthony's.

J: I was gone at age eighteen anyway. I went into the service then.

G: So, but you came back. Well, but you were back at Saint Anthony's by the late fifties, right? Were you still attending church at Saint Anthony's?

J: Yah, when I got out of the service. I got out in '54.

G: Fifty-four, okay. And you did come back to Lowell right away, right?

J: Oh yah.

G: So, did you resume at being at Saint Anthony's then?

J: Yah, I was with my parents. Now my father is on Bowden Street for the second time. Seventeen and nineteen Bowden Street, on the righthand side, three houses down from the right, from Gorham Street. And my father owned, he owned the house first time. No, he was renting there. We had the second floor.

G: I think he finally bought the house at Sayles Street, right?

J: Yah, when I was a senior in high school that's when he bought the house on Sayles Street. First time he owned a house. Getting back to Bowden Street, the second time we were there, my sister Helen moved in across the street in a little cottage. I don't remember the number. It was a cottage then. It wasn't a double decker. It was like a cottage.

G: On Bowden Street.

J: Yah, on Bowden Street. She married Roger Sanborn, who was a big time Ray Riddick football player at Lowell High.

G: Oh, it that right?

J: He was the center for the offensive line.

G: I meant to ask you. So, when you guys were on Bowden Street for the second time, when you would go to church services, would you drive to Saint Anthony's, take the car?

J: I'm trying to think. My father had a car by then. It took him a long time to get a car. The money was (--) Cars were only four hundred bucks, but he didn't have four hundred bucks. He finally got a four-door car. We used to drive to church. The first one was a big Nash.

G: Yah, sure. I remember the Nash.

J: And it had the tires on the fenders, with the mirrors on the top. And the back had little curtains. Esther Stirk, a blonde chick. Oh, this is even before. This is when I was at Robello's house. That's when he owned the Nash. And Esther Stirk lived next door. A cute blonde chick. And we used to go in the back of my father's Nash and pull the curtains down. It had regular curtains with tassels. We'd pull all the curtains down. This was kissy face, you know. We were kids just experimenting.

G: So, the other thing too. I should ask you, but you've been going to Saint Anthony's for a long time, right? Do you still go to Saint Anthony's?

J: No.

G: When did you stop going? Just roughly.

J: Roughly, I don't know. Maybe after we were married, in fifty-nine.

G: In fifty-nine. Okay. So, really, you knew Father John in the fifties, and after that, because you weren't going to Saint Anthony's.

J: No.

G: Let me ask you about some other Portuguese that were your father's generation. Do you remember a man name Firmo Correia?

J: Vaguely.

G: He had a son name Manny who was President of the Holy Ghost Society in the seventies.

J: Yah, I remember Manny.

G: Do you remember Manny?

J: Yah.

G: You guys weren't friends, but you knew Manny.

J: Yah, I knew him. That's it.

G: But Firmo Correia, that name doesn't really (--)

J: No.

G: How about Deolinda Mello, who was the head of the (--)

J: Deolinda Mello.

G: Deolinda Mello, yes. Do you remember her?

J: I remember the name. I think maybe I could come up with what she looked like.

G: No, that's okay. You didn't know her well, but you knew her reputation.

J: I knew her, yah.

G: Did you know John Silva of the Silva Brothers?

J: Of course. Oh, I can tell you stories, John Silva.

G: Did you know him pretty well?

J: Oh yah. When I was fifteen or so, I worked at Spinney's Garage.

G: Oh, you worked at Spinney's?

J: Yah, I worked at Spinney's Garage.

G: Did you know Domingos Spinney? Domingos?

J: Yah, Domenic.

G: Domenic.

J: Yah, he was a watchmaker.

G: Wow, you knew him.

J: Yah, he's the watchmaker. Tommy was the brother, one of the brothers. A bunch of brothers. And Tommy owned the garage. And he ultimately had his six kids when he was there. And I knew the girls.

G: And you worked at the garage?

J: Yah, for two years. I started, I used to buzz cars in and out. Hey Johnny, go get the Ford! Okay. I could put cars in narrow spaces. That's how I really learned how to drive.

G: What do you remember about the Spinney Brothers? Do you remember much of anything about those guys?

J: Leo was kind of an outcast of Tommy. He was a painter. He had a painting business. The original thing, they were all painters, the family, John Silva.

G: No, I was asking you about the Spinneys.

J: Oh, you're talking about the Spinneys.

G: Sorry, yah. I was asking about the Spinneys, because I didn't know you worked at the garage. Do you remember anything about the (--)

J: Sure, I remember Manny. There were two Portuguese guys. I know one guy who lived over in Swede Village. Johnny.

G: That's okay, John.

J: The monument guys.

G: Oh Luz?

J: Luz, Joe Luz was a mechanic. He was a navy mechanic. And he got out of the service, and he worked for Tommy. And there was Manuel something, an older guy.

G: Okay. Manuel wasn't a Spinney though, right?

J: No. And there was Billy Riggs, a big, tall guy. He was a prick, a big, tall guy.

G: He wasn't Portuguese though?

J: No. Billy Riggs. The man used to come around with the milk wagon. And he used to chugalug the buttermilk. Buttermilk, he used to chugalug that. I could tell you a lot of stories about Billy Riggs.

G: That's okay.

J: Anyhow, the Spinneys, Domenic was a quiet guy. He was a jeweler. He owned a jewelry shop somewhere. He fixed watches. He always had that magnifying thing in his eyes every time you'd go to see him. And Tommy, and Leo, Leo was a painter too. Originally, they were all painters. And there was one son, I don't know what was wrong with him. Something was wrong with him in the brain. They lived right on, and they moved here. They lived on Chelmsford Street.

G: This is the Spinney Family?

J: Spinney. No, Silva.

G: No, okay. I'm sorry. I was asking about the Spinneys.

J: You asked me if I knew John Silva too.

G: Well, yah, but I didn't realize you worked at Spinney's Garage. So that's why I was shifting over to the Spinney Family.

J: Well, that's the connection with Silva.

G: Okay. Sorry, what is the connection?

J: The connection with Silva, is John Silva used to bring his car. It looked like a Mark, some kind of a Mark, a Lincoln Mark, the two-door, you know.

G: He had it serviced at the Spinney Garage?

J: Yah, and he had a big black and gray Shepherd [dog]. "Major," he called him. He was always in the back seat, because John owned properties all over the city, big tenements, and stuff.

G: Yes, he did. Huge owner.

J: And he used to collect cash and put it in a paper bag. Put the cash in a paper bag and put it in the back seat with Major. Nobody would go there! And so this one time some guy, he was down on Mill Street, you know, that's off of Back Central? Goes down, you know, Lawrence Street?

G: I know what you mean.

J: He was collecting rents there. And some "jerko" saw that bag of cash, right. He opened the door. He didn't see Major in the back seat. Major went out and grabbed him by the side of the chest and ripped his frick'in skin off the side of his chest. And John come out, "All right Major. It's all right." And he said, "Go home kid." You wouldn't get in that car. If you knew you wouldn't get in that car, and all that cash, thousands of dollars. And he used to have his car serviced. And there was a lady, Mrs. Pimber or something, would come. It was a 1929 Ford, or something, four-door. You know, some boxy thing, bring her car to be serviced. Well she and Tommy would get in John's car, and they'd go off somewhere.

G: Right, right.

J: And Silva owned racing cars. There used to be a racetrack in Dracut, someplace in Dracut. And the top speed was like eighty miles an hour. It was in the mud. Like a mud track. And Tommy used to service the racing cars.

G: Oh, okay.

J: And so when those people were off on their journey going wherever, the mechanics would take a repair plate and put it on the back of the racing car, and I'd drive up and down A Street, B Street, C, and drive them in and over. You got to be back at such and such a time. Okay. Because Tommy will be back, and if you're out there, you're going to lose your job. Okay. So, I'd time it, right. And I'd go up and down A Street, B Street, C Street.

G: You were out of high school when you were working for the Spinneys?

J: No, I was in high school.

G: Were you in high school working?

J: Yah, I was fifteen.

G: Yah, working for the Spinneys.

J: Two years I did.

G: Where was their garage again, the Spinneys?

J: Corner of C Street and Powell.

G: C Street and Powell, okay.

J: There's another family; a guy and sons. I don't know who they are, but they took it over. Young Tommy owned it for a long time. And his brother Jackie was Johnny Silva's godson. So, when Silva died, he left Jackie [a good sum of money].

G: Really? Wow!

J: And he owed Tommy some money too. But his godson, he took care of his godson. It was Jack Spinney, Jackie Brady the fighter, the boxer, and another guy whose name I don't remember. It was the book guy, you know, the bookkeeper kind of guy. And they bought the old Marty's for Parties on Chelmsford Street. Now it's a whole bunch of different things, but it was upstairs. That's actually, we had our wedding party up there, Marty's for Parties.

G: Oh, did you really?

J: Yah, you come in from Temple Street. You go around, you drive up Temple Street, and there's a walkway down into the second floor. Yah, I had all my guys from the college in there rotating. They had a band, the whole four-hour band.

G: Speaking of Brady and fighter, boxers, who's the very well-known Portuguese fighter in the sixties in Lowell? Fifties, sixties.

J: [Arthur] Ramalho used to be the boxer instructor.

G: No, no, but this was (-- He actually (--)

J: I don't know. I didn't follow boxing that much.

G: Okay. You'd know the name. I'm sorry I can't remember this guy [Manny Freitas]. By the way, there's a wonderful photograph of him in the bar on Chelmsford Street, you know, the Irish, the Gaelic Club? I think it's gone now.

J: Oh, that's gone. That's the same place I'm talking about, Marty's for Parties.

G: Oh, yes. Is that where that was?

J: Jackie named it the Gaelic Club for his mother who was Irish.

G: I see, but in that bar, there was a great picture of this Portuguese fighter [Freitas] and a former neighbor of yours, Jackie McDermott. It's a great picture.

J: Jackie McDermott used to live up our street.

G: It was a great picture because there's McDermott sitting at the bar, and this was probably taken in the sixties. And there's [Freitas] wearing his boxing trunks. He's like Hollywood, good looking boxer with Jackie McDermott. It's an incredible photograph.

J: You know, Jackie ended up being connected a little bit.

G: Was he?

J: Jackie McDermott, I know when he got shot. We all knew here on the street. He was a good guy actually, you know. You never wanted to fight him because he was a hell of a fighter. Not a boxer, a

fighter. He could knock anybody on their ass regardless of size. But I got to know him not as a good friend, but you know.

G: Well, he was a neighbor right? He lived up the street.

J: And I knew him before he moved here.

G: Oh, okay.

J: With the other connections in Lowell. But when he moved up there, you know, he'd be out in the yard. I'd drive by, "Hey Jackie." "Hey, how are you doing?" Then the night it happened, when he got shot, I'm trying to think of the kid's name. I can't think of the kid's name that shot him.

G: Oh, Barnowsky, or something like that?

J: No, Barnowsky ordered the hit. He didn't do it.

G: Oh, okay.

J: It was a kid. I can't, Peter something. My son knew him, the kid. He's the one that shot him.

G: I didn't realize that.

J: But when the Feds went in there after he died, the Feds knew he had money somewhere. It was all in the walls.

G: In the house?

J: Yah. They ripped the walls down.

G: I've got to ask you about another guy. He's well-known in the Portuguese Community, and for some good reasons, some bad reasons. [Did you know]Manny Bello?

J: I knew Manny.

G: And he had a club on Bridge Street? No.

J: No, John Street.

G: John Street. What was the name of the club?

J: Flamingo, I think.

G: Okay.

J: It was right around the corner from Fanny Farmer's Candy, which was on the corner of John Street, and you just walk-up John Street, it's right there. It had a level, you know, street level place, and there was a downstairs.

G: Okay. Did they have live music there?

J: Yah.

G: Did you play there?

J: No. They had dancers there, sort of strippers, you know. But yah, I got to know him through, I don't remember who introduced me to him. And I learned later on, when I was dealing with the North End guys who knew him.

G: Did they know him in Boston? In the North End?

J: Yah.

G: Because I think he did some business with them. So, I just wonder, what were your impressions of Manny? He was, I forget how old he would have been when, maybe a little older.

J: I don't know. He was older than I was of course.

G: Yah, a little older than you.

J: I didn't have a lot of dealings with him. Mostly here and there, and I'd go to the club once in a while. Because you know, as a union rep, back then if a band was playing, you had to check them out and collect dues.

G: You would, right.

J: Yah. And see if they're union. If they're union, you got to pay your work dues. Now nobody pays work dues. They just don't. Boston stopped collecting work dues before I did when I was still President of this Local. I was still busting balls collecting work dues. And Boston, Mark said, "[expletive] that." You know, "It's not worth it."

G: So, you'd go around to the different clubs in Lowell, including Manny Bello's place.

J: Yah.

G: Finally, let me ask you about one other guy. I've met him. He's a wonderful, I think he's a wonderful guy. And that's Luis Gomes.

J: I never got close to him for whatever reason. I don't know. I never did much with him. I never had a lot of dealings with him.

G: Okay.

J: You know when you're in church you meet a lot of people. And the Feasts, you meet everybody. Everybody went to the Feasts. So, you'd meet them there, you know, but a more casual kind of thing. Because you're up there on the bandstand playing. You don't have time to schmooze. Most of the time you're playing so many [expletive] hours. The guys I brought from college, right, say, "When the [expletive] is this gig over?" I said, "When I tell you!" We had one trumpet player, Eddie D'Amico, great player. Great player.

G: I remember Eddie D'Amico.

J: He's a lead trumpet player. And the first time he did a gig, there was only one bandstand there. And the old building is behind you. There was no new building then, yet. The old building behind you, and the bandstand is over there by the trees. And I'm going to go set up. Somebody puts a statue of Saint Anthony on the lead trumpet's chair. They didn't know, it was Saint Anthony. So, he comes up, steps on the back. He says, "Hey, who's this guy? I'm playing lead, right?" I said, "Yah." I said, "Put him on down on the floor." Jesus Christ, I said, "Put him on the floor." "Are you sure you want to do that?" "Why?" "I don't know. You touch a saint, who knows?" Well, you know, the gig is long, right. This guy

owned a Hudson car. You know, Hudson, four-door, big four-door, and he had parked that way. Okay. And the sun comes down this way. He goes back to his car. He comes back. "Son of a bitch! Somebody broke my [expletive] rear windshield!" "What do you mean, broke it? Nobody is going to smash your [expletive] windshield." So, I went up there to look at it. The whole thing was shattered, you know, like somebody [makes sound]. You couldn't see through the [expletive] thing. The sun hit it just right. I said, "Custigo. Pennance, Custigo. You touched Saint Anthony. You're not supposed to touch him."

G: That's great.

J: "What the [expletive]! You know what it cost for a [expletive] windshield?" I said, "I told you, Saint Anthony. Don't mess with the saint." So, he had to have the window replaced. The insurance covered it, but you know.

G: Hey John, on that note, I don't want to take more of your time, but thank you. That's great.

J: I'm glad. I'm going to see Melba at 2:00. You know because she's busy having her lunch. She's doing PT now too.

G: Thanks a lot John. I appreciate it.

Interview ends.