

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL

Memórias – Preserving the Stories of Lowell's Portuguese Community

Oral History Interview with Patricia (Santos) Nickles, February 25, 2017

Biographical Note:

Born in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1950; daughter of Ruth E. (Cassidy) and Charles R. Santos Jr. (1923-1990); both born in Lowell. Ruth (Cassidy) Santos (b. 1923) was from an Irish-American Catholic family. Charles R. Santos Sr. (1901-1964) was born to a Portuguese immigrant family on Charles Street in Lowell. His father (Nickles great-grandfather) Alberto(Albert) Santos, born in the Azores (likely on the island of Graciosa), married Aldina Silva. Charles Sr. attended Lowell public schools but left upon completing elementary school. He married Mary Farley of Lowell(1903-1939)who was of Irish-Catholic heritage; worked a few years in a small foundry in the Ayer's City section of Lowell, and purchased a house near the foundry on 32 Marriner Street. After employment as meat dept. manager at Saunders market on Gorham St. in Lowell, he began a successful family-run wholesale meat company, Charles Santos & Sons Inc. The first of seven children (two girls and five boys), Charles Jr. was educated in Lowell public schools. He graduated from Lowell High School in 1940, after which he worked briefly as a welder at the Charlestown (Massachusetts) Navy Yard. During WW II he left to serve in the U.S. Marine Corps in the South Pacific. After sustaining combat injuries related to his participation in the liberation of Guam, he returned to Lowell, graduated from Northeastern University, and worked as manager/president in the family meat business. At this time(1950's), Santos became involved in local Democratic politics. working as campaign treasurer for the campaign of Attorney James L. O'Dea for District Attorney of Middlesex County and then for John F. Kennedy's Senatorial and Presidential campaigns. From 1962-1967 he was employed with General Services Administration as a liaison officer for the federal government. He was appointed U.S. Postmaster of Lowell in 1967, serving in this position for 12 years before promotion in 1979 to District/Mgr., Middlesex- Essex, Mass. He concluded his career with promotions to District Manager/Postmaster of Honolulu and the Pacific Region (1981), and then to District Manager of the Boston District (New England States) in 1983, before retirement in 1986.

Scope and Contents:

Interview conducted by local historian Mehmed Ali focuses almost exclusively on family history, primarily on the Santos (paternal) branch, with some reference to the Cassidy (maternal) family. It includes the experiences of marriage across ethnic lines, education, and occupational roles of family members in Lowell. It also includes information regarding the operation of business in a local family company, as well as that of local and state politics in the 1950's and 1960's, including the John F. Kennedy Senatorial and Presidential campaigns.

INFORMANT: PATRICIA NICKLES

INTERVIEWER: MEHMED ALI

P=PATRICIA

A=ALI

A: Okay, this is interview with Pat Santos Nickles on February 25, 2017. Pat thanks for sharing some memories today.

P: Oh, my pleasure.

A: First, Pat, just a little bit about you. When and where were you born?

P: I was born Saint John's Hospital March 31, 1950; parents, Charles Santos, Ruth Cassidy Santos.

A: And where, which neighborhood did you grow up in?

P: My father, having been a World War II Marine Corps veteran, thought he was very fortunate to be able to call his first residence the Veterans housing project, a red brick complex opposite the Olympia Restaurant and the Greek Church. It was developed for returning WWII veterans. He and my mother, after getting married, moved in with her family for a short time until moving into Veteran's housing. I don't know if there was a seniority list or a lottery, but they felt very fortunate to get into veterans housing. A lot of up -and -coming Lowellians lived there. Dr. Felix Sweeney was going to medical school at the time. Jim O'Dea, who became District Attorney, was attending Harvard law school. He was very close with my father. They remained close friends for life. So, a lot of very promising young people who made their mark in the history of this city lived there as well.

My parents were married five years before I was born. I lived in the housing project with them as an infant until I was eight months. I believe I saw on the deed in the month of December of 1950, that he had it in the works to build a house on a piece of land that he obtained from his father, on Marriner Street in Lowell, opposite the old Nickles Dairy and Saint Patrick's Cemetery. It was right next to my grandfather Santos' home, the old family home, where all seven Santos children were born. Grandpa Santos [Charles R. Santos Sr.], when he married his wife Mary Francis Farley, purchased that home. He was quite proud at such a young age to be able to purchase a home. I know my father was born when his mother was twenty and his father was twenty-two. So, Grandpa bought that house at a young age, which was very impressive when that was not the case once upon a time.

He chose the neighborhood because it was walking distance to the foundry [originally called the Eagle foundry and located in the Ayer's City section of Lowell]. And I believe the foundry was where manufactured parts for the mills were made. My grandfather Santos got the job because his older brother Tony was a foreman. He helped my

grandfather get employment as a molder. His brother Joe also worked there. A lot of Portuguese were employed there.

It was very country-like in that area for many years. It looked like a different world. There was a vacant lot of land opposite my grandfather's family home, and they always called it Woessner's Field, because the land belonged to a gentleman named Julius "Gus" Woessner. That field was used for ice skating in the winter and baseball in the good weather. I remember my dad telling me that the guys from the foundry would meet the guys from the Harvard Brewery next door and have a heck of a time playing baseball. People organized their own fun. They didn't need sponsors; they didn't need anyone. They did it themselves. And my father, all his life, was a baseball fanatic. It was funny that he didn't like to sit and watch the game for hours, he preferred to play the game.

A: Was your grandfather Santos an immigrant to the city, or was he born here?

P: His family, to the best of our knowledge, was from the island of Graciosa in the Azores. Some of his siblings were born there, but my grandfather [Charles R. Santos Sr.], being younger, was born when they reached Lowell, and he was born on Charles Street where an old Zayre's had been for many, many years. They were near the classic Portuguese Back Central Street area near Barry's Bakery and Saint Anthony's Church. That's where he was born. For reasons unbeknownst to our family, his father separated from his mother. They call it a "poor man's divorce." We have no idea what the circumstances were that caused it, but the father took three of the children with him, but left the rest with my Portuguese great-grandmother. He brought the kids to New Bedford where he obtained employment.

Great-grandmother Aldina moved with the rest of the family to 59 Court Street, in back of Saint Patrick's Cemetery.

My grandfather was always with her. There were still a number of siblings living with her. His brother Tony, Joe, and his sisters Jennie and Margaret were there. He also had sisters Sarah and Mary, and a brother Manuel, but they were in New Bedford with their father Alberto.

My great-grandmother, from the stories I heard, was a force to be reckoned with. She was a tiny woman who spoke in broken English. She ran a little grocery store to support her family.

A: This would be your great-grandmother?

P: Yes. She is my father's paternal grandmother and my great-grandmother. It's amazing to hear her described as wearing a long dress, an apron, and a colonial dust cap., She farmed a piece of Woessner's field that I had described earlier, the land opposite my Grandpa's house on Marriner Street. She actually farmed part of that

field. I imagine she paid Julius Woessner a fee. I don't know if she paid him in vegetables or money. She also made homemade pies and sold them from her store. She also raised on her land some livestock including chickens and pigs. You could do that in Lowell then. I remember my grandfather talking about how she would bring her pigs to the butcher. They would be slaughtered, and then the butcher would have her return at a certain date when he would give her the meat from the slaughtered pigs. She would take the meat home and make homemade Portuguese linguisa. That takes a tough lady to take pigs to slaughter.. But I guess being that plucky helped her survive.

One of my favorite stories may make her sound a little bit shady, but bootlegging was pervasive at the time. Relatives from the distant past aren't fun unless they're a little shady. My Aunt Margaret Santos, my grandfather's sister, , was one amazing woman, a dynamo. She told me about an awful experience that she had with my great grandmother when she was about eighteen. Prohibition was in full force. Many people in Lowell brewed their own moonshine, and great grandmother Santos was no exception. Margaret saw her mother making bathtub gin, including the coloring. There was a little creek, no longer there, that ran through their property. They put bottled moonshine in that creek because of occasional police raids. She would put the moonshine bottles in a box with a rope ,and she would sink it right into the creek with some bushes hiding the rope. Aldina would pull it out as needed. There was a whole system in place. Margaret told me that when she was eighteen, somehow my great-grandmother Santos got caught, and Margaret accompanied her to court. Margaret said even at age eighteen she sensed that the judge was sympathetic to this poor little Portuguese woman struggling to keep her family fed and a roof over their head . He gave great-grandmother Santos a lecture on how it's illegal to bootleg, as well as a good lecture about not doing the right thing.

I don't attempt to speak for all Portuguese because I don't know how the culture varies. I can only speak for my own family. They were quite blunt with what they had to say. They did not mince words, and they looked at frankness as a virtue. ? Why wouldn't you not want an honest statement? So as the judge was winding up his lecture, he said, "So now that you know, and I'm sure that you will know better in the future. Can you tell me honestly you will never do this again"? Margaret began to breathe a sigh of relief thinking that all was going to go well. Then great grandmother Santos kicked up her heels and said, "I've got all these mouths to feed. If I have to do this again to feed my children, I'll do this again!" Margaret said that she saw the judge sink in his chair. This is not what he expected. He gave her a gentle fine and a lot of reprimand. Margaret said that she knew that he was being so humane under the circumstances, but she also said, "I thought I was going to die." [Both laugh] Again I don't know how the culture might have been different among families, but I get a sense that there was a lot of this kind of personality in the family, especially in my grandfather. My grandfather was certainly, we have more funny stories about him because he said it the way he saw it and didn't see where there was any problem being that way.

A: Where was her store?

P: Yes, her store was later called Hood's Variety. Alvina's daughter Margaret took it over and married Lew (Lewellyn) Hood, but Margaret ran the store. They lived on Court St., off St. Patrick's cemetery, before they moved and converted part of the adjacent store as their residence. The store was at 367 Plain St. Coincidentally my cousin Kenny Santos lives there on 367 Plain St.. Funny to think there is a Santos still there. If you look at the structure of the building you can see how the front would have accommodated a variety store. But the building is still there. Kenny, by the way, retired as meat manager for Demoulas/Market Basket stores.

A: Now, do you think she sold her illegal bootleg stuff out of the store?

P: No. It was sold privately from her home. People knew from whom to get their moonshine. My mother once told me her own story. She was from an Irish family on Crosby St. in the flats. One of her best friends was a Greek girl. Mom would go to her friend's house to play. It was not unusual for the parents, in the winter, to give them bottles to hide in snowbanks. My mother just looked at it as a playful activity that kids would do for the adults. Later, adults would tell them to go get a nice cold bottle. The kids would see adults exchanging bottles for cash. This went on all during Prohibition. No one really went dry. [Laughs]

A: That's funny huh.

P: Yah, quite common in Lowell.

A: What else can you tell us about your great-grandmother? Did she ever remarry?

P: No.

A: No?

P: No when someone has a large family it can be a daunting thing to take on. I get the impression that she was a feisty little thing too. I think if there were a man in her life she would have to be the boss. She was a survivor and a trooper. The whole family had some laughs about her, but they were very impressed with her natural intelligence and energy, and ability to survive.

The family often talked about a terrible time in their history, the 1918 influenza epidemic. My grandfather said that as a little boy he saw hearses frequently going up and down Gorham Street to the cemeteries, like a bad dream. It touched the family of my great-grandmother. She had an eleven-year-old girl named Emma, who at that time, fell sick and died shortly after. She died around Christmastime, during 1918 influenza epidemic, after battling tuberculosis for some time.

My father told me a story that his father told him. Grandfather Santos, in his bedroom drawer on Marriner Street kept armbands. At one time men's shirts were all made with the same sleeve length and armbands were used to adjust sleeves for fit. When dad

asked his father what they were, he explained that they were a Christmas gift from his sister Emma who died at age eleven during the pandemic you lose someone you love, it never goes away. There is always something there. This family story was a little piece of a larger history of the 1918 influenza pandemic.

My great- grandmother Santos, she was only 54 when she was killed in a car accident in 1930, in East Chelmsford by Baptist Pond.

A: What happened?

P: Her daughter Mary was learning to drive and was practicing in that area The car went off the road and into the water. Mary survived, but my great-grandmother drowned.

A: Oh.

P: The great Portuguese grandmother died at age 54 in 1930 It was something that understandably haunted Mary all her life. That was a terrible way to lose her.. But Aldina's family was very close and went on without her. They all shared and were very giving. I read the book from the Lowell Historical Society, "*Comunidade*" The Santos family showed all the characteristics described of the Portuguese people in *Comunidade*. They were very proud and would never think of taking assistance. As a family they would pool what they had. *Comunidade* mentioned that the Portuguese family tried not to all work in the same place. There were Santos in the foundry, but other members of the family had other kinds of works, as well as second jobs. This protected the family should someone lose a job due to a strike, etc. In other words, don't put all your eggs in one basket. They'd always be somebody in the family to assist others in the family. The family would manage because they shared together as a community. They were independent. They worked hard, without complaint, but they weren't submissive doormats either. If they had to strike, they would do it, and then would be supported by family members who worked elsewhere.

A: Yah. When was your great-grandmother killed in the accident? Were her kids fairly young?

P: No, she was 54. The family was grown up and independent at that point.

A: About your grandfather. He went to Lowell schools?

P: Elementary.

A: Where did he attend elementary school?

P: He attended the former London Street School, not far from his Court St. home near St. Patrick's Cemetery..

A: Okay.

P: I remember the Portuguese exhibit [sponsored by the Saab Center for Portuguese Studies, University of Massachusetts Lowell] contributing a photo of Miss Haggerty's third grade class at the London St. school. My grandfather was in the far back row. He was the little boy in the plaid shirt. That was his only formal education. Later he worked for a while as a child laborer in the mill.

A: Did he?

P: His mother did some work in the mill, and he did some work with her.

A: Do you know which mill they worked in?

P: No, it was just one of the mills in Lowell. It was for a short period of time, before his brother Tony, who was foreman at the foundry, got him a job as a molder.

Later, my grandfather got work in Saunder's Market, located near the old Saint Peter's parish was on Gorham Street, the housing project area. He was in charge of the meat department where he had a lot of interaction with the people in that business. He was very thrifty and industrious and in a short he was setting up his own wholesale meat business with abattoir(slaughter house) in Tewksbury. But the main business was located on the corner of King and Jackson, off the Lord Overpass.

A: Did he own the land in Tewksbury as well as on King Street and Jackson Street?

P: Yes

A: Where was the slaughterhouse in Tewksbury?

P: Trull Road, not far from Andover St. It was a woodsy and swampy area.

A: What year did he first open?

P: Mid to late 1930s

A: So during the depression he opened a business.

P: Yes, My father said that his family never suffered during the depression. My grandpa stood 5 foot 1, wore a big Stetson hat and he always had a big cigar in his mouth. He was a no nonsense personality. My father had funny stories regarding Grandpa when he entered the workplace. He was a comical character, but a very admirable human being in so many other ways. My father said that during the depression school children rolled up newspapers to fill in holes in their shoes. Kids would watch other kids eating an apple at recess and they'd put their index finger up and say, "checks, checks,". This

meant that they wanted whatever was not eaten. Dad and his siblings never knew these hardships.

Dad said that everyone in his family had decent shoes, decent clothes, no one was hungry." Dad also had a very doting Irish mother. And as number one son, he might as well have been Prince Charles. Her children had dancing lessons and music lessons. The two youngest ones had ponies. When the children took dancing lessons they had recitals. So, there was money for costumes when other kids were lucky to have a coat to wear to school. The family was not rich, but they were well off for a family during the depression. Again, it all goes back to my five foot-one grandfather, with an elementary school education, but he had so much common sense, so much natural intelligence. He was sound in his judgement, he was candid and honest, and had no patience for nonsense. Above all, he honored his family. He turned out a great family.

A: So, he only did elementary school.

P: Yes.

A: Did any of your grandfather's siblings go to parochial school?

P: No, they all went to Lowell public school None attended or graduated from high school.

P I question if any graduated from junior high, but they were all smart and successful.

A What's your grandfather's name again?

P: Charles like my father.

A: Yes. So, Grandfather Charles started on his own. Were any of his brothers involved in the business to begin with?

P: No. He was the only brother who went into the meat business. The others were in the foundry.

A: In the foundry, okay.

P: To the best of my knowledge that's, that's what they did. I heard that Tony would get some part time jobs to supplement his income, but the foundry was where they were employed. Grandpa was unique in that He was self-made in his career. My father told a story about my grandfather's no-nonsense approach in parenting Dad said that when he was twelve years old my grandfather brought him to Saunder's Market, where Grandpa was in charge of the meat department. After speaking to the owner, Grandpa told my father to sit at the cash register. There gave Dad a quick lesson in making change. Then he said, "That's your new weekend job."

A: So, your father started at Saunder's?

P: Yes, As a cashier on Saturdays.

A: Okay

P: Dad said he learned to be good at math in a hurry. . At times my grandfather would take the beef truck to the Brighton stockyards outside of Boston, Brighton. There were trains that came in with cattle cars. My father would go along with Grandpa, and his in-law uncle, my Aunt Margaret's husband Lew Hood who worked for my Grandpa., Grandpa would quickly scan a herd of cattle and come up percentages telling you how much fat waste and how much prime he could expect just from observation. Dad said it was mind boggling how accurate he was with his estimations. He had a strong aptitude for math. At night, Grandpa would sit in bed with his pillows propped up, reading a book on business law. Sometimes, he'd call someone in to help him pronounce a word, so that he could talk to the lawyers about business matters My father said he was always educating himself.

A: Hm, interesting.

P: When Kennedy was elected President, My grandfather's early business reaction was to increase the supply of hamburger production the because the hamburger was Kennedy's favorite sandwich. My father said that he was right. They couldn't keep the hamburger in, because of Kennedy's popularity. The meat business went through a big hamburger phase. Grandpa often demonstrated a keen sense of business. There are many stories to tell about him.

A: Yes, we'll keep sharing some stories.

P: What else should I think about?

A: Tell us more about the business. The business grew over time, right?

P: Yes, it was a very arduous business. It was extremely difficult. I won't even get into the subject of slaughtering animals regardless of the work, but my uncles all had a marvelous sense of humor. You would wonder how they could keep the personalities that they had. My uncle Roger was involved with slaughtering about thirty cows a day. It was a horrible thing to have to do. My uncles needed to get into a certain frame of mind. But they managed by coming up with funny stories, and crazy little gags to play on each other for fun. But they got through it. My father, who later ran the business, had a deal with tough customers, who in some cases, were unbelievable characters.

One time Dad went to downtown Lowell to collect. Many people didn't want to pay their bills, and this would take its toll on business. That essentially is why in the later part of the 1970s the business started to go under. We were going through a terrible economy. Many small restaurants and diners were going out of business during this recession

period. The owners would pack up, leave, and not pay their bills. It took a toll on the family business. Once Dad had to collect from a restaurant owner somewhere near city hall. It was wintertime, and my father said the man was very belligerent when my father came in to collect on a bill. They exchanged a few words and the guy ended up chasing my father while wielding a knife. Dad had to jump over a big snowbank and roll away to escape. There was a lot that went with running a business..

Dad also told me stories about seeing very heartbreaking things. One time he had to go to a woman's house to collect because she was running up bills and not paying them. When he entered the house, her children were sitting on the floor. She started to cry. She opened her refrigerator, and it was empty. Dad was so upset that he opened his wallet and ended up giving her money to go grocery shopping. Afterwards he shared the story. My grandfather didn't comment at first, but later joked how we wasn't Dad out to collect anymore." [Both laughs]

A: Too much of a softy, right?

P: Yes! But I think my grandfather understood. It was just a way of kind of dismissing the situation.

A: So, what was the business called?

P: Charles Santos and Sons Wholesale Meats, Inc.

A: Okay.

A: So ,they sold to restaurants.

P: Yes, they did. They also included provisions. You would see these huge jars of mayonnaise, relish, mustard, ketchup, things that restaurants would routinely use.

A. Would they do process hamburg, or?

P: Yes. The slaughterhouse would provide the raw meat.

A: Then it was brought to King Street where it was processed down to different cuts.

P: Yes, The business was on the corner of King and Jackson. On the Jackson St. side there were massive refrigerators inside. Beef would be hung there. I can remember my uncles wearing white coats going into the refrigerator and shouldering huge pieces of beef. They would bring the meat to a cutting room where they had a grinder. Certain cut beef would be put in the grinder and later rolled in white paper. Then it was brought into the office section., where customers purchased from a counter, after having placed their orders.. The customers came to purchase wholesale meat, which included hotdogs, hamburg and steak etc. Very popular were what they called the jack pack

steaks, which were multiple steaks in big boxes. They were very popular with restaurants and people planning large parties and with families on a budget.

A: Now those steaks, were those cut on site or were they refrigerated or frozen and brought in?

P: They were fresh. They were not frozen.

A: Okay.

A: So, they had both retail and wholesale essentially.

P: Yes.

A: Okay.

P: Everything they sold was wholesale, even to the public.

A: Okay.

P: There were many women who went there weekly to feed their families, and they would enjoy great savings.

A: What was the competition for wholesale meats in Lowell?

P: It might have been only Lowell Provision in Centerville.

A: Okay.

A: Did they bring in the cattle and slaughter it somewhere?

P: I'm not sure how they operated. I just knew they were there. I don't know of another business besides Lowell Provision. I always remember hearing the stories of the DeMoulas Brothers getting started in the Greek Acre, where they had a little family market. They bought all their meat from my grandfather Santos. That's how my father became friendly with the family, particularly Mike DeMoulas. He admired their work ethic and their family. I can also remember when I was in my early teens, my dad came home for lunch. He was so excited with his conversation with Mike DeMoulas who told him about family plans for an enormous supermarket on Chelmsford Street. Dad said they were taking a big gamble but if they won, they'd become an enormous success. I can vividly remember that whole conversation. This occurred when we lived in our house on the corner of Marriner Street and Boston Road.

I can also remember the evening of the market's opening day on Chelmsford St., seeing from our home these bright spot lights wavering back and forth in the sky. It was related to the grand opening of the DeMoulas on route 110. Yes, I can remember that

amazing event as a kid. My father's words came back to me, because the big gamble launched a successful chain of markets to follow.

A: That's for sure.

P: That story reminded me of the many qualities I always admired in my father. He didn't understand the meaning of jealousy. If something wonderful happened to anybody you would think it was happening to my Dad. He was so happy for anyone who experienced success or great luck in life. And he was so excited for the family.

Eddie Lelacheur who became our state rep, was also our neighbor on Marriner Street. He lived at the end of Marriner St., on my family's side. He also bought his meat from my grandfather when he had Stone Pine Market on Gorham Street. Ed was an outgoing and funny man, who was wonderful with kids.

A: Okay, so not only restaurants and housewives, but also the little markets across the city?

P: Yes.

A: Did your father have any other stories to share about the DeMoulas family'?

P: Dad and Mike served together on various boards and organizations.

A: Okay. Tell us about your Irish grandmother

P: Before I talk about my Irish grandmother, Mary Farley, it might be helpful to hear about how the Portuguese felt about other ethnic groups. What I found very interesting about the Portuguese whom I knew, was that they were unlike some other ethnic groups in the city who were clannish with their own. The Portuguese were close, but they were very receptive to other cultures, other people. They valued being upright, hard-working, and commonsensical. They didn't have a lot of patience for nonsense. If you appeared to be a solid commonsensical person with values, ethnicity didn't matter. I think the Portuguese women were a little partial to Catholic, but even that was not as intense as you might think.

My grandfather's sister Margaret, married Lew Hood, who was Protestant. He worked at Santos and Sons for my grandfather and they got along very well.

A: Sure, yes.

P: My grandfather, even though he was very good to Father Rev. John F. deSilva at St. Anthony's, he was not all openly religious. He believed in God and the importance of morals. He worked hard for his family, and was just twenty-two when my father was born. The love of his life was a young Irish girl, from a lovely family, the Farley's of Centralville. They were just two young people who fell in love. I didn't hear of any

objections from the Portuguese side. I remember stories about when Dad was dating my mother. His extended Portuguese family all doted on my dad. To them, he could do no wrong. My mother said that she was amazed when she met the family for the first time. They were so delightful, and they were so gracious to her immediately. They made her feel like she was something extra special because she was my father's girl.

A: And she's Irish as well?

P: My mother is Irish as well, yes. There is another Portuguese story that always touched my heart, my grandfather Santos, which had to do with Grandpa's sister Margaret, who also doted on my dad. One time Dad visited Margaret when he was on leave from the Marines, showing up in his green uniform. When she opened the door, she looked at him disappointedly. And when he asked what was wrong, she told him that she had boasted to the neighbors that he was a Marine. She said, "But you don't have the beautiful uniform on." Dad explained that the dress blues were expensive and that during the war you had to buy your own. Months went by before he saw her again. On his next leave home, she presented him a gift box containing Marine dress blues. She took all the steps so that she could give him his Marine Blues, because that meant so much to her. She said, "I want to show you to my friends, and I want you to wear that beautiful uniform." Later he married my mother in that uniform at St. Peter's church on Gorham St.

A: Oh terrific.

P: Son hearing this story I thought what special people to care that much. .

A: Now where did your grandparents meet? Do you know?

P: They were introduced by a young Centerville neighbor of my grandmother's. Everybody called him O.B., as in O'Brien. He introduced them at a local dance.

A: Okay.

P: Then my grandfather started courting her. There were about fourteen Farley children in her family.

A: Any relation to Leo Farley who was the mayor?

P: No. Not to my knowledge.

A: Okay.

P: My father's sister Shirley, married Ed Silva from Winthrop Ave. in Lowell. His father's business was Silva Wallpaper and Paint. Ed's father was Manuel and his mother Margaret. Margaret. I would run out of ways to compliment Margaret. She has to be one of the most beautiful human beings ever. The father was very interested in having his sons work in the business. That was more the mindset then of the Portuguese

father. If there was a family business, then there seemed to be little justification in going to college. My grandfather was also of that frame of mind.

What drove my father to further educate himself at Northeastern, was the GI Bill. He saw it as a great opportunity after the war. He was in the Business Administration co-op program

In the case of Manuel and Margaret Silva, for some reason Margaret recognized how important education was, and she was the driving force to have the boys educated. My father's sister Shirley married Ed Silva a young Portuguese man who went to Boston College and graduated Valedictorian. His father Manuel couldn't afford to have him board. So, he took the train to Boston College every day and back. Ed was an ROTC student. He had served his time on duty in Oklahoma for a few years after graduation, and then General Electric in Lynn hired him. He ended up retiring as Vice President in General Electric in Cincinnati, Ohio. That's an impressive success story about a nice Portuguese boy from Lowell, who wallpapered and painted his way through B.C. His family did very well.

A: Did your grandparents marry at St. Anthony's?

P: My grandmother was Centralville, so it was St. Michael's.

A: Okay.

P: Because it was customary to marry in the girl's church.

A: Okay.

P: And she would have been in St. Michael's parish in Centralville.

A: Now you said your grandfather was friendly with Father deSilva?

A: What do you know about the father?

P: Father deSilva? I heard he was a man who could have a gruff manner, but it did not reflect the kind man he was beneath. He was extremely kind to those in need. He was highly thought of by the Portuguese Community. One time he was looking for donations to help the church. This was after my grandmother had passed away from gall bladder surgery, leaving 7 children, my father being the oldest, and my grandfather was only 38. Years old.

A: How old was she when she passed?

P: She was thirty-six.

A: Wow.

P: Father deSilva was looking for people to donate or help the church. My grandfather donated two confessionals in my grandmother's memory.

A: Okay.

A: He didn't go to church though. (P: No). Did he go Christmas, or?

P: Church attendance declined as his family became adults.

A: So, after your grandparents got married, did your father and the family go to church?

P: Yes. The family did because the mother was very Irish Catholic.

A: And where did they go to church then?

P: They were communicants of Sacred Heart church because they lived at 32 Marriner St., which was considered the Sacred Heart Parish.

A: Did your father make his First Communion there?

P: Yes.

A: Okay, very good. What else about your grandfather and Portuguese connections?

P: My grandfather attended the Holy Ghost Fairs and other Portuguese activities. He never spoke Portuguese at home because he didn't see the point. He was business minded, and he didn't see where it was relevant to business. But when my father accompanied him to Holy Ghost Fairs and other Portuguese celebrations, it surprised him to hear Grandpa switch right into Portuguese jabbering away with the old timers. Then Grandpa would switch back into English.

A: He must have had Portuguese customers though for the business?

P: Yes, but he had all ethnicities for customers. There were a lot of Greeks. I know a Greek woman who came over here when she was fourteen. She told me that every Saturday, her mother who spoke no English, would take her to Santos and Sons. She would have a note to order meat, because they spoke only their native language, as did other customers.

A: And the Greeks had a lot of restaurants, right?

P: Yes. My father was very good friends with the Tatsios Brothers who owned a small restaurant near City Hall. He went to high school with the Tatsios Brothers, and he was especially friendly with Johnny Tatsios. He had a lot of Greek friends. A lot of people

thought Santos was a Greek name. Because of his black hair and his many Greek friends, Dad was often thought to be a Greek boy.

A: Were there Portuguese restaurants back in the day?

P I do not remember a Portuguese restaurant in Lowell, but Portuguese food was always available at church functions. My father loved Portuguese soup, also called Caldo Verde, a green, soup because of the kale in it. I make it. Portuguese people think it's very delicious. It's a very ethnic dish, but now it's in many upscale Boston restaurants. Once, if you wanted it, and you were Portuguese, you had to make your own at home, or find it at Portuguese fairs, festivals, or church dinners. Some local Portuguese restaurants came to the city later.

A: That is interesting in itself because many other ethnic groups had restaurants, (P: That's right)

P: The Portuguese made their living usually from physical or blue collar labor, including construction. A man I knew once worked summers in Prince Macaroni for some extra money. He told me that he worked with a lot of Portuguese guys. He said, "God, those guys don't even take a lunch break." He was amazed by the Portuguese work ethic.

A: Were there any Portuguese professionals when your father was young?

P: I don't remember because it was still the generation of the blue-collar work. At that time there was a mindset that if your father established a business, you would work there for the family. There were a lot of shops and small businesses. But the thinking changed. My Uncle Ed Silva, (my uncle because he married my father's sister Shirley) graduated from Boston College and retired as vice president of General Electric out in Ohio. His push came from his mother. She had a different philosophy about education and persuaded her husband to be receptive to the idea that the kids be college educated.

A: Your grandmother died when she was thirty-six. (P: Yes) How old were the youngest kids at that point?

P: About five and three.

P: Yes, Shirley and Freddie. Freddie was the youngest.

A: How did your grandfather deal with that death?

P: Again, there's a lot of coming together. My father said he saw very little of him, and people told him that Grandpa was emotionally devastated. He was just so emotionally devastated. Aunt Rita Farley moved in with the family to help. The older kids helped with household chores. My Dad washed floors He said whoever got up in the morning

first, put the coffee on, and they delegated chores for the day. The older ones had jobs looking after the younger ones. They all had to answer to my grandfather. He was the guy in charge, but he had to run a very demanding business as well. Then my grandfather's sister Margaret, my Aunt Margaret Santos Hood, was extremely involved and did much to help out the family. There were only two girls in the family and five boys. My Aunt Shirley spoke about Margaret taking her for her prom gown and her wedding gown. There was a lot of coming together; wonderful people coming together and helping one another to get through it all.

A: So, your father graduated high school. (P: Yes) And what year would he have graduated?

P: 1940. Raymond Sullivan was the principal.

A: He was born in 1924?

P: He was born in 1923.

P: My father thought highly of Ray Sullivan.

A: Yes! So your father graduates from high school, but during high school he was working at the business?

P: Yes.

A: Okay. And just went right into the business after high school, right?

P: No, after high school he wanted to learn welding. He heard how you could make a lot of money as a welder in the Charlestown Navy Yard. So, he asked my grandfather if he could borrow money to take a welding course. My grandfather wasn't easy about borrowing money. He set up terms for repayment. My father later paid him back for the course, and he went to Charlestown Navy Yard every day with a bunch of guys. He was making great money, but it was taking over his life. He had no life of his own, and he was a young man trying to date my mother. Finally he decided to work for his father short again. Soon the war escalated, and he was young. He let some Marine recruiters take him out to dinner and talked him into signing up. [Laughs] Soon after he was in an historic invasion, the Liberation Day invasion of Guam. The invasion was a day filled with explorations and mortar shells. He was thrown into the air, slammed down and was paralyzed from the waist down from spinal shock. He was sent to Honolulu for rehab. He didn't know if he'd walk again, but after many weeks he came out of it. But all his life, he had terrible problems with his back and terrible migraines from concussion. He was on many islands and turned twenty-one on Guadalcanal. Dad went through a lot and was decorated for it. Because he was then unfit for combat he was reassigned to kitchen duty at the Marine base in San Diego. His background from Santos and Sons, where he learned meat cutting, determined his kitchen duty. It

was there that his Mexican marine buddy, Mr. Gonzales, taught my father how to make great Mexican chili.

A: No kidding

P: He loved this duty. According to Dad, it was the best duty in the Marine Corps. He said he remembered the Marines sending him home to Boston by train cross country. He said I couldn't believe how beautiful a country was at that time It made him think of what I was fighting for. It was so beautiful. It was before we tore up the country with highways and everything. More strip malls, multiple unit housing came later.

A: But this is what population will bring though.

P: You're right, it's sad but true.

A: Tell us when your father came home and returned to work for your grandfather.

P: Yes, he managed the business for my grandfather and was later considered the company president.

A: Okay.

P: Dad worked on the administrative end of the business. Because of the GI Bill, he took advantage of the Northeastern University Co-op Program. It was perfect for him, because when it was time to fulfil the work requirements, he did so by managing his father's business. His work requirement would be for a couple of weeks, and then he would take the train into Boston to Northeastern for a couple of weeks of classwork. The train depot was conveniently located across from Santos and Sons, and from where both my parents lived in the Veteran's housing near the Holy Trinity Greek Church. Everything was very close and walkable.

At Santos and Sons, Dad was the guy in the suit, while everyone else wore the long white butcher coats. Years later, he and my mother talked about the economy changing with the times. There was a need for more security and benefits in their lives. Dad was very involved with local politics at the time. He was also politically involved with the Kennedy's, who were in the early stages of their political careers.

A: Before he helped out the Kennedys, did he help other candidates in the city?

P: Yes. Jim O'Dea [James L. O'Dea from Lowell, served as District Attorney for Middlesex County]. Dad was treasurer of Jim O'Dea's campaign for Middlesex District Attorney. He was a very close friend of Jim O'Dea.

A: And how did they know each other?

P: They both lived in the brick Veterans Housing near the Holy Trinity Greek Church.

P: When Jim and his wife went out campaigning or to attend a political function my father would babysit his boys. He'd just go over and say, Both were Marines in WWII. Jim, brilliant man, was actually a Japanese interpreter. He graduated from Notre Dame and went on to earn a law degree from Harvard. And he was just an absolutely brilliant man.

A: He should have been governor.

P: He could have been. The Kennedys had plans for him to run for Governor.

A: But [laughs]

P: His demise was related to the morality of the times. We now we have a president [Donald Trump] who is married to wife number three, and having with multiple relationships in his past. O'Dea's political career came to an end when news of an extra-marital affair was leaked to the press. The public lost an incredibly effective public servant. My father spoke of the Kennedys priming him for governor. They were looking at him before Teddy. Teddy was still in the background.

A: And how did Jimmy O'Dea know the Kennedys?

P: He was a politician. It's a network thing; Democrat, Irish Catholic, politician with educational status, a distinguished WWII veteran, and an early Kennedy supporter.

A: I know there was some familial connection because we did it for the exhibit with the Gargan Family who lived in Belvidere. They were related to the Kennedys.

P: Yes, they were cousins to the Kennedys.

A: Do you think there was a connection there for Jim O'Dea?

P: There could have been because Jim was in with the influentials in the city, especially the Irish Catholic democrat faction. This faction was represented when the Lowell Sun(11/22/2013) published a commemorative page on the 50th anniversary of JFK's assassination . Dad was in a photo seated next to JFK at a Knights of Columbus breakfast. The Kennedy library carries this story in an oral interview with my father. In this interview my father was asked what made him want to support this young political figure John F. Kennedy. Dad related what he went through as a young combat Marine during World War II serving the country. Dad said in addition to his impressive educational credentials, Kennedy was a true patriot. His wealthy and powerful father who could have gotten him out of serving during war time. But he risked his life like the rest of us." Dad said, "That caught my attention early on, because I had been there, and I really admired that." He said, "The Kennedys stood for the everyday guy, the working guy, and I knew that was the kind of person I wanted to work for."

A: Did your father do any outreach to the Portuguese community for these political campaigns, whether Jim O'Dea or JFK, or?

P: I don't know if he reached out to any specific group of people.

A: Okay. Do you know that JFK in the late [19]50s sponsored legislation to allow a group of Portuguese immigrants to come to the U.S. because of the Azores volcano?

P: Yes, correct.

A: Do you know any stories connected to Lowell about that?

P: I know that my father was in contact with Father deSilva about immigration. Father deSilva used to contact my father about different matters Dad was an effective liaison between Father deSilva and Ted Kennedy in opening U.S. immigration for the next wave of Portuguese after the volcano disaster in Falal. [The Azorean relief act, sponsored by the Senator JFK, was passed during the Eisenhower administration.]

A: Do you ever hear of a person name Firmo Correa?

P: No.

A: Okay, he was one of these Portuguese guys that was kind of one of the godfathers of the community. You know, he would have been twenty years older than your dad, or something like that.

P: Yes, I'm sure if dad were here today, he'd probably say he knew this gentleman. Considering the kind of support from the Kennedys, and the Portuguese community being Democratic, I don't believe that special efforts were needed to gain their support for Kennedy.

A: Tell us the nature of the business from fifties into the sixties for Santos and Sons.

P: They were very good business years. Chinese Restaurants were among their best customers.

A: Oh really?

P: Probably their best customer, was the old Cathay Garden on the Lowell-Lawrence Boulevard. The owner, Frank Chin, had a daughter Theresa married a gentleman name Bob Lu. They opened the Silver Dragon in Methuen. These customers insisted on top quality. I will never forget, as a child, one Christmas Eve when my grandfather called my father. He told Dad to take the Santos and Sons truck into Boston and to accommodate Frank Chin. The Cathay Garden was nearly out of pork and Mr. Chin demanded service. My mother was upset. But my father said that there was no

disappointing a customer like Frank Chin, who always ordered the best quality. The restaurant underestimated their holiday orders, and they expected my grandfather to make good. The Chinese people were superb customers., and grandpa enjoyed excellent relationships with them.

But I'm sorry I sidetracked from your question.

A: No, no, that was a great story. The business continued to be good [19]50s into [19]60s?

P: Yes, that's where I sidetracked. Later in the 1970's during the Nixon administration, economic conditions, recession, and inflation occurred. Inflation was affecting all kinds of restaurants in the area. Consequently, some weren't paying their bills, and they were closing.

A: Did your family sell the business at one point, or did you close it?

P: They struggled for a few years before they closed it down. They turned the slaughterhouse over to my Uncle Kenny for a while longer. He had a house right on the same street in Tewksbury.

A: What year did they close it roughly?

P: I'm going to say the later part of the [19]70s.

A: And so they sold the building?

P: It later became Geoffroy used cars.

Later Dad worked to get jobs for his brothers. His brother Roger became a federal meat inspector., and his brother Freddie found work as a meat cutter, at Fort Devens. His brother Eddie later worked at the Tyngsborough post office. My father went on with his own career as Postmaster.

A: Obviously your father supported the Kennedys. Did he have a federal position before he became postmaster of Lowell?

P: Yes, he worked for General Service Administration in Boston as the liaison officer. That was the job title, Liaison Officer, GSA.

A: And when did that job come?

P: That would have been in the early 60's.

A: After JFK was elected or before?

P: A little after. (A: Okay) But it was while JFK was president that he worked for GSA. He was away from home a lot on job related travel. My mother wasn't happy living that way.

So, he started looking around at other possibilities, and he learned there was going to be an opening for the postmastership of Lowell.

A: Was Charlie Gallagher the postmaster?

P: No, I believe it was Jim Gallagher. My dad had a very solid administrative background between running my grandfather's business and his GSA position. There were many problems and challenges involved in running a family business. It never ended. I remember one night, as a child, seeing Dad come home drenched from a soaking rain. He and his brothers were out in the woods of Tewksbury because some burglars had stolen my grandfather's entire safe. They broke it open in the Tewksbury woods. The police located it, but the cash was missing. My father was concerned about all the wet business papers out in the woods. The business papers were very important to them. So, Dad and one of his brothers were out in the soaking rain. They were walking through the muck and the mire gathering the papers up. The number of diverse miseries that went on with that job, along with other matters that, provided background for future career challenges. he had to be accountable for. The co-op program at Northeastern University, the diverse problems that went with the meat business, hard times helping his brothers to obtain new employment and working for General Service Administration, all provided experience for Dad in his future career. He was also a people person. He thoroughly enjoyed people and got great satisfaction from making a difference with people's lives.

As a relative, bragging about your own sounds prejudiced. But it was Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan who said, "Everyone is entitled to an opinion, but they're not entitled to their facts." I have many facts to back my opinion about my father's life

A: When was your father sworn in as [Lowell] postmaster?

P: St. Patrick's Day 1967. Ted Kennedy swore him in.

A: Okay.

P: My parents didn't know it until the last minute that Kennedy planned to swear him in as Postmaster. Dad had received a phone call from Frank O'Connor's aide, Frank O'Connor, an aide to Kennedy, and a good friend of my father. A new set of invitations was required to replace the prior ones, which had not listed Kennedy. Children were brought from schools to attend. They let kids out of school to attend. You would not believe the mass attendance it generated. It's now the Brad Morse Building, owned by Middlesex Community College.

A: Correct.

P: Okay.

P: Dad stood on the staircase as Ted Kennedy gave a speech about him. There was the usual Kennedy humor and charm. "On St. Patrick's Day it's my privilege to introduce to you Ruth Cassidy's husband." This was Ted's humorous way of introducing Dad to the public. Then he told Dad that he hoped it would be a scandal-free administration, because he didn't want to hear stories about mail trucks delivering Santos and Sons beef. Ted did his research on Dad's background to create the humor. What a snowy St. Patrick's Day it was. Being sworn in as a postmaster was a very prestigious event then. Lyndon Baines Johnson was president at the time. When my father got his official appointment certificate, it had the authentic Lyndon Baines Johnson signature at the bottom.

A: Good.

P: Dad continually received promotions. He was the only Lowell postmaster who was ever the Middlesex/Essex district manager. He kept going up the ranks. Because of his involvement running the Santos family business, he didn't enter federal government until he was forty. Although he made good money, he wasn't in the federal government long enough to have a secure retirement that would benefit my mother, if something happened to him. He felt some extra pressure to keep advancing himself so that my mother would be secure.

This prompted his interest in a large promotional opportunity as District Manager/Postmaster Honolulu Hawaii.

So that's one of the things that got him looking for a promotion like Honolulu, [Hawaii], because it was so significant.

A: And the job in Honolulu was for what exactly?

P: District Manager of the Pacific region and Postmaster of Honolulu. He was in charge of the South Pacific islands. These included the Hawaiian Islands, Guam, and other U.S. possessions and territories in the Pacific area.. They were the islands where he served in combat with the Marine Corps. Events came full circle at the end of his life came because of his jurisdiction as the Postmaster/District Manager. When he returned home from war, he always talked about the beauty of the Pacific islands. He spoke of his dream to return there in peacetime, never imagining the circumstances related to his return. So it was a remarkable circle of life's events.

P: In 1989 he and Mr. Peter Tsapatsaris, a fellow marine and Lowellian, attended the 45th Anniversary of the Liberation of Guam by the marines. The Governor put the returning Marine liberators on floats in parades. They spoke to audiences of young marines in large gathering places. He said it reminded him of an old Roman film where returning conquerors were worshipped. It was an incredible experience. That

happened the year before he died. I always thanked God that he had that experience before he left the earth. That was quite a gift before he departed in 1990.

A: Well Pat, any final thoughts or stories about your, the Portuguese side of your family?

P: The Portuguese are a community whom the city should rightfully be proud of. It may be a generalization, but I don't think it's inappropriate to say that in a quiet way. The Portuguese are not egotistical, characteristically speaking They are unlikely to brag. They recognize the goodness within their own community. They're people of values. There's something very special about the community. Again, in the book *Comunidade* so many, there are so many pieces of information that seemed to confirm these impressions as a community. They pride themselves as being contributors. During the Great Depression, they took pride in their personal independence and seemed to shun outside assistance during other hard times as well. My Portuguese family was very receptive to integrating with other kinds of people. They exhibited much warmth without excessive sentimentality. I always felt very fortunate to have Portuguese relatives. I love my family's Irish side, but there was something very special about the Portuguese family in my life.

I'll share thought about my Irish mother who was one of nine Cassidy children, five girls and four boys. Of the five girls, four married Portuguese. Some people thought that was different for an Irish family.

But my grandmother who worked in the mill, was not an educated woman, as were many people of her time. She was a simple woman with a lot of sense. From working in the mills she had the opportunity to observe all kinds of people, and she always admired the Portuguese people. She saw them as hard working and family oriented. She was very approving of her daughters marrying Portuguese men. She saw them as good providers, and good family men. The idea that they were also Catholic appealed to her as well. It was about the quality of the person. and she saw much of this in the Portuguese community. I personally feel that Portuguese family and community values have, in many ways, transcended the generations in our city.

A: Okay. This was great. Thanks again Pat.

P: Thank you!

Interview ends