

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

INTERVIEWEE: BARBARA DUNSFORD

INTERVIEWER: GRAY FITZSIMONS

DATE: APRIL 24, 2023

B=BARBARA

G=GRAY

Biographical Sketch:

One of four siblings, Barbara Dunsford was born in Lowell and grew up in the city's Highlands neighborhood. Her father was a public school teacher at the city's vocational school and her mother was a homemaker until she entered the workforce in the 1960s. Barbara's mother, Sophie Anne (Gancarz) Dunsford (1918-2006), was born in Lowell and her parents were Polish immigrants. Her father, Harold Bevan Dunsford, Jr. (1918-1973), was also born in Lowell, but of English (Yorkshire) descent. Barbara and her siblings attended St. Casimir's Polish National Church in the Centreville neighborhood. All four siblings were educated in Lowell's public schools and received college degrees. Barbara studied psychology, graduating from Lowell State College in 1973. She worked for a short time at a garden center before obtaining a position with a statistical consulting firm that studied employment, education, and public health issues. Around 1981, she was hired as director of the Portuguese American Resource Center, a program of the Lowell Union of Portuguese Americans (LUPA)

Founded in 1977 and located in Lowell's Back Central section, which was the city's major Portuguese neighborhood, LUPA provided social services to the area's Portuguese residents. A large number of Portuguese immigrants, primarily from the Azores, settled in Lowell beginning in the 1960s and into the early 1980s. The Resource Center offered a number of services and programs to aid this growing immigrant population. As director, Barbara coordinated some of these activities with the International Institute of Lowell, a long-time immigrant aid organization. She also wrote a number of grants, including one that led to an extensive photographic documentation project, carried out by local professional photographer Kevin Harkins, of the Back Central neighborhood and its residents, as well as in the various factories where many Portuguese were employed. After federal funds supporting the Resource Center were expended, Barbara worked as a director of "Annual Giving" at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. She remains active today as a consultant to a number of non-profit organizations in Lowell.

Scope and Contents:

This interview is divided into two parts. The first part includes a brief family history of Barbara Dunsford and covers her years growing up in post-World War II Lowell, her education in the city's public schools, her university studies, and her early work experiences. The second part focuses on her work at the Portuguese American Resource Center (PARC) in Lowell that was a program, funded by through the City of Lowell via the federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. PARC was a key program operated under the aegis of the Lowell Union of Portuguese Americans (LUPA), which was founded in 1977 to provide social services to the city's growing Portuguese immigrant community. This part of the interview highlights the role of PARC within Lowell's Portuguese community and it also covers some institutional background information on LUPA.

G: It is Monday, April 24th. I'm here with Barbara Dunsford at the Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers, the predecessor of the main topic today, which is the Lowell Union of Portuguese Americans. Barbara, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

B: My pleasure.

G: Let me start with some general family personal background questions. First of all, when were you, and where were you born?

B: I'm a tried, and true Lowellian. I've been born in Lowell. I came through the Lowell [public] school system, and through the university [Lowell State College; by 1991 University of Massachusetts Lowell]. So, I'm very proud of my city, and I'm really happy to be here today to share my information about LUPA with you. My dad was a teacher, and my mom was a housekeeper up until the time we were in middle school, and then she went to work. I have three siblings, and all of us went through the Lowell school system as well, as we went on to higher education. It was my dad's and my mother's tenet that you can do anything you want, but you needed to graduate from college. So, we all have good degrees. We all had good jobs growing up. We were a basic traditional middle-class family.

G: And what year were you born?

B: I'm not sure we need to talk about what year I was born. I think I'll pass on that question.

G: Okay. But when were you in, for example, elementary school and grammar, and high school?

B: I was in [grammar school] in the late 50s and in the early 60s into high school. And then off to college in the early 70s. I was involved in the community through my mom. She was a volunteer, not just at the school with the PTOs, but also with the church. She sort of laid the [occupational] groundwork for me. She would collect for the American Heart and American Cancer societies. And in those days, you went door, to door, to door with an envelope, and the people gave you their change, maybe a dollar. And you would go up and down the streets. I

would follow my mom as a young person, be involved, [and observe] how outgoing she was and how engaging she was. And she was a good fundraiser, which I think laid the groundwork for me as my whole career has been in philanthropy and development, and fundraising. And I think that's where it started. It was easy for my mom back then. I find that this profession is not only rewarding, but I feel people have the connections with organizations, and they give from their heart. And it's made my professional career easy.

G: And how far back does your family go in Lowell?

B: My family goes back in Lowell, my mother's parents were from Poland. They were the first generation here. And they lived in a cold-water flat off of Coburn Street, Roosevelt Place, for all their years. My grandfather I did not know. He died when my mother and her sisters were young. And so, my grandmother was actually a single mother, bringing up four girls. She worked in the mills. My mother and her sisters [told] the story that they would scavenge for bottles, empty bottles. And the clear ones didn't get you many pennies, but the colored ones, the greens, and the browns, got you more money, because they would give it to a person who was making bootleg. Those were good stories. My mom was in the Flood of 1936. And she lived on the second floor, a three-family on Coburn Street, and the water went up to the second floor, and had to be evacuated.

My paternal great-grandparents came here from England. And my grandparents lived in South Lowell off of Moore Street. We [often] visited one grandparent in the morning after church on Sunday, and then go visit the other grandparents after lunch. We had a really good family upbringing. My father was Protestant. My mother was Catholic. And in those days that was a little bit taboo. We were basically brought up Catholic. I don't think I ever saw my father step in the church.

G: What is your mother's maiden name, the Polish name?

B: My mother's maiden name was Gancarz, gang cars in English.

G: How do you spell it?

B: G A N C A R Z, and her mother was a Swiderski. And I'm really good at pronouncing Polish names and spelling them for sure.

G: Very good. Coburn Street in Centralville? Is that correct?

B: Coburn Street in Centralville. It's off of Lakeview Avenue and Hildreth Street. Right, really in the center of, at that time, the Polish community.

G: Yes, right.

B: Right. We walked to Polish School on Saturdays. We would be dropped off in the morning. And at noontime we would walk a block or two around the corner to my grandmother's house. Then we would walk downtown, over the Bridge Street bridge, to get the bus to come back to the Highlands where we lived. Good memories.

G: What church did you attend?

B: We went to the Saint Casimir's Polish National Church, which was a little bit different than the regular Catholic Church. They were more aligned with the Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, and that their priests could marry. So, there was always a controversy there. And the reason that we were in that church is because when my grandmother went to the other church.

G: Which other church?

B: Was it Holy Trinity?

G: It probably was.

B: Up on High Street I think it was?

G: That's Holy Trinity, yes.

B: That's Holy Trinity, to get her children Baptized. And at the time they were older, because at the time she couldn't afford it, they again, were charging her an amount she could not afford. So, she left there, and she went to the other church, and they did not charge her for the baptismal, and had my aunts, my grandmother had four daughters, had my aunts all baptized there. That's why we ended up at St. Casimir's. A wonderful community church. Good, good memories.

G: Very interesting. What was your grandmother's occupation after she became a widow?

B: She worked in the mills. She was a stitcher and she would take some discarded remnants home and make dish towels and embroider the edges with them, and sell them for probably, very little money, just to kind of make ends meet. My aunt, the third oldest, was actually sent to Worcester to live with an aunt, because my grandmother could not afford the four girls in the house. So, she was sent [to Worcester]. And I think the only reason, well I know that this is the reason, is because she was quite plump. Evidently that aunt was not very nice. And my Aunt Helen would have to get up in the morning before she went to school and do chores. It was a very difficult situation. I think she was there for almost one year. And the reason that she came home is that her father had passed away. Basically, my grandmother was getting messages that if she stayed there, she was just going to be more abused, because she was little. She was little at that time. I think she could have been maybe eight or nine.

G: So, your mother's side of the family was Polish working-class. Your father's side, the Dunsfords, how would you characterize them?

B: They were working class also. My grandfather had a painting and contracting business. And I actually found recently a picture of his old truck, and it made me laugh, because my father was a junior. And so, to see my father's name on a truck, which belonged to his father, made me feel really good. My grandmother, my nana, she did not work. And my father had three sisters. He was the only boy. I think he was treated probably like a prince. And my mother had three sisters. So, four girls on my mother's side, and three girls and my dad on my dad's side.

G: So, growing up in Lowell in the 1960s and 70s; did you meet many Portuguese people?

B: I would say in the 60s and 70s, in probably elementary and middle school I would not have known if they were Portuguese or not. When we all came from different neighborhoods in Lowell to go to Lowell High School, that's when we had this sort of blend, this mix, or this kind of quilt of the makeup of what the City of Lowell looked like. And that's when I met people who may have been [named] Barros, or they could have been Gonzales, or names like that. And then knowing, having always been a bit attuned to last names, I knew that they were Portuguese.

G: So, what school did you go to in elementary school in Lowell?

B: I started off at the Pine Street School on Pine Street. And then went to the Morey, and then went to the Daley, and then Lowell High School.

G: Okay. So, you graduated from Lowell High School, and then you went to college?

B: Yes, the university.

G: Of?

B: Of Lowell.

G: The University of Lowell.

B: Right. It was right down the street; easy to walk to. At the time I was a very good, my sisters and I, we were always very good students. But I didn't know what I wanted to do when I grew up. I was having much better time being a social butterfly and engager. I went to school, to college, as a biology major. And I think that came from my father wanting me to be a veterinarian. And I figured, well this is the first step towards something such as that. But after a year, it was a very difficult program, and I went into a psychology program, which I think was really good for me at the time. I didn't want to be a nurse. I didn't want to be a teacher. I didn't want to be those traditional female roles. And this particular program gave me the

opportunity to open up and see different venues of where I would like to spend my time and my profession.

G: What year did you graduate from ULowell?

B: I graduated from ULowell in 1973, and then I went back and got a Masters in 1978. And then I started another Masters' Program, a Business Administration Program shortly after that. But at that point I had been, and I felt that was enough school, and my profession was on a trajectory. So, I didn't really need all these letters at the end of my name.

G: Upon graduating ULowell, what did you do? Did you stay in school then, or did you actually get a job working?

B: No, I ended up getting a job, but not in my profession. I worked at a garden center for a while full-time. And then I finally ended up making that connection somehow with an occupation to work in the community. I'm looking back here, and this is interesting on my resume, because I did a psychological educational testing of learning-disabled children in the Lowell School System in 1976. I vaguely remember that. I think was my first real job, as I said, on the trajectory to coming to be a professional fundraiser at this point.

G: So, that was with the Lowell Public School System?

B: I don't know. This looks like it came out of the University of Connecticut at Storrs. So, I'm not sure. It did say, "Lowell School Systems." So somehow, I had to make that connection, but I vaguely remember that. It may have been short-lived.

G: So, let's talk about the way you came to work with the folks who organized LUPA, the Lowell Union of Portuguese Americans. But you were saying though, it had a different name.

B: Yes. I just found a resume from yesteryear, and it says I was Director of Portuguese American Resource Center in Lowell. When I saw that I remembered the acronym was PARC. And I was like, oh, yes, yes. We called it PARC. It was a program that was CETA funded. CETA at that time was the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. And it came through under Ed Trudel who worked at the [City of Lowell] Department of Planning and Development, and it came under his management. I think when LUPA applied for this money, they may have changed the name of what this center was going to be, maybe make the distinction of them being the governing group LUPA, and the Association of Portuguese Americans, and this being the resource center, which was kind of an information and referral agency.

G: I see. So, LUPA was kind of the umbrella, and PARC was one of the major parts of what they did.

B: Correct, but I researched Portuguese American Resource Center, nothing came up. So, it could have been short-lived just with the funding from the CETA Program.

G: I see. Okay. Do you know, by the way, there was precedence for LUPA in Somerville, and Cambridge. As far as your early involvement with LUPA, did those two organizations ever come up?

B: They came up because they were large Portuguese community agencies. I don't believe we had, as this Portuguese American Resource Center, we had much connection with them. I may have, just as my nature, may have called and asked about their programs, but I don't remember ever going to Fall River, or going to Somerville to visit with these organizations. But at the time those were two large cities that had, I think, larger Portuguese Communities than Lowell. So, I think LUPA probably may have been more connected with those agencies, and general sharing of information than I was as director of this program.

G: So, I'd like to talk a little bit about who were the major organizers in Lowell of LUPA?

B: Okay, what I remember is that it was their board. At the time there was a gentleman, Joao DaSilva, who was the Board President. And Duarte Bettencourt, Alda Rocha, Clarinda Adelino [Clarinda M. (Mendonça) Adelino, b. Graciosa, Azores in 1922; to U.S. in early 1970s; d. in Lowell in 2007], and Paul [Paulo] Godinho were board members that I remember. There were a couple of other board members. Their names didn't come to be. These were the individuals that I worked with directly. João DaSilva was the President. And Duarte Bettencourt eventually became the President. And then Alda Rocha, Clarinda, and Paul were always in the office, because that was where LUPA ended up having their board meetings.

G: So, do you know, did the organizers coming up with the idea to create LUPA, what were some of the key ideas, and what were the services they thought that were needed?

B: I don't know exactly what they went to the CETA Program with, but remember, it was going to be a Social Service Program. There was a large Portuguese community in Lowell, mainly from the Azores. They all lived in the Back Central Neighborhood. Their church Saint Anthony's was here. Their clubs were here. Their bakeries, their businesses, etcetera, and so forth. So, we were charged with opening up a center. Now they call it wrap around services in some of the non-profits. And that was to assist people with reading documents, translating documents, getting them to appointments, doctors, to legal whatever, reaching out to other agencies in the cities, like a CTI to maybe help with assistance one way or the other. Connecting, I know many times, with the International Institute [International Institute of Lowell] and Mrs. Deolinda Mello, who was [Executive Director] up there, to help facilitate getting over some of the barriers that these individuals faced as they came to Lowell. And some who had been living here for a while, [with] problems that may have happened in the workplace, that they didn't know how to access Human Resources, or access services to assist them with their problems.

We [LUPA] transported people to appointments. We talked to some of the individuals that they may have needed assistance with their issues again. And we were just, I think we were just an open door. If you came in with anything we were there to help you. Now the people

who I worked with, they had no social service background. Their main reason for being hired was they could speak Portuguese.

I was sort of the conduit to, say if João came in with something, and he needed to get in touch with the International Institute, I would say, okay, here are the steps. Call Mrs. Mello. Set up an appointment. Bring them if they didn't have transportation, bring them there. It was very organic. There were a couple of incidences where there was a workplace incident where someone was very sick. And the inquiry was about, could that person have picked up this illness from the workplace. And of course, that was way beyond our, sort of scope of experience.

G: Yes, Occupational Health and Safety.

B: We didn't even know OSHA; that wasn't even a word I think we used back then, but we knew that something was wrong. So, what we would have likely have done, and I don't remember specifically, is to connect them with a lawyer. And usually, of course, we connected to a Portuguese-speaking lawyer, or a Portuguese-speaking doctor, or someone who could easily facilitate the barriers that some of these individuals faced.

G: I see. So, you say again, wrap around social agency, which is interesting.

B: Yes.

G: Because the International Institute was doing similar kind of activities with all kinds of immigrants.

B: Absolutely.

G: So, it's kind of interesting. I gather too that, you might know this, but beginning in the early sixties really, there was a second great wave of Portuguese immigrants into Lowell. Not just Lowell, but New England. But Lowell was generally losing population during this time, except the Portuguese were the largest growing population, mostly from the Azores as you noted. So, you were probably working mostly with this new generation of Portuguese, correct?

B: I would think so. At times as we know with all immigrants and refugees, we would have the children come in and they would translate for their parent, or for the person that they were with. And of course, the child, and we were trying to give them information, may not have had the educational experience yet to be able to understand some of the things we were talking about. It was a challenge, but I do remember that most of the people that we dealt with were from the Azores, the different islands in the Azores.

G: And did they tend to be younger adults and children? In other words, they weren't from that earlier generation of immigrants.

B: We had all ages. I mean we didn't have children. We may have had the, as I said, the teens may have come in to translate for their parents, but we had probably individuals who were anywhere from the ages of twenty up to seventy plus.

G: Okay.

B: So, we did get older grandparents, senior type individuals in.

G: And how closely did you personally work with the International Institute for various, serving various people, various Portuguese? Were you working very closely with the International Institute?

B: We had a relationship with them in that when we were dealing with immigration situations, or something that was a little bit out of our wheelhouse, we would connect with them. The International Institute in those days was busy. And there were other individuals, I can't remember their names, but there were other individuals who kind of brokered some of these situations that they may not have gone directly to the Institute and to Mrs. Mello. There may have been others that were "in the community", who did this type of work. And we were always a little bit concerned because we didn't know what these individuals' backgrounds may have been. And we would hear from clients, information, positive, negative, whatever. So, we liked to stick with the International Institute, and not get, so and so involved, because we weren't sure what was happening in terms of money being exchanged. The Institute was free I believe, but with these other individuals, we didn't know if there was any money crossing during the transactions.

G: I see. And how closely did LUPA and you work with the city?

B: I think except for the city being our payor because I believe that the CETA money came through the city, we didn't have much connection. We were this sort of brand new, as I said, Information and Referral Social Service Center up on Back Central Street doing our own thing, doing it quietly, serving the people, as I said, who came through the door as best we possibly can. So, we were busy. And this was brand new. And although I had a background, a little bit of a background in social services, dealing with a population that I couldn't understand, and then having to find what is the best resource for them to help them resolve their issue, was challenging. And the people I worked with were great. They were hard working. We had a great team in that day, and we were busy. If we weren't working with people coming through the door, we were looking at resources where we could refer them to. It was great.

G: So, let me ask you, how were you selected? And was your title initially Director?

B: It was.

G: And how were you selected?

B: I don't remember.

G: Do you remember being interviewed?

B: I don't remember. It was one of those things that as I found this older resume, and I looked where I went from one job to the next, I'm thinking how did I get there? What was it? Where did I go to end up getting there. That's a blank. But my job also was hiring the individuals, and again, the number one qualification was that they could speak Portuguese, and that they were friendly and opened to what was ever going to happen when that door opened. And a great team.

G: You mentioned Ed Trudel with the City of Lowell.

B: Yes.

G: As kind of the overseer of the CETA Funding. Did you have much involvement in the original proposal to create this?

B: No, I did not. My role was to keep finances in line to submit them to Ed. So, some of the vendors that we may have been working with could get paid. That was very simple back then. I mean, you just walked down to his office and give him, a bill, an invoice, and individuals would get paid. He was a great man to work with, because he was opened to this new idea of this center on Back Central Street. So, I and the team at the time just did what we felt was the right thing to do.

G: So, the city, mainly Ed Trudel, was essentially the fiscal agent.

B: Yes.

G: I see. Again, you mentioned some of the board members. What generation were they from? Joao, and some of the others, were they say in the thirties, or older?

B: I would say that at the time they were in their late twenties, early thirties.

G: Oh, so a fairly young group.

B: Yes, because they were young they were energetic, and they were excited about this. And they were fully committed, and whenever you needed something. And they also at times were resources. So, we didn't get directly involved with the church. We didn't get directly involved with the clubs, but they were our conduit if we needed something. If we had to, whether it was setting up a funeral, or whatever, and going through Father Eusebio Silva [pastor at St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church] at the time, they would be somebody that we would kind of reach out to. So, they were actively involved.

G: By the way, I meant to ask you, what year was LUPA launched?

B: I want to say that LUPA was launched in 1981.

G: Okay.

B: Excuse me, the Portuguese American Resource Center, where I worked, [was established] in 1981. LUPA, I don't remember, because these individuals that I mentioned before, the board members, seemed to have been involved for a while with the Portuguese community, but I don't know in terms of LUPA. That would be a question for one of them if they can remember. [Note: LUPA was formed in 1977; its founders and board members are noted by Barbara elsewhere in this interview.]

G: So, LUPA would have existed before the Portuguese American Resource Center?

B: Absolutely. They were the non-profit agency. They were the entity that applied for this CETA money. I don't know how and when, but as I said, it was a very positive work experience for me and for the team we had. Great memories of working on Back Central Street, and truly getting to know the community firsthand.

G: I want to ask you a little bit about your memories of Back Central at that time. Where were you living when you were directing?

B: I lived up in the Highlands, Upper Highlands at the time. So, Back Central Street was not a place where I went. There was nothing that brought me there.

G: To Back Central.

B: To Back Central Street. So, it was an interesting neighborhood to be involved with. My prior jobs that I had didn't have me working in a segment of the community such as with the LUPA Program. And it was just wonderful. Just like today, walking into MAPS [Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers], very pleasant, kind, welcoming individuals no matter where we went and what we did. And I just remember it was so different than the neighborhood I lived in, which was more eclectic in nature in terms of backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds of people. This was like this concentrated group of individuals. So, you would see boats in the back, big boats, fishing boats in the back yard. You would see grapevines beautifully arched. Gardens. Definitely a lot of "Madonna in the bathtubs." And it was just a sense of safety and security, and everyone seemed to know everyone else, and looked out for everyone else. It was a wonderful experience.

G: Do you remember some of the processions from Saint Anthony's Church for some of the holidays?

B: I did not. I don't remember them. I did not participate in them, but I remember that they were, whether it was the celebrations out at Holy Ghost Park, or the processions to and from the church, that the community was well involved in those. They took pride in these. They were sometimes managed, by I think, some of the clubs, or [possibly] some of their ad hoc committees. They were always really, well attended, beautiful, gorgeous clothes. Everyone took pride in their community and their background, and these particular holidays and celebrations.

G: Did you have much interaction with Father Eusebio Silva?

B: I did not. I knew him just because I worked up the street from him. And I knew he was the priest there. I didn't have much interaction, but we knew each other just because of the proximity and what I was doing for the community.

G: Were there any other, apart from the board members, were there any other neighborhood residents in Back Central that you remember particularly?

B: No. This particular agency, this particular program that was started kept us busy. So, I didn't make it out of the office much to, to kind of make connections and engage with other people in the community. Mrs. Mello I knew. I knew, Ed Trudel. I knew where to go for the services, whether it was legal, or whether it was for health, and so forth. But basically, my job was to get everyone their help, and hopefully resolve situations in a positive manner.

G: Do you remember having to handle any particular crisis with individuals, or groups at all during your tenure?

B: Not so much groups. I think the only challenging issue was this person, this woman who came in, and her husband was ill. And I don't know what kind of chemical he was working with in this factory, but it was one of those situations where it was new to us to kind of make this connection that possibly having worked there for x number of years, he is sick because of this. I don't remember how that one was resolved. I think we moved that on to a legal situation because we didn't have the background. But that was probably the most challenging one I can think of. Everyone else was coming in making appointments for health. Setting up an appointment to have a driver from our office take them to that appointment. Learning how to access, because back then in the early eighties, when you were taking your driver's test it was not in [one's] native language. So, if you wanted to get your license you had to understand English and again we connected with the International Institute. No, it was all pretty tame.

G: Well, these were basic services that people needed?

B: These were basic services because of the language barrier, and maybe some anxiety as to how to access these things. We were a good conduit to help individuals make those connections.

G: Did you learn some Portuguese when you were with LUPA?

B: I did. I don't have much left, but I can say, "Espere um minuto." And then what would happen is I would say my short phrases, and then the individual would start talking to me. And I'd say "No! I only speak a little." But everyone was really so thankful and kind for the services that we were providing. It was a pleasant, positive experience.

G: You mentioned you tended to refer clients, the people that needed services, to Portuguese doctor, or a Portuguese lawyer.

B: Portuguese speaking, yes. And I would assume, I am not sure whether they were from the Azores, or maybe where they were from. I don't remember who they were, but it was just an easy connection, because again, the language barrier was the key element that prevented some of these services to happen for these individuals.

G: Yes. One of the well-known Portuguese lawyers in Lowell at the time was Herb Pitta.

B: Herb Pitta, yes. I remember that name. That's right, Herb Pitta. And the thing was is that again, the team I worked with, the wonderful individuals I worked with, they may not have been able to be a translator for a health-related situation. They may not have known how to translate some dire diagnosis, or something. That's why it was best to connect them with a doctor who could then speak with more of a specialist to help the individual out.

G: Did you work at all with Maria Cunha?

B: I did not work with Maria Cunha, but in later years, many years later became familiar with her because I worked with her sister, Fatima Palermo, and recognized the role that Maria has played in the Portuguese community. And I don't know how I missed her back then, but I did not know here till many, many years later.

G: And how long were you Director?

B: I think it was for over a year. I want to say that the CETA Program had a certain amount of time that you could work with them. And because it was supposed to be an educational and training program, then you were to move on. But again, I don't remember how I got this job.

G: Who succeeded you as director?

B: I don't think there was someone who succeeded me. I think my time ended there, and I think that the people who were there as the interpreters, they stayed on. But I don't know what kind of, how long that was after I left.

G: So, again, I was wondering, because LUPA continued after your time.

B: Yes.

G: Because it continued at least until the late 1980s I believe.

B: Yes.

G: But you weren't associated with them at all after you left?

B: No, I mean I still had the connections with the people who I worked with, but I went on to work at the university [University of Massachusetts Lowell] after that. That was a brand-new job also at the university. So, I didn't get back to the community, but I always kept my eyes and ears opened about what was happening in the Portuguese community, because it was such a positive experience. And of course, Barry's Bakery and the Portuguese Bakery up on Gorham Street, and the restaurants, yes.

G: What was your job at the university after you left?

B: I was the Annual Giving Director. I was the first one that they hired to come in and start their program, which today has, I think I had a secretary back then, and now it's a huge, huge office. So, I'm pleased that I was at the beginning of their successful fundraising department.

G: One other question I did want to ask you, because it's an important legacy in documenting the Portuguese community in Lowell, and that is the work that Kevin Harkins, photographer, did in the early 1980s. Can you describe the project? Its origins and what was done?

B: Well, what I remember is that, and I recently looked at his photo documentary, it just was looking at the life, the daily lives of the people in the Portuguese community, mostly in the Back Central area. So, Kevin did a phenomenal job in terms of looking at their social and religious [activities], their sports. When I looked at the pictures from the mills it was very startling, because in many ways I would have dated those pictures much before the eighties [1980s]. They just looked still pretty primitive to me. And some of the work that the individuals were doing, I mean, I don't know if OSHA had been in here lately. But what [Kevin Harkins' photographic work] did is it left this legacy of what this neighborhood looked like back then. Very simple. Very engaging. The church, soccer, the celebrations and the mills, this was what this community was. There were businesses too, which were nice to look at. But the people we dealt with, those four things, the church, the sports, the mill work, [the celebrations], those were the things that kept them strong in the community. That was what knitted them together.

G: Do you know who came up with the idea for Kevin to do this very interesting, social documentary?

B: I don't. [Note: Kevin Harkins recalled that the idea to document the neighborhood and its residents originated with Barbara Dunsford.] I do remember writing grants. I know we wrote

grants to the Parker Foundation, because they were always so supportive even back then, for Lowell and for the new immigrants. And I'm not sure if that's where Kevin was paid from, but if that was the case, then it was probably something I wrote. I mean in those days, between keeping the doors open and looking for people to donate to the organization, looking for grants to support this new idea, a lot of balls up in the air, but I do think that that's one thing that Kevin's documentary is just superlative. Because this is what this neighborhood, this Back Central Street neighborhood looked like then.

G: One thing I did find interesting about Kevin's work, is that in addition to social services that LUPA was offering, the Portuguese Center was offering, you were also doing essentially cultural programming.

B: Yes.

G: And I was wondering in addition to the work that Kevin did, were there other grants that you wrote, or other cultural programs that LUPA was involved with?

B: I don't remember. I know, at the time, in the mid-eighties' era, Joan Ross and Jim Higgins [designed] *The Lowell Plan* documentary [Note: *The Lowell Plan* booklet contained photographs by Jim Higgins] on what was going to happen [in Lowell]. And I actually have a copy of that with this resume, even though it was done a number of years after I was at LUPA. And there was a lot of interest from the city to document these populations that were here, and the new populations that were coming.

G: I did want to skip back to ask you about, in addition to Azoreans, did your office deal with any Brazilians?

B: I don't remember at the time any. No. I think they, the Brazilian population came later, and so we didn't. It was mainly, everyone knew everybody from their islands. And we had, I think when you look back at some of these photos, you'll see that there's a picture of Portugal, and there's a picture of the Azores, and then a picture of the United States. And I remember those on the [LUPA] office wall. I don't remember why they were up there, but I needed to learn the Islands names, because that's where the people came from.

G: With your experience working, were you able to distinguish any cultural differences between say, Azoreans and Madeirans, or those from Mainland Portugal?

B: No, but I know that there was a strong association with the Islands that you came from.

G: So, you did mention the Portuguese American Civic League, as it was one of the key clubs, or social organizations. What about the Portuguese American Center? The "Blues Club." Do you remember how (--)

B: Oh, the Blues Club. I just knew them as clubs. They each had their own kind of distinct boards. I don't remember, but I would think that some of the board members that were the LUPA board members were probably members of those associations, because it was very tight knit. I mean this was a small section of the City of Lowell, and everyone knew about everybody else.

G: Again, getting back to the board members that you worked with, was there anyone in particular that was say, especially important for a leadership role within the Portuguese community in Lowell?

B: I think João DeSilva was a very strong advocate for his community. Clarinda Adelino, who I believe was a part of the executive board, also. Alda Rocha, who is João DaSilva's sister, was working in social services at the time, and she was somebody, a very outgoing individual, very connected with her community. I ended up, over the years since LUPA, bumping into her here and there. And last I saw she was working at Elder Services, now called Age Span, and could still be there as a social service person. She would be a huge resource for you if you could connect with her.

G: That's a wonderful idea.

B: Yes. And Paul Godinho, I think I gave you his information. Again, they would know where everybody is, and they could give you some information about the inception of LUPA and why it happened.

G: What do you remember about him? What were his key roles with LUPA?

B: Paul was outgoing. He had, dark hair, dark mustache, trim build. And I want to say that they all, these board members were all very close with each other. [Note: After this interview Barbara recalled that Filomena Ferreira was another important LUPA board member.] And so, there was one person, I don't remember who it was, it could have been Clarinda, where you saw Paul, you saw this other person. Other than that, if he walked in the door, I would remember him. He had a very distinct look.

G: I wanted to ask you too, about one other key figure in the Portuguese community, and that was John Silva, who was one of the largest property holders in Lowell, and owned a number of properties in Back Central.

B: Yes, absolutely.

G: Do you remember having any dealings with John Silva, or the board dealing with him?

B: Not that I know of. We knew his name, and he lived over on Middlesex Street, by School Street and Wilder. He had a house there that was set back, off the road, and he had Doberman Pinchers that would always just run up to the gate if you were ever nearby. But he, I just

remember him as being somewhat of a character and also one of the largest landowners in the City of Lowell. So, but I had no direct [contact], I just knew of him because of his status in the Portuguese community.

G: Did any of the people who, Portuguese, who used the services of LUPA, were their housing issues at all that you had to deal with, or your organization dealt with?

B: I don't remember. I think it's a possibility, because my remembrance of the community is that everybody was very hard working. They wanted their children to get an education. The people that we had our service center at, owned their property. And I don't remember their names specifically, but they would, in the summer we would get fresh tomatoes. At Christmastime we would get little gifts from them. I think, like the American dream, that many of these individuals just wanted to better the next generation, and buy houses, and participate in the community, and raise their children, I don't think in Chelmsford, or Westford, still in the Back Central Street area, because this was where they had their foothold.

G: But I wondered if any of the Portuguese in need of some services had some issues with say, landlord, or some housing problems.

B: I would think that that was probably part of our wrap around services, but specifically I don't remember that. It was mostly translations. It was appointments. And I'm sure it was a myriad of all those other things put together.

G: Okay. So, let me just conclude by asking you, what do you feel like your legacy is with LUPA? And what do you feel like you accomplished?

B: Well, I think it was a team effort with LUPA. I think with the translators, the interpreters, again, all really good, giving, kind people. We just all pulled together. We had a very welcoming agency, where you could walk through the door basically at any time between nine and five, Monday through Friday, and we were there to help you. If we couldn't help you, we found someone to help you. So, I think for individuals who were facing barriers not understanding our systems, language being an issue, maybe at times family circumstances as such that no one could help them, when they came over that doorstep at LUPA at 994 Central Street, they got attention. They received attention, and we helped them as best we possibly can. And if we couldn't, we just found some others who could do a better job than us. It was a wonderful experience. I think I was telling you the story about one woman coming in. I said, "Oh my goodness! You have this beautiful name, Female. Where did you get this name?" She says, "Well I didn't get it." She said, "When I came here, they checked this box off, and that's the name that they gave me." And basically, the short story is, someone checked the female box off, and this person felt that wherever she came through, New York or wherever, they were giving her this name, which as we know way when, when people were entering our country, if there was any questions the individuals who were there were making decisions about what their names would be for basically the rest of their lives. I remember that story. It was just

wonderful, because when I realized it was Female [from marking “female” in the gender category on the immigration form], I said, “Oh my God, that was a wonderful name.”

G: Well again, thank you very much Barbara. I appreciate it.

B: Thank you, Gray.

Interview ends.