

# UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL

## Memórias – Preserving the Stories of Lowell's Portuguese Community

### Oral History Interview with Philip C. Maia, March 25, 2017

#### **Biographical Note:**

Philip C. Maia was born on the island of Madeira in 1958; son of Encarnacao A. (da Camara) and João B. Maia; at the age of twelve, with his mother and three sisters, he immigrated to the U.S. and settled in Lowell, Massachusetts, in the “Back Central” neighborhood, in a small apartment building on Central Street with relatives in the same building; his father joined his family in 1974 and they subsequently moved to Lowell’s “Lower Highlands” neighborhood; Maia graduated Lowell High School, where excelled in track and cross-country running; then graduated from University of Lowell (now University of Massachusetts Lowell) with degrees in education and Spanish; taught language arts at Lowell High School and coached track and cross country; married Patricia Ann Gaffney in 1987, had two children; currently live in Tewksbury, Massachusetts,

#### **Scope and Contents:**

Interview conducted by local historian Mehmed Ali; interview includes family background; boyhood and schooling on Madeira island in the 1960s; immigration to the U.S. and initial years in Lowell’s “Back Central” neighborhood; entering public school as a non-English speaker, prior to bilingual education; the occupations of family members in Lowell; activities of family and prominent members of Lowell’s Portuguese community in local social clubs and Catholic-church affiliated organizations; teaching language classes and coaching track at Lowell High School; and teaching Portuguese in the Lowell community.

**INFORMANT: PHILIP C. MAIA**

**INTERVIEWER: MEHMED ALI**

**P=PHILIP**

**A=ALI**

A: Okay, this is interview with Phil Maia on March 25, 2017. So Phil thanks for coming down today. Appreciate it.

P: No problem.

A: So Phil first a little bit of background information. Where and when were you born?

P: So I was born in Madeira, the Island of Madeira in 1958. And I came to the U.S. as a, at the age of twelve.

A: Okay.

P: And I immigrated to Lowell and I've been here ever since. I never left Lowell really. I mean I've gone all over the world. I studied abroad, but I went to Lowell High School, UMass Lowell, and this is my thirty-fourth and final year at Lowell High School.

A: Terrific. So tell us about any memories of schooling back in Madeira.

P: Well in Madeira I was, I had reached the maximum of public school. So I was actually going to a boarding school, which was not, was not cheap and I had three sisters. So one of the reasons that my parents thought would be fair would be to give the sisters the same opportunity of an education that I was getting, but it was going to be very expensive for them to be able to do that. So that was kind of an underlining reason for them to immigrate.

A: Okay. So public education in Madeira?

P: In Portugal, in Madeira at the time was only to the fourth grade.

A: Really, even in the sixties?

P: Right.

A: Wow!

P: Yup. Then after that you took an exam, you went like to this day, basically you take an exam, you go onto the next level. You pass the exam, you go on to the next level. When you test out your options are basically what's available for employment at that level. So when these (--) That's why I tell the students at school that, you know, these physicians that work at Mass General and whatever, that come from overseas, these are actually quite, very bright people, because they've literally made it to the top. Just because they have an accent doesn't mean that they're any inept in their job. That's just how the system is in Europe. You know, you test out at the fourth grade. If you can't continue anymore, then you seek opportunities at that, at that level. And it's kind of a respected thing. No one, you know, tries to bypass the system. It is what it is.

A: Yah. So you've been an educator for over three decades now. What do you, with a set of 2017 eyes, what do you think of that system that you went through?

P: Well obviously we try to compensate a little bit more. We try to be more inclusive, you know, give kids opportunities to compete to succeed. And you know, we have special programs, we try to supplement things you know. Try to find, you know, things that, inefficiencies and try to create opportunity. So we're, you know, obviously it's different than what it used to be.

I also don't think that the economy necessarily takes in those you know, the kids that, you know, that don't finish school like it used to. For example in, you know, when my grandparents were here in the early 1900s the dropout rate in Lowell was almost 90%. The high school was very small, you know. The first (--) I'm fortunate to teach at Lowell High School, where part of the high school, you can actually see the building, that was the first high school in America that was

co-ed; first public high school in America to have a student, a black student attend school with a white student. But it was just a small building. It's like one end of the building. And the population of Lowell was greater than what it is now. But they didn't have the dropout problem, because if you weren't in school you were working in the mills. Now we have a dropout problem because the economy just doesn't absorb the 10%, or 15% that don't make it through school.

So the situation is different, but you know, that's, definitely that was an underlining reason for us to come to the U.S., was that my parents saw the value of education, which kind of was not the norm in the Portuguese culture at the time. That was to work and bring in a salary and stuff like that. But my parents, they, you know, my dad had, my dad had a white collar job and he probably suffered the most, because he gave up what he had over there to come here and work in the mills, and work at a manufacturing plant. So he gave up quite a bit. You know, I mean when we think back we're forever grateful that our parents made that sacrifice, especially my dad.

A: What was your dad doing over there for work?

P: My dad was an assistant to the, to the treasurer. So he had a white collar job and he basically was an assistant to the Mayor of the town.

A: Okay.

P: Even though at the time Portugal was ruled by a dictator, there were you know, towns that had a city hall, you know, very much set up like here. You know, you'd go and pay your taxes and stuff like that. And he was past for promotions because his education was attained at the highest level that was available at the time. And so he, from first hand he realized that the kids would have a better opportunity to succeed if they could get that education. So that was, that was definitely the motivating factor for my family to come to the U.S., which was not necessarily the same thing as everybody else.

A: Why do you think your parents were different from others?

P: Well I think they were different in the sense from their experience, from my dad's experience as a, in his field, in his career, and his lack of advancement and the reason for that, not having the education that other people who would come and go before and after him. So that was, that was his experience. I don't think they necessarily felt that they were different, but that's what they thought you know, would be the important thing for their children certainly.

A: Now you mentioned that your grandparents had originally come to Lowell before you folks had immigrated.

P: Right, right. So I have a little bit of a history here, you know, just to put things into perspective.

A: Yah.

P: So in 1911 my grandfather name Silvério Anastácio da Câmara, Silvério da Câmara.

A: So this is on your mom's side?

P: On my mom's side, yup. My dad's side, we've been on that island for hundreds of years you know. I mean our history goes back to quite a bit. The Island of Madeira, not to get off the subject here, but the Island of Madeira was discovered in 1419. So when Columbus made his three trips to this part of the world all three trips he spent a week in Madeira. It's all documented. It's all there. Because that was the furthest point to the west that you know, one traveled back, you know, before, in the 1500s.

A: Were there natives on Madeira?

P: Madeira was an island that was, had a lot of vegetation. They actually, rumor has it that they set fire to the island and it burned for seven years. It's a volcanic island very similar to Hawaii; same vegetation as Hawaii, same high cliffs as Hawaii, same flowers. Fun fact about Madeira is the Ukulele is actually an instrument, I think I told you this before, native of Madeira, brought to Hawaii from Madeira.

A: Umhm.

P: So anyway, the island was discovered in 1419 by Gonsalves Zarco, Z A R C O in 1419, and then after that it was kind of a colony and has been. Now it's the State of Portugal. And then shortly after that the Azores were discovered, which it's more on the middle of the Atlantic.

So in 1911 my grandfather comes here (A: To Lowell) to Lowell. They came through New York, through Ellis Island you know. Then in 1914 my grandmother Gerarda Rodrigues Aguiar, she came over. And this is, the ship that she came over, we have the Portuguese name for it is Butio. We're not sure exactly what the, you know, what that is in English, but the one that she was on was the Cornucopia I think. I mean looking at something from the accent it sounds like it was Cornucopia. It was a big, it was a trip that took nine days and it was accompanied by a U. S. Navy escort, because this is at the onset of World War I. This is 1914.

Then you know, again she came through Ellis Island and then they came, they came to Lowell because this was, there was opportunity here to work in the mills. Then from 1914-1920 my grandfather met my grandmother and they worked in the mills, in the Boott Mills. And you know, in that time my grandmother had an accident in the mills. The accident was she worked on one of the weaving machines, and one of the belts came off the pulley and cut off these two fingers on the right hand, her small finger and (A: the ring finger) and the ring finger, you know, on the right hand. And I remember my grandmother, you know, not, only having eight fingers. I remember that. I used to make fun of her as she would try to go kill a fly and she didn't have the surface area to. Just a mean little kid that I could have been sometimes, you know, just to (--)  
But we all laughed about it.

Anyway, so after the mishap I think that you know things just, this was before workmen's comp. So I don't think that that was, you know, something that (--)  
I think that had a lot to do with

maybe her opportunity to work was diminishing. And so in 1920 she had a baby, that was my Aunt Cecilia, and in 1920. So in 1920, 1921 she was seven months. And my grandfather, and her, and the baby kind of agreed that well let's go back to the Island of Madeira, because our opportunity here is just, is not what it was. And so they went back, they went back to Madeira. In 1948 my grandfather died. He died of actually gangrene. He was, he was a mason and fell off a ladder. His leg got infected and he died actually at a young age.

Then in 1950 my Aunt Cecilia who is now, let's see if I do the math. Twenty, she was about thirty, right? Twenty to, 1920 – 1950, she's about thirty. So she comes to the U.S. and because she was born here so she always had the documentation that she was an American anyway. She took a job at Commodore Foods, (A: Yah) which was in Westford for the longest time and Lowell as well. So she worked at Commodore Foods. Then in 1966 she sponsored my Aunt Teresa to come here. My Aunt Teresa came to the U.S. She was in Portugal, in Madeira. She came to the US with her three daughters and they established themselves here on Walnut Street, 45 Walnut Street. And they too worked at you know, Commodore Foods, because in those days you had to have a place to stay, you had to have a work contract. It's not like here, like nowadays. Even though it's difficult to come in again, but that was, you had to have a sponsor, a job, and a place to stay. That was kind of a prerequisite. And so my Aunt came in 1966.

In 1970, on April 14, 1970 my mom and I, my Mom, myself, and my three sisters came. She sponsored us to come. My dad came shortly after that. It was very typical in those days for the spouses to come at different times. I mean I remember hearing about an uncle that I had that was put on a boat to go to South America at the age of seven. Oh, your big brother is going to pick you up. You know that was, it was very common in those days. Our values of today obviously don't match those values of those yesteryears. So in 1970, April 14, that was the same year that they, that Apollo, it was that Apollo that they used, they made a movie with (--) They crashed into the Atlantic, in to the Pacific rather. They made a movie with Tom Hanks. Apollo II or Apollo (--) I think it was Apollo (--)

A: Umhm, yah, yah. Apollo 13 was it?

P: Something like that. And so that same night, that same night was the same night that we were over the Atlantic. So I tell my students, you know, the funny story about that night is that we, you know, we were over, you know, we were over one ocean, you know, flying and there was a space capsule you know, that was Apollo 13, right. And so that same day the crash landing of Apollo 13 into the Pacific, we were landing at Logan Airport. [Laughs]

A: Now when your parents told you and your siblings that you guys were going to come to the U.S. what was your first thought? Do you remember?

P: You know that's a very good question. I thought because most of the (--) A funny thing about Madeira, Madeira has about 300,000 inhabitants. And in South Africa alone there's more than 300,000 people [descend] in South Madeira. It's just like it's a huge place for immigration. You know no one really, the economy just didn't allow for people to stay there. So they went all over the world.

So my parents, when they told us that we were going to America I said, "America!" You know, "I want to go to like Venezuela. That's where all my friends are going," you know. So and it was a funny thing. When we arrived at Logan Airport, what is now Terminal E, or the end of Terminal C, because that's, at the time that's the extent of the airport, I remember looking. I didn't see any skyscrapers. And I said, "Wait a second. This is the place with the skyscrapers. Why do I not see any skyscrapers." [Laughs] So there was some initial disappointment but you know, we, you know, it was (-- You know eventually (-- Something bad was happening in Lowell that week of April 14, 1970. I think that's when they had those, that major fire on Market Street where a lot of people actually jumped into the canal and stuff like that.

A: Um, I don't know the story actually.

P: Yah, I remember actually when we came back from the airport my cousin, my Aunt Cecilia's son, picked us up and we drove and like there was a fire going on. And now we hear that those apartments where the old police station was on Market Street, and the Lowell Sun was there. Those buildings in the back that are now kind of tenant buildings, that burnt down on April 14 and there were some fatalities. People jumped into the canal and stuff like that that day. So anyway, and then in 19 (--)

So that was 1970, 1971 my grandmother Gerarda came back to the U.S. because she was living in Madeira the whole time. She came back to the U.S. and now we are reunited with my Aunt Cecilia, my Aunt Teresa, and my mom, my dad, and my grandmother is here. And that was in 1971. So she came back to the U.S. Then in 1972 my uncle who was living in Venezuela, the oldest brother, immigrated to the U.S. again under her sponsorship. And they resided in Back Central Street like we all did. I lived over the Portuguese Club (A: Oh yah?) when we came over.

A: Which one? On Central?

P: On Central Street, yah, the Portuguese Civic League. (A: Okay) We lived on the second floor. My aunt, my two aunts lived on the third floor. So we lived in that building for about four or five years.

A: Is there still rental units there today?

P: You know what? I think after we left they stopped. They rented and then they had some issues with the people that they were renting to. So they just decided, they just use it as storage now. That's what I'm told.

A: Yah, yah, yah.

P: You know, but we, we were good tenants for sure. And then, let me see. So that's [19]72. [Turning pages] I think I left one of those papers at home.

A: Okay. Well that's all right. Let me jump in on that. So what did you think of Lowell when you first landed?

P: I mean my experience was as a little kid, it was that of a little kid. I, you know, I could adapt to anything. I was, I honestly was glad to be out of that boarding school. The boarding school was rough. It was like you know.

A: How so?

P: Well it was in the old days. It was corporal punishment. I remember I struggled, which is ironically, I struggled with French. You know I speak Spanish and Portuguese, you know, fluent in those languages, but I just didn't see the purpose of learning French, you know. And I struggled. And I just remember not passing a quiz or an exam and being like punished for it. And I remember my roommate, he would talk in their sleep and I as a little kid I'd be having a conversation with him. And unbeknownst to me I was being loud. So the priest, the Franciscan priest would come in and he would just like hit me with a rope, with you know. I would just like, I would tell my mom. I said, "I think I'm dying in this place." And my mother's response was, "Well the priest don't do bad things, so you deserve it." So I wasn't getting any support from that. And then when she told me we were coming to the U.S. I said, "Yes, I'm out of here!" [laughs]

A: What was the name of the school you were going to?

P: It was called the Prince Infante D. Henrique [the Colégio do Infante D. Henrique in Funchal, Madeira]. You know, everything is Prince Henry, reference to Prince Henry the navigator. That's like our George Washington. Everything is Prince Henry the Navigator in Portugal. So this school was also in honor of Prince Henri the Navigator.

A: So when you came to Lowell [did] you [speak], any English?

P: No, I didn't speak any English. (A: Okay) We went to the Rogers School. Oh funny story. So shortly after that weekend, you know, we were told that we had to go to school. So I have shirt and tie and my sister is well dressed. We walked you know, from Central Street we walk up to the Rogers School. And you know, we were going to be, you know, we were just going to go to school. We didn't know what the process was. To this day we don't know, you know, how that day went, but I just remember you know, being directed to this classroom. And you know, we sat in the back and everybody was dressed with T shirts and peace signs, and bandanas and stuff like that, and here I am with a shirt and tie. And the teacher called my name and I stood up because that's what you did when a teacher spoke with you. And everybody was laughing. And the teacher was saying something. To this day I don't know what she was saying. And I sort of you know, trying to be respectful, my sister was sitting down next to me, because we were about the same age. I was twelve, she was eleven, but we somehow were both directed to the same classroom. So I said to Ann, I said, "What do you think she's saying?" And my sister very supportive said, "I don't know, but I'm glad she's talking to you and not me." [Laughs] So that was our first day of school in the U. S., at the Rogers School.

Then shortly after that obviously they knew we didn't speak English, and this is before bilingual education. So the week after somehow we found ourselves with, in a contained room with, there

was, I remember there was a kid from Puerto Rico there. There was a kid from Egypt. There was a kid, two kids from Greece, and the two of us. There was like you know, maybe seven or eight kids. And that teacher, you know, kind of stayed with us for the rest of the year, you know, from April, May and June, you know, stayed with us. And then somehow we were put into the sixth grade, you know, shortly after that, at the beginning of the next school year. And we just, we did everything we could to learn English. My parents would go to night school. And it came easy to us I thought. Little kids, we were motivated to learn. You know, obviously we wanted to learn. And I think, you know, people say, you know, well you know, how do you say thank you to your parents? Well I think we said thank you many times. And you know, my dad has since passed away, but all four years myself and my three sisters, we were never absent at Lowell High School. Like the four of us had perfect attendance. So education has always been important to us. And we respected that and the sacrifices that our parents made to get us over here.

A: So do you feel when you first arrived you were accepted by the community?

P: I thought we were. You know I didn't, we certainly, we're not rebels of any kind. I think the Portuguese people generally are accepted by the community. They're, you know, they're quiet in nature, they keep up their property, you know, they're respectful. I just think that's a culture that's easy to like. So I thought that we assimilated reasonably well.

A: So obviously kids can be tough in you know, in this time period, in this age group. Aside of that incident where the kids were laughing, did you get picked on as an immigrant?

P: No, no. You know, I didn't. I don't know, I was a good little athlete, you know, when I was younger. So I don't know if that had something to do with it, that I earned instant respect. But I was a pretty good little athlete. I won the junior high cross country championship. That's how I started running.

A: Okay, for the Rogers School?

P: For the Rogers School. And that's how I, that actually started a, you know, my running and coaching career.

A: So you guys ran at the South Common?

P: We ran around the South Common. And our training was basically running around the school and then we ran at Shedd Park, (A: Okay) you know.

A: Now who, who got you involved in athletics?

P: It was a gentleman by the name of Floyd McDonald. He was the gym teacher. He has passed away. He's the one that encouraged me to, you know, to participate in like in cross country. You know I was a soccer player. Oh I thought I was a soccer player, you know, in the boarding school, but we didn't have much of a soccer team here. So my athletic out was to run. And so I had initial success with it. When I got to the high school you know my track coach John Lang



was very adamant about getting me to run. We didn't have a soccer team. So I ran, ran all twelve seasons. And when I came back after college I was given the opportunity to coach and I've actually been the head coach for twenty-nine years you know.

A: Yah.

P: So it's, it was a very nice opportunity that I just happened to be at the right place at the right time.

A: Yah neat. Growing up did you get any sense that there was a difference between the existing Portuguese Community and the newer immigrant Portuguese Community?

P: Well I always, I marveled at the effort that the Portuguese, the Joe Camara[s], the Jack Picanso[s], those people who organized the feast like at Holy Ghost Park. Holy Ghost Park has been a place where, that's preserved that community and the traditions. And even if it's just one feast a year, not a year, but one feast you know, every now and then to commemorate a saint, a patron saint, or you know, whatever it is in affiliation with the church, it just gets people together and that bond, we always took pride in that we would meet as a group and we would, you know, it was like our (--) What we call it, there's a word in Portuguese we call saudade, which it's very difficult to translate. It could be a longing, but it's over the years we had so many poets to try and define the word and it's almost like you have to be Portuguese to understand what that means. It's just like it's a celebration, it's a longing of something that you did. It brings you back. It's a smell that brings you back to who you were, and stuff like that. That's a combination of a lot of things, but that's called, the word is called saudade.

A: How do you spell that?

P: S A U D A D E, saudade.

A: Okay. So you didn't see any differences between the Madeirans and the Azoreans?

P: No. I mean obviously there was a difference, and initial difference which was in the dialect. (A: Umhm) So people knew automatically. They could identify a person from Madeira on the dialect, a person from the Azores, a person from the mainland just like today. Although the Portuguese today, because more kids are going to school, the local Portuguese dialect have become a little more, more homogenous than they were.

A: Yup. Just like how we're losing the words tonic and car. [Laughs]

P: Right, right, right, exactly. Yah, exactly.

A: Tell us about Lowell High in the 1970s?

P: You know Lowell High in the 1970s, well you know, the 1981 building certainly wasn't there. In 1978 is when they started building it. My wife actually graduated. She was, her first class was the first in the, in that 1981 building. So that building has gone through some

renovations. And you know, the building itself, the 1922 building also known as the Sullivan Building, named after a long-time headmaster of Lowell High School. His son, Brendan Sullivan, who was the President of the Alumni Association that I actually took over after he retired, he, that building was, you know, and then was added on. They added on some sixteen classrooms to the back. That was since I've been there as a teacher, but they built the 1981 building and now there's a big discussion about where the new building should be put and stuff like that.

A: While we have the recorder going would you like to go on record where you want the high school to be?

P: Aaah, yah.

A: No, I'm just teasing.

P: No, you know, I personally think (--) I know that there's pros and cons about the high school site, to preserve something. And there's a thought that, well it's what goes on inside the building that really matters. And you know, so obviously there's two, two camps, you know, that one about the building, one about what goes inside the building. I personally think and I spend my whole time you know, and I'm not shy to tell a kid, "Listen, this is not the way you talk. You don't talk like that," you know. And someone has to tell these kids that, because you can't just be righteousness, you know, be a righteous person and say well you can't tell a person like if someone swears. What is this? This sounds like a ghetto in here! And the kids look at me like, "How dare you say ghetto?" "I grew up in a ghetto. This is not right. We don't talk like this." We should tell the kids that stuff. (A: Right) You know, you can't just assume that they'll know what's, you know, what's proper and what's not. So I don't know, I'd like to see the building out there personally, because I just think that some of these kids you know, who like myself, who grew up in you know, Back Central Street, and then the lower highlands, we need to see nice homes and stuff like that, that this is, that there's another world out there. You know, to keep on taking the bus to the same location is not exactly you know, changing the outcome of the product here. I don't know. I just (--) And of course selfishly a lot of this is because of the coaching. I marvel at all those schools that have the fields right outside their, right outside their buildings and we have to you know, take the bus and go elsewhere.

A: Right.

P: Although we've done very well, you know, especially in cross country in the last seven years. We've won the All-State Championship three times and we finished second four times. I mean that's, that's really incredible. And that's commuting from the school to do our training at Shedd Park. I mean it can be done.

A: So that's defeats your own argument.

P: Right, right, exactly. It does, but you know, I just think I'd like to see, I would like to see the building, the facilities right outside the building. You know, I don't know.

A: Yah. So what about the church, and the role of the church in your family, or in the community?

P: My dad spent so many years, almost right from the time that he arrived in the U.S. in the early 70s until when he passed away. He was, it was a volunteer with Holy Ghost and he just spent a lot of time, a lot of time there. He would help them out, and stayed there till 1:00 in the morning cleaning up the place. He would do a lot of, you know, for the feast he was like a treasurer. He had this ability because that was his profession in Madeira. He could count money so fast. He was like a machine. Oh yah, the people who worked the feast they'd say, "Your dad is like a machine. He goes [makes sound] and he counts like twenty, thirty bills like in nothing." That was his profession over there. So he spent a lot of time helping out at the Holy Ghost Park, at the Feast and stuff like that.

A: What did your father do for work when he came here?

P: Well he, initially he worked at the Wannalancit Mills.

A: He did?

P: That was the contract, because that's where my (--) No, I'm sorry. He worked at Commodore Foods cutting frozen fish. That was his initiation to the U.S. from a white collar job to cutting frozen fish, but never complained about it. He made a sacrifice for the family. He was happy with it, never complained about it. Actually was very appreciative of the opportunity that America gave him and his family.

Then after that he didn't stay very long at Commodore Foods. Then he worked at the Wannalancit Mills. And then after that when Wannalancit Mills was restructuring, so then he went to work at Raytheon as an assembler. Then after that he just (--) Oh he worked, actually he worked at a, on Tanner Street in one of those sub-contractors, you know, who did some assembly work, electronic assembly work.

A: Okay. And your mom, was she?

P: Then he worked at Canada Dry.

A: Oh he did work for Canada Dry?

P: Yah, that was his last job. He actually has, my mom has a little, little retirement benefit from my dad from Canada Dry.

A: Where was Canada Dry located?

P: In Waltham.

A: Okay.

P: Yah, he went with a gentleman that lived across the street. They commuted. Sometimes I would drive them in if one wasn't going.

A: What did he do there, delivery, or bottling, or?

P: No, he (--) Bottling, yah, just in the assembly, in the assembly plant just bottling Canada Dry products.

A: Interesting. All that stuff has been bought out and merged and disappeared you know.

P: Right, yah, exactly.

A: Now how about your mom?

P: My mom, my mom worked at Raytheon. She actually retired from Raytheon when my dad was working at Canada Dry and my mom was working at Raytheon. She worked at Teradyne for a while and then moved on to Raytheon doing similar assembly stuff.

A: Good. Who were some of the community leaders in the Portuguese neighborhoods that you recall?

P: That I recall, yah. I mean I recall them by face almost. There was Joe Correia, he and his wife have passed away since. (A: Okay) He was, he was instrumental in like a lot of the Portuguese Feasts, you know. He was like the president of the Feasts. There was a lady with the International Institute. She was like wonderful, you know, she would provide services. If you got a bill, or something like that that you didn't understand, she would actually translate it for you. You know, she was (--) Now what was her name?

A: Was that Deolinda Mello?

P: Deolinda Mello, yah, she was like (--) When she passed away it was like the whole community, even I felt it, and I never really had to go to her for any of the services that she helped them out with, but man what a, what a nice lady she was. I mean it was like, it was like part of the community died, you know, when she passed away. I remember people being very sad about it, yah, Deolinda Mello. She was very, very nice. So I remember her.

A: So any interesting stories about the Portuguese Club since you lived so close to it?

P: Yah, the Portuguese Club, well you know, we lived upstairs. And my family took up two floors of the three floors. They, you know, it was a soccer club, it was a social club, and there was another club on, down at the, on Chapel Street there we call the Blues Club. The Portuguese American Center it is called officially.

A: So the Blues is down below and the Reds is on Central.

P: Right, right. And they had rival soccer teams. To this day I think they still do. I belong. I haven't renewed my membership in quite some time to the Portuguese Civic League, the Reds, but hopefully I'll have more time. I just, I, when I joined the club they said well you know, you got to come by here, have a beer with the guys and stuff like that. I did that for a while, but I didn't really know anybody there, and I just didn't want to go to a club to have a couple of cocktails. I said, "Listen, what if I have a couple of cocktails and I'm driving home and something happens?" So I never had the same drive as everybody else to go there and socialize, but you know, the value is, was important to keep the community, just a place to vent really, talk about politics.

A: Did the, did the clubs have different identification with certain geographic parts of Portugal?

P: Um, the Reds Club had a general attraction to the people from Madeira and maybe the people from the mainland. And the Blues Club, the Portuguese American Center was more from the Azores. That was the initial pull I thought.

A: Okay. And any difference in the kind of political identity of the two places?

P: No, no. I think the only difference was the fact that they had, you know, two different soccer teams and they would you know, we would play each other and stuff like that.

A: Did you play soccer?

P: I played soccer, but I never played the club soccer because my initial success was with running and so I sort of followed that path. And I never, I never really played soccer. I played in Madeira. I played in the boarding school that I was going to. But here, I never really had that opportunity, because as I said, I you know, I was pushed towards the running. And I'm glad I did, because that led to a pretty good track and coaching career.

A: I've never asked anybody this and I think you're a little too young to answer this, but do you remember people either supporting or opposing Salazar's government in Lowell?

P: Um, you know in Lowell (--) Obviously in Portugal there was some resistance. I remember that.

A: What do you remember?

P: Well I remember most of what my parents were talking about and they, it was important for them to immigrate in 1970, because if they had waited another year, I was going to be twelve, if they waited another year I was going to have a hard time leaving the country, because Portugal was going through it's on Vietnam. It was in Africa. It's called Guinea and it was terrible. They didn't train the soldiers. They didn't have the ammunition to train the soldiers. They basically, literally they gave you a rifle and said, "This is a rifle, this is the trigger, the bullet comes out of this end, okay. Go." There was no training. And so as a result they were slaughtered. I mean we were, it just seemed like there was a funeral every week from like in the surrounding towns of someone that died in Africa.

So my dad, that was one of the motivating factors for us to get out before I was too old that I couldn't get out, because Salazar wasn't going to allow. The next time I heard about Salazar in the U.S. was when I was working at the Grotto Cassanelli. I grew up working in an Italian restaurant. I worked at the Prince Grotto, and then that chef opened up its own place in Haverhill called the Grotto Cassanelli and I just went with him. I used to walk from Back Central Street. I would walk you know, up Central Street down Newhall Street, and then the chef opened up his new place in Haverhill called the Grotto Cassanelli.

A: Is that place long gone in Haverhill?

P: Yah it's gone now. It's where Jaffarian's Volvo is located.

A: Okay.

P: The dealership is right where the building was you know. Yah, when the chef passed away the kids just, you know, it was hard to, they had a hard time trying to keep it going.

A: Was he Portuguese?

P: No, he was Italian.

A: Okay.

P: I used to drive to the North End with him. He had this station wagon. And we would load that up with, you know, lettuce and carrots and everything. And the state police would always pull us over because it was so loaded and things are flying all over the place. [Laughs] So the state police would pull us over and the chef would say, "Ah," he said, "Those people, I cannot believe they do this to me on purpose all the time. I buy five heads of lettuce I get to Haverhill with one," so they'll feel bad for us. It's like, "Can you just like tie this stuff down." Stuff all over 93. [Both laughing]

But um, so one of the chef's son-in-law said to me, "Hey, I work with a guy whose brother is that Salazar." So apparently Salazar has a brother, had a brother, I'm sure he's dead now, that lived in Andover.

A: No kidding?

P: Yah.

A: Okay, wow.

P: And I think he worked for Raytheon.

A: No kidding.

P: Yup.

A: Interesting. Tell us about the Prince Grotto.

P: Oh well it's not there anymore obviously. That was a beautiful place. The Pellegrino Family who owned the Prince, they built this place and they used the Portuguese labor. I don't know if you've seen pictures of it? Have you seen pictures of the Prince Grotto?

A: I was there!

P: Oh you were?

A: Many times, yah.

P: Oh okay.

A: My friend's father was one of the standing acts down there, Frankie Ares? I don't know if you remember him. He was a good guitar player. (P: Oh okay) He passed a few years ago. So we used to go there and hang around.

P: Oh, so you remember the place?

A: Oh yah, yah.

P: Oh okay, the dining room down below and the whole bit?

A: Yah, yah, and I took (--) When I came back from the service in the early 90s I went and took pictures of the building. I think it was closed then, and the Prince Bleachery building which they've since ripped down too. They had a museum in there, and I was so, I don't know, I was like intimidated to just go in and look at the museum. I don't know why, but I never actually went into the Prince Pasta building. But I also took pictures when they were on strike, or trying to protest to save the plant, you know, in the 90s.

P: Oh yah, that's right. That's right.

A: But anyways.

P: But that building was beautiful. That was built with Portuguese labor.

A: Okay.

P: Joe Pellegrino was, he was, he liked that, and so they built it to his (--) You know, they had the waterfalls in the back. Did you ever see that waterfalls?

A: Yah, yah, and all the statuary.

P: Yah, yah, and yah, it was incredible. I worked there for, I worked there I want to say maybe I was fourteen to about eighteen, nineteen maybe. And then I went to Haverhill with the Cassanelli's and I was there for about ten years until he passed away. And then you know, but the building in Haverhill was, he was trying to do the same thing, but yah.

Well I remember, you know, we took pride in delivering food. I mean we were, if you were a bus boy you had to really carry a lot of stuff and, you know, carry a big tray on three fingers like that. And two, you know. I remember one time it was so busy and there was an arch door in the lower dining room. And I'm coming through, I'm coming through and I go like, someone is coming and I go like this. I turn to the side my tray hits and the tray falls off. I said, "Oh, I don't even want to see what happened." I think I wiped out about three tables. People have salad all over the place. [Both laugh] I said, "Oh I'm so sorry!"

You know another time I had just, my first day as a waiter, I'm opening up a bottle of champagne and you know, I didn't have my, I'm supposed to take my serviette and put it over the cork, twist it, because that thing goes up. And I was just, ah, I'm just going to grab it like that. And the cork slips through my finger. And you know, the proper thing was that you had to give the cork to the person, you know, to kind either smell or see if whatever. And I go like this and I look over and the lady is like in her lap and she has the cork. I go, so I go, "Excuse me, may I please have that cork?" The gentleman takes the cork and he goes, "Smells like it's been someplace." [Both laugh] They're like, they're laughing at my expense and I was like, "As long as you leave me a good tip I don't care what you do," you know.

Another time, some of my most memorable times was, I had just started being a waiter and I was so busy. And this guy orders a glass of, a bottle of wine, expensive bottle of wine. And he asked me if I would get him some bread crumbs. And so, bread crumbs? I'll go find some bread crumbs. I go in the draw and I got some bread crumbs right here, put them in a dish. He's scraping the cork, you know, and take some of the bread crumbs, take some of the wine and he makes like a little paste and he goes like this. And there's this girl, she's almost jumping out of her dress, you know, she is so impressed with what he's doing. I said, "What is going on here? This guy is really trying to impress this woman?" The chef's daughter goes like this, "You know who that is?" I said, "No, but he's like driving me crazy because he wants me over there and I've got all these tables." "Now you better wait on him because he's going to leave you a good tip." He was one of those Gallo guys.

A: Oh, from the wine company.

P: From the wine company.

A: No, kidding, wow.

P: He actually knew what he was talking about, you know. He had like such a way to figure out if the bottles were, you know, whatever.

A: Yah, yah, interesting. So what made you decide to get into education Phil?



P: Oh well that was, that was a heaven sent really. It was (--) My sophomore year at Lowell High School, Mary O'Neil was the head of the department.

A: What department?

P: Of the foreign language department. (A: Okay) And she asked me, she pulled me aside and said, "I would like you to consider a career in education." I said, oh jeeze, you know. I know teachers weren't paid very well. I got to make sure my parents are okay with this. And I said, "Why?" "Well I think that you should be a Spanish teacher. And I think Spanish is very easy. Obviously you have, you know, super grades, and you know you'll be trilingual. If education doesn't work out then you can you know, always go into the industry. Somebody will pick you up as a trilingual individual." And I said, "You know what? That kind of makes sense. You know Spanish is easy, you know, I could definitely do this." And then junior year she said, "Maybe you can even coach," you know? "Teach and coach." And I said, "Oh boy." I said, "Yah, you know, I mean obviously that would be pretty good." So I took her advice and I stayed with it. So when I came here I knew I was going to be a Spanish major, education major. I ran all twelve seasons here at UMass Lowell. And when I graduated from here I had a job waiting for me over there. (A: Okay) And John Lang stepped aside after that. He was of age to retire. I took over as head coach and I've been teaching and coaching for the last thirty-four years. And my daughter that I showed you in that little picture there, she's now in her third year at Dracut High School. She's the head, she's teaching Spanish and she's the head girls' coach.

A: Okay.

P: The girls' track coach there. So I don't know where she got the idea.

A: Following after dad, that's great.

P: And my youngest is a sophomore at UVM. He's killing the budget. He's the reason why, well not the reason, but is the reason why I'm going to retire, to find another job just to pay down some of that tuition.

A: Now were there many, either here (--) Now you were here when it was Lowell State right?

P: It was the University of Lowell.

A: The University of Lowell, right, 1975. That's right, so ULowell. Were there many Portuguese professors here?

P: No, no. We didn't even have, you know, if Portuguese was my primary area of study I think I would have had to have gone to UMass Dartmouth, (A: Okay) because that was the only school in the state. Now we have, we have Portuguese now here, but Portuguese was only available at UMass Amherst, or UMass Dartmouth.

A: Okay.

P: And I think my parents were just determined that I was going to come here. I wasn't going to go to school any other place.

A: Did you apply anywhere else?

P: No, no, this is the only place that I, you know, that I (--). It was just one of those things. We didn't have much money and so the options weren't (--). It's not like nowadays you know, there's, well you don't have the money, you borrow and then you get through it. Although I think my dad, if he was alive, he would have been very happy with the fact that even though Zack is going to a very expensive school and we don't qualify for much money because you know, in that middle income, especially at the bottom end of the middle income, you know, you don't get very much. But the fact that we're doing everything for his education, you know, that would be within, within the wishes of my dad, because that was the reason that he came over here, which is a little different, because a lot of Portuguese immigrants don't have the same, the same reason for immigration like we did. A lot of them is more work driven.

A: So more economics?

P: Right.

A: Yah. So when you graduated here did Lowell High already have a Portuguese language course?

P: No they didn't. (A: Okay) They worked very hard. They worked very hard to get that. And I credit Luis Gomes. He was kind of the father of the Portuguese program at Lowell High School. And one of the reasons that I teach as a volunteer on Tuesday nights, I teach with the language, the Portuguese Language School. We have classes at St. Anthony's across at the parish.

A: Oh really, in the hall?

P: In the hall, (A: Okay) and I do that because I think it's so important to preserve the language. We lost Greek when the teacher retired from Lowell High School. We had a very good Greek, and Lowell has an incredible Greek ethnic history behind it. And not to offer Greek, you know.

A: So who was the person that retired?

P: It was this Rizos, Father Rizos. [Rev. Dr. Peter G. Rizos, pastor at Saint George Greek Orthodox Church in Lowell]

A: Oh yah, yah.

P: He retired and the program just, there was, you couldn't find Greek teachers.

A: No kidding.

P: And it was just, it just died. And so one of the reasons that I was teaching Portuguese is that we always had a full-time Portuguese teacher, but sometimes we'd have more students subscribe to the classes. So instead of telling those students, well the classes are filled, you can take French, or you can take Spanish, or whatever, I said I would, I said I can teach, I can teach up to, even though I'm not certified to teach Portuguese, but I am fluent and read and write, and stuff like that, more so than some of the Portuguese Language teachers that we had there. But I am allowed to take up to 49% of the kids that subscribe to it. So I always would take one of two classes or something like that, just to keep the program going. But now we have one fulltime Portuguese teacher, a nice guy. He's from Africa, Julio de Calvale, and he does a nice job. And hopefully the Portuguese Program will stay you know, as active like it is now.

A: Yah. So when you were teaching Portuguese over the years how much percentage of kids were non-Portuguese taking the language class?

P: The percentages are not very high. Most of the Portuguese that take Portuguese are kids that either, you can tell their last name is Portuguese. So it's in their, in their lineage, in their ethnic lineage, but a lot of them, yah, a lot of them, you know, well it would be nice, Portuguese, you know, learn to say something in Portuguese, you know. Tell someone your name, where you are from, something you like, you don't like, you know, just know a little Portuguese. Take pride in, you know, who you are. I think a lot of Portuguese kids, a majority of it is for that reason. But you would get a couple of kids who would take the language. You know, I grew up on Back Central Street. All my friends are Portuguese. I want to be able to you know, understand a little bit of what they're saying, or whatever.

A: Okay. (P: But the majority) Maybe some, maybe some guy who was interested in a lovely young lass or something. [Laughs]

P: Oh yah! Oh absolutely, absolutely. Absolutely.

A: Yah, neat. So you told us a little bit about when you showed up at Lowell High in 1983, right?

P: No, 1978.

A: I'm sorry, as a teacher.

P: Oh, okay, as a teacher, yup, [19]83, [19]84 was my first year.

A: Yah, you started coaching right away?

P: I started coaching right away. My, the gentleman that was the coach, John Lang, was still there. He would retire a few years after that.

A: Okay.

P: So I was fortunate to take over for him. And people have asked me, “Why not stay on and still coach?” Well I don’t want to do that because I was given the opportunity and I, the kids that are there right now are my former athletes and I just think that would be the natural progression. So I don’t, I never liked coaches who retired and stayed coaching, because you have these young kids that want the opportunity too. (A: Sure) And so I just, that was an easy decision. I didn’t even have to think about that.

A: Yah, yah. I’m sure they can call you if they have any questions right?

P: If you have any problems, what do we do now?

A: Has the sport of track and field changed since you first started in the [19]80s till today?

P: Oh it has. The technology, the information that’s available. It’s incredible. It’s just, it’s changed incredibly. The shoes, the, you know, everything is better, the diet.

A: So take a couple of those and talk about what’s different. For example, what’s different from the diet in the [19]80s, or even the [19]70s when you were at Lowell High in track or here till today.

P: Well you know, we would either hear about things like you know, Bill Rogers would say that you know, he loved coffee and tootsie rolls and you know, when he was tired he’d have a flat Coke and that would energize him and stuff like that. We now know that it’s the sugar in the drink and stuff like that, but we also know what you should be putting in your body, what’s healthy, you know, what’s not healthy and stuff like that. So kids are actually better athletes now than they were. So they have the soft drinks. I remember when Gatorade first came on the scene. You know, that was, you know that was created by a trainer at the University of Florida and who wanted to (--) Before that there was a thing available to us was, it was a mixture, it was a glucose drink. We called it ERG, Energy Replacement Glucose. It was glucose and they would flavor it. And it was a powder and we’d mix it up with you know, in some water and dilute it, and that was kind of a way to put that glucose back in our system. I remember ordering that thing in the mail. And then shortly after that there was this thing called Gatorade. It was basically the same thing. This guy at the University of Florida decided to, because he was a Gator, he was going to just market this thing, and look where it is now. Now that was, again that kind of development, you know, that energy replacement stuff is just evolved over the years.

The shoes are better. We trained, nobody knew. We just ran miles. It was like the more miles you ran you know, the cream would rise to the top, you know. Either you’d get hurt and you know, disappear, or you’d continue and you know.

A: What kind of shoes did you run in when you were at Lowell High, or ULowell?

P: Oh I had real basic shoes, you know. I remember Nike when the Nike Company started. It was a coach out at the University of Oregon, Bill Bowerman. And, you know, we had these real flat shoes, really bad shoes. And he had this, I don’t know if you’ve seen the movie [about]

Prefontaine? It's call "Without Limits." Anyways it's the story of how Nike got started. This (-  
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**Interview ends and begins again on another disc. Interview begins in mid-sentence**

P: ...coach, who coached the Steve Prefontaine. And you know, we were running a lot of miles in the [19]70s, and our shoes were very hard. So he used his wife's waffle iron and melted some rubber and cut out some shoes, the soles, glued them to a shoe and used you know, the NIKE thing which is the Goddess of Speed or something like that.

A: Right.

P: And so then they started to make those shoes. And NIKE started out as a shoe company. Now it's so diverse and unbelievable. As a matter of fact, the gentleman that started NIKE, this kid, this guy Knight, he still, I mean he's the reason that he gives the University of Oregon all of the money that they need. They're the only (--). They use a different uniform every single game during the football season. They have all of the money that they need you know. So he was one of the co-founders of NIKE. But I remember like that there was one NIKE shoe that came out a year and everybody wanted that shoe. The very first one was called the Oregon Waffle. And then there was the Pegasus. And then there was like, but there was only one shoe that came out a year. And so we all just, you know, went to a place where we could buy it. And even here when I was at the university you know I remember that. And then after that the other companies, Saucony started. You know we were testing shoes for Saucony when I was a student here, (A: Okay) you know, testing different wear, you know, soles, insoles and stuff like that for the company. Colors, you know.

A: So how about some, what have been some memorable stories of your coaching career?

P: You know what, it's just, it's been like really (--). I like just about, I like every kid, you know whether they're good, bad or ugly. They just, they all had something funny to offer, you know, whether it was like a Tom Golden, you know, Tipper, the State Rep. He was funny. But you know, they just, they've made thirty-four years go by like in a flash. They just, you know, just to see them progress from starting out to see whether they're going to like this or not. And then to go out and see them at the Olympic trials, you know, it just, it's been incredible. It's been a great run. We've had quite a few guys come here to UMass Lowell and become All-Americans and stuff like that. Early on, even in the early [19]80s, [19]86, [19]87, the kid here at UMass Lowell, that was the first kid to be All-American freshman year, sophomore year, junior and senior year. He was one of my runners. That was Dave Cremin. And we've had a few since, you know. We had a Portuguese kid, Jeff Veiga, just a few years back. He was All-American here in the 10k.

A: Okay.

P: We had Pat Morasse who was All-American here. We've had, we've had a nice run.

A: You've had a number of championships. What are some of the stats over thirty-four years?

P: Well I'm going to leave you with this here. [Hands over papers] My career, my winning career is 402. (A: Wow) Up here I have it by season. These are the, yup, 402, 104 and 8. These are the major championships. This was a thing that I filled out when I was elected into the Massachusetts Hall of Fame, (A: Okay) Coaching Hall of Fame. They sent me a thing to, and they asked for this information. So I filled it out and I've been, this is the second page. We were All-State Champions as I said in the last seven years. We won, you know, two All-State Championships, and we finished second. These are all Eastern Mass Championships that we've won.

A: Wow.

P: Went down to New York, won some Manhattan Invitational Meets. My own personal thing here, I've been Boston Globe Coach of the Year four times. Twelve times for the Lowell Sun, twenty-seven for the league. Some, you know, National Federation, I was their Coach of the Year.

A: That's great!

P: This is my 102nd coaching season right now.

A: Wow, because you have like a fall and a spring seasons, or whatever?

P: Right, so that it's three a year right. So when I was thirty-three I was ninety-nine seasons, simple math. Here is the, you know, some of the things here. I've run the Boston Marathon nine times.

A: So obviously, you know, you have to have talented kids out there and on the field to make, to make all this happen, and yet other, other schools across the state also have talented kids. So there's got to be some, a little bit of a formula from out of your head and out of your mouth, and your other coaches that have brought this success. What is it? What do you attribute it to?

P: I think one of the most important things is the junior high program. The junior high program is huge. Gloucester, their coach just passed away last year, they won like six consecutive All-State Championships. I remember asking the coach, "How do you do it? How do you do it?" And he said, "I have the best middle school program in the state." And I thought about that and I said you know what? He's not the type that would like kid me or anything like that. I thought and I thought about that. And that has been my driving force the last fifteen years.

A: So did you, did you steal his idea essentially?

P: Well I, I was thinking that that's how I got started running myself, was because of my success in the elementary school and the middle school in that cross country program. So we went through a phase in Lowell, there was no money. The teachers were working to [unclear]. It was very difficult to get anybody to bring the kids out to Shedd Park for that, for that junior high meet. And then when we did we only had as a, a one day championship, which is like when I ran, you know. So in 1992 we used intermural money to pay teachers if they could like train

some kids and we would have like four dates where they would come to the park, bring the kids and then we would have a championship race on the fifth date. And so what happened is some teachers started coming with five, six, seven kids, you know, in the preliminary weeks on Thursday. We always picked it on Thursday, because that was the one day. Our meets were Wednesdays. So Thursday was kind of a short day. So we could help with the setup. So what we do now is incredible. We, we take the, you know, are you (--) You're familiar with Shedd Park right, of course.

A: Yah, yah! Here, why don't you write it on here and then we'll keep that for the archives.

P: Okay. So we have at Shedd, you know, we have the track here okay. (A: Right) And so we start, we start right here. Actually we start right here. We start right here. We go. We have the kids go on the track. They go up. Here's that field house. (A: Right) They go behind the field house. Then they take a left, they go up the hill. Up here there's a baseball field. (A: Right) Right, they come in through the back of it. Actually there's two baseball fields up top. Okay, they come in. They come in through the back by the tennis courts. They have the tennis courts right here. They go in tennis courts. They go in to the back by the Pyne. Then they take a left, is Boylston Street, they come back in. They go in through the woods. They come back almost. They go around the track and finish right here. That's 1.7 miles. So this is so popular now the Daley shows up with two buses. Two buses, that's like sixty kids.

A: That's just one school.

P: That's just one school. So what we do is we start the boys. We have about somewhere between 250 – 320 boys, okay, that will start over here. They'll start. The boys start. When the boys, you know, when the boys come on to Boylston and they go back into the trail, we start the girls. (A: Okay) So the girls start. Now the boys will finish and the girls are out running. And then the girls will finish about ten minutes later, you know, that's the difference. And we accommodate literally 600 kids on Thursday. And we, we've been retaining those kids. And so our top-runners right now with kids that like one, or finish in the top ten. So we identify them early and we just go with that enthusiasm. So I think that that's one of the major reasons for our success, but I also would be remiss if I didn't you know, acknowledge the fact that you know, hopefully the boy, the kid that will take over my job, one of my former athletes, Scott Ouellette, you know, he's just so enthusiastic about keeping the kids. He's almost like a father figure to some of these kids, because you know, they have their little issues. And you know he just really, you know, takes an interest in them.

A: Good.

P: So it's a combination of that. And I think, I also have a pretty laid-back demeanor. I've never, I've never sworn at a kid. And I've never told a kid when he's like dying, "come on, pick it up," because I know that no kid wants to suck. It just you know, that's the last thing he wants to hear is that from his coach. So I'd just say, "Listen, hey, how about, let's see if moving the arms helps you a little bit. You know, just adjust to the hill. You know, look at your form and work on your breathing." You know, see if, you know when they're, just to try to help them out. And I don't know, I just think that that demeanor that I have is not threatening. I don't, I don't

get into their face and yell at them and like, “Get down and give me five pushups!” You know, I just, I don’t have that. That was not (--) I don’t have that because I was fortunate that I never had a coach that was like that. John Lang was very laid back. At UMass Lowell, George Davis was you know, very matter of fact, laid back, you know. So I think I just took (--) You know, I was fortunate to have good coaches that, you know, I think. I’m not sure. I don’t know. Let’s see what happens in the next phase.

A: Yah, no, it sounds (--) Well I mean the success is there so you’ve been doing something right, you know, with your, with your assistant coaches and of course the right mix of students, etc. So, but yah, I learned running at Paris Island. So we weren’t getting much of a laid back demeanor, [both laugh] but I was a pretty good runner back then, in fact to the point where I wish I had done it in high school, because I probably could have done something. When we did our final physical fitness test, out of two hundred and fifty guys I came in second (P: Wow) on the three-mile run. And so you think with proper training and mentoring and stuff like that, but hey, it wasn’t to be. I was busy working at DeMoulas and Purity Supreme supermarkets, you know.

Hey, so a few years ago you got the Harvard Club Excellence for Teaching Award.

P: Yah.

A: So as well as a magnificent coach in my estimation, somebody else has thought you’ve been a heck of a teacher Phil. What do you think?

P: Yah, yah, that was a nomination that I got from Bill Samaras.

A: Okay.

P: And the other heads of school at the time. So I think they put a little thing together, you know, about what I do as a teacher and coach, and they I think review that and decided to honor me and a couple of other teachers as well. So it was, you know, I went down for the ceremony. It was very nice. I was very impressed with that whole Harvard Club over at the, on the backside of the Elliot Lounge. I’ve been in the Elliot Lounge to have a couple of beers after a run one time, because that was just where you would go, (A: Right) you know, but I’ve never been in the building inside. It’s quite beautiful in there.

A: Yah, I used to deliver mail there. Again, this is probably the only chance I’m going to have to get into this place, you know. Well any final thoughts? Portuguese Community, growing up Portuguese, your high school teaching and coaching career?

P: Yah. Well like I said, I wouldn’t trade my experience for the world. I’m glad that you know, my own family, my own kids have seen, you know, what it’s like to be an immigrant really and how you come from one place to another, and how you evolve around with the things that are available to you. And, you know, how things just work out. So I think that, you know, I’ve been very fortunate. I also have been very fortunate. Knock on wood, my health has been very good. So, and there are a lot of things that, you know, nothing can ruin a dream faster than



health issues. So I was fortunate not to have any of those things. And I just, you know, just been very lucky I guess. My wife has been very supportive. I met her here in college, you know. So we've been together. It will be thirty years of marriage next month. (A: Wow!) So everything has (--) I've been blessed with a lot of good things and I wouldn't change anything. I've enjoyed it and now I just want to give a little bit back to the community, you know, help out with those classes.

My dad did a lot, you know, there was no question there. I'm not sure if I could ever give the time that he did. I mean my days coaching you know, year round, I go basically twelve-hour days and most weekends. I go from like 7:00 in the morning until almost 7:00 at night. And then Saturdays, you know, we have meets. So I don't know where I would have the time to do anything other than that, especially when you coach year round. But, you know, we'll see what happens. Right now little by little I'm trying to give some time back. You know, as I said, teaching that Portuguese class on Tuesdays, I go right after practice. So Tuesdays is more than twelve hours, because I go from like 7:00 until about 9:00.

A: Wow. Well hopefully you're getting some Gatorade in.

P: Yah, yah, yah, some ERG. The kids, the kids always, you know, some of the older kids that are in their forties now, late forties, they talk about the ERG. "Remember that stuff you used to give us? What was that?" It was just powdered glucose. That's what you have in Gatorade right now really.

A: Phil, thanks very much for your time today.

P: Mehmed, thank you!

**Interview ends**