

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL

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

Oral History Interview with Beatrice “Bea” E. (Silva) Hogan, September 10, 2016

Biographical Note:

Born in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1942; daughter of Mary (Avila) and Manuel Silva (1895-1976); Manuel Silva (1895-1976) was born on the Azorean island of Graciosa and immigrated to the U.S. with his parents (Mary Bella (Cunha) and Andrew M. Silva) in 1906; Mary (Avila) Silva (1906-1975) was born in Lowell, but her parents were also from Graciosa; Beatrice (Silva) Hogan grew up in Lowell’s major Portuguese neighborhood, “Back Central,” and attended the city’s public schools, graduating from Lowell High School; she married Francis W. Hogan, of Irish and Portuguese ancestry, with the Portuguese side of the family also having the sir name Silva; following high school graduation she worked in a clerical job before having children and then returned to the workplace, managing the women’s department in a Sears department store.

Scope and Contents:

This is the second of a two-part interview conducted by local historian Mehmed Ali; much of the focus is on Lowell’s “Back Central” neighborhood in the 1940s-1960s, its businesses, culture, and prominent Portuguese families, as well as religious practices in the parish of St. Anthony Catholic Church, and the related religious societies; the city’s ethnic diversity in the post-World War II period; and cultural differences within the Portuguese community, namely in relation to Madeirans and Azoreans; and marriage across ethnic lines. [For more from Beatrice (Silva) Hogan on other topics related to Lowell’s Portuguese community, see “Oral History Interview with Beatrice “Bea” E. (Silva) Hogan, August 6, 2016.”]

INFORMANT: BEATRICE (SILVA) HOGAN

INTERVIEWER: MEHMED ALI

B=BEA

A=ALI

A: Okay, this is interview with “Bea” Silva Hogan on September 10, 2016. So Bea, thank you again for coming down.

B: You are welcome; my pleasure.

A: So Bea, tell us a little bit about your background and growing up in Lowell. You were born in Lowell?

B: I was born in Lowell and raised in Lowell. We lived on Charles Street, which is considered Back Central Street, or South End, whatever. And it was a mix of ethnicity in that area. We had Armenians. We had Italians. We had Irish. The Greeks weren’t there. They were in the Acre part of, but Polish we had.

A: And how did people get along, mingle, not mingle?

B: Everybody got along.

A: Segregate?

B: And of course if you're Portuguese you got along, you know, you were more into the Portuguese people, but very much so they would talk to the Italians, the Armenians, everybody would talk to one another. It wasn't a (--)

A: Now when you were young were the parents of your friends or people who were your neighbors, (B: umhm) were they mainly immigrant folks?

B: The parents of my neighbors, or my friends?

A: Both.

B: Both okay. The parents of my neighbors were immigrants. (A: Okay) Most of them were from either Portugal, you know, Ireland, or Poland, places like that.

A: Okay, yah.

B: But I had a lot of friends that were Americans so to speak. They were Irish. A lot of them were Irish, and their parents weren't immigrants. Now their parents might have been, but their parents were not. They were very American.

A: Okay. (B: Okay) And so the South End though were a lot, were a lot of the people immigrants, the, again the older generation?

B: A lot of people were yes. Yes, yup, most people were as a matter of fact. Very few weren't. Like I said, I, I came up with some friends that weren't, but for the most part it was all a mix of immigrants there.

A: So English would have been the lingua franca for the Polish person to talk to the Armenian, who talked to the Portuguese?

B: Yup.

A: Yah, that's an interesting feature.

B: Yes, yah it was, but like I said, most of them, they were very cordial. They would hello, how are you? But with the language barrier they would, that would be practically the end. But the Portuguese would talk, talk back and forth. So.

A: So what are your earliest recollections of the Portuguese Community, and I'll let you define that as you, as your own.

B: My earliest recollections of course was the church. Everything was, we were (--) It was around the church. Everything revolved around that. The processions, the feasts, everything we did was the church.

A: Now are you still active in the church today?

B: I am. Umhm.

A: So has there been any rituals, or activities that have changed from the time that you were young till today?

B: Yes, because when I was young it was mostly people who were over here from the Azores. They were here from Graciosa where my father was from, Terceira, and those were the main two islands. You had a few from Saint Michael, but not too many. And so we celebrated Saint Anthony's feast in June, and then we celebrated Our Lady of Fatima in August. And we had big processions. That was a big to-do. It was very fresh in my mind, because we used to participate. We'd go to the back of the church after Saint Anthony's feast and procession, and I remember getting a Hoodsie Cup. They would give it to you and a sandwich. That was your thing for being in the procession. And we also had the Holy Ghosts processions which ran for two weeks. We had what they called the Trinity, which was a seven week thing where people would take the crown home. My mother did that. They would take the crown home. They would have it in their house for a week. And you built your altar, actually for fire reasons it wasn't very safe, you know, because it was crepe paper. (A: Okay) They would build it with a crepe paper. And then they'd have the candles. I mean my mother would put the water, the candle, but you know, if that other got caught, but it was very pretty. And every night people would come to your house and we'd say prayers. (A: Wow) And that was (--) And then at the end of the week you'd go to the church and somebody would be crowned. Like when my mother had it my children were crowned. And, because the priest would perform that after the mass.

A: And what's the significance of the crown?

B: That was, that was something that took place in the Azores again, Terceira and Graciosa. It was something about the Trinity. They were very into the Trinity. And when we were, went to Terceira, you could see it. It was all over there. It was very much the trinity, it was all about the Trinity, (A: I see) which I was fascinated by, because you know, it's all about God, but to them the Trinity was the Holy, the Holy Spirit. That was it.

A: So you don't know what the kind of religious (B: No) or symbolic (B: I really) significance of the crown is?

B: No. (A: Okay) I know it originated back in the Azores, but I don't know.

A: So what did the crown look like? What was it made out of?

B: It was, it looked like aluminum or stainless steel, but it was a crown, and it was very ornate and it had a dove, because that was the symbol. A dove on the top, you know a symbol of the dove. It was very interesting, the whole ceremony was interesting. So that was back when I was a kid growing up and when my kids were growing up for a lot of years. And then along came other immigrants from Saint Michael in the mainland, and from other places, and that sort of changed the whole traditions of the church. They started with the Feast of Saint Loreto. That's another saint. And then they do Saint Anthony's on a different day. And they do the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima on a different day.

A: Okay. So the feast and the holy days from your youth, have those gone by the wayside?

B: They haven't really gone by the wayside, but I can remember Our Lady of Fatima, which was, we celebrated in August, we would have this enormous procession. And now they do a procession around the church.

A: So is that a feature of just you know, kind of a decline in population, or is it, and/or, or the kind of newer people coming in and emphasizing other things?

B: Yah, that's what it is, yes. It's other people who have said, "Well we don't need to do that. We'll just do it this way because it's too much trouble." (A: Okay) I mean they really used to do it up. It used to be the gowns, the dresses, and you used to have the flags. We would carry the Portuguese flag, the American flag. Somebody would be honored to do that. (A: Yah) And two girls would walk beside them. And the crowns, sometimes we'd have two crowns in the procession.

A: Oh two crowns.

B: I mean it was just always, but it was a very, very big thing. And it was long, and you'd have all the sodalities march in it. You had, you had like two or three of the women's sodalities, and you had the Holy Name Society for the men. So that's all gone by the wayside. (A: Yah) You have one society now.

A: And which is, which is left?

B: Um, it's not the Holy Name. That's gone. Amélia, the Amélia one is gone. I think it's just the Sodality, just the Sodality.

A: Do you remember all of the organizations that were connected?

B: It was the Dona [Maria] Amélia Society. And then it was the, it was this one that's still there. It's called the Society of (--) I don't know, but it's just that one that's left. (A: Okay) And there aren't that many that go.

A: Involved anymore?

B: No.

A: Yah, well this is the nature of many religious organizations.

B: I know. You're right.

A: No matter what ethnic group or location, or whatever.

B: Yah, it's kind of sad, but I mean even me. I don't really go to the meetings. I don't go to any of the things. I just belong as a member.

A: Yah, well you know, before television (B: Yes) people needed to be occupied (B: You're right) and these were things that they became involved with. (B: Yup) So the, the societies back in the old days, there was three or four you said? (B: Yes) Were they made up of representatives from the different islands? Was that?

B: No.

A: No? Okay.

B: No, it was the Dona Maria. And then you had the other one. My mother belonged to both of them.

A: Okay. Okay, and then the men's society wouldn't let women in I'm guessing.

B: Oh my God, of course not. Are you kidding? That was (--) No. I think that's why they abolished them. [Laughs] The women won.

A: Yah, well the women are the workers right?

B: Yes! That's right. That's right.

A: I mean, and I don't want to sound sexist in any way, (B: I know, yah) but every time I've been involved in some organization the women are doing 90% of the work and the men are up there, you know. [Laughs]

B: I know, you're right! And it was funny, but in those days at the Holy Ghost Park we used to have the Feast. And I can remember everybody who belonged to that was like you would be up there at night. You'd be cooking. You'd be scraping potatoes and doing that, and doing, and these workers would be unbelievable, but it was both men and women.

A: It was? Okay.

B: I will say, and I can (--) My mother was there. And the men would stay overnight with the meat, because it was all open. So you couldn't leave.

A: Couldn't leave because somebody would come by and have a nice feast on their own right?

B: Exactly! Exactly. So I can remember them doing that. And I'm saying, oh my god! But that ended too, because, and at the feast. So you would go to the Holy Ghost Procession. You'd go and they'd have this wonderful meal. It's Portuguese traditional meal. You would sit there and it would be all volunteers that would serve you, you know, and all those workers, they've all gone now. And I mean they, they would cook the meal, they would serve the meal, they would run around. (A: Clean) Clean it. It was unbelievable.

A: Yah. When the Feast of the Holy Ghost was happening did you guys do a procession from the neighborhood out to the park?

B: No.

A: No, it was too far.

B: No, it was all, yah. We would (--) We used to have a bus that used to drive everybody who was in the procession to the park. (A: Okay) They don't do that, because everybody has got their cars now, but back then a lot of people, we didn't have a car. (A: No) When I was growing up we didn't have a car. So they would take us in their, in the bus, and we'd go, go up to the park. And that was nice. But yah, so you would just (--) It was from the church down to Central Street, (A: Okay) That's where the procession would end.

A: Okay. When you folks did processions would other people, other ethnic groups come out to watch?

B: Come out to watch? Oh sure. (A: Okay) Yah, many of them did. Yup. I mean the streets were lined with people, and people would be looking out their windows and everything. You don't see that today. It's funny.

A: Because they're looking at the computer. [Both laughing]

B: I know, looking at the computer!

A: Anyways.

B: It's just amazing. It floors me, because even my kids. Like I was brought up with all these traditions and I tried to instill that in my kids as best I could. But really they don't have that. They don't have (--) They remember the Holy Ghost, because my mother used to have it. My mother did a lot to reaffirm that with them, but they don't have what I had I don't think, you know, and it's kind of sad. But they have their own traditions I'm sure. Yah, the computer. [Laughs] Their phones.

A: So when you would go out to Holy Ghost as a child, I mean was that kind of an adventure, or did it seem like it was far away?

B: It seemed like it was far away, because we were coming from Charles Street out there. But it, it was a lot of fun, because you'd get to meet a lot of people there that you knew from the church community that you didn't really see all the time. And so you got to hang out with them. And when you were a kid they had swings. So you could go on that. And when you became a teenager it was so nice, because the boys were there and you know, and the girls.

A: All the socialization.

B: Yah, so all the socialization that went on, yah. So it was good. It was good for a while, yah.

A: Had there been changes in kind of the foods of the Portuguese Community from the time, you know, you've been here?

B: No, I don't think so. It's all, it's, to me it's still the same.

A: So there's no food, special food that was created when you were younger that people don't create now?

B: That don't create now? Nope.

A: Okay. Because I know that is a common theme in other ethnic groups.

B: Oh really? (A: Yah) No, and even when we went to Portugal, we went, we've been to the mainland and we've been to the Azores, the foods there were just like I remember my mother used to cook.

A: Okay.

B: More so than of course here when you go to a Portuguese Restaurant. A little bit different, but they do it up different that's all.

A: Yes, right.

B: But it's still basically the same.

A: Tell us your recollections of the priests from the church.

B: The priests were somebody you respected. We usually had just one priest. And I remember Father [de]Silva. He was the mean priest, but (--)

A: Yah? (B: Yah) Why so?

B: Oh well he, it sort of seemed like he didn't like kids, teenagers you know, and because that's how priests were back then. They really weren't in tune with what kids liked, or what they didn't like. Because we used to have a CYO, which was, CYO's were very popular back then. And before I got to join my brother used to be a member, and they used to go to meetings and

stuff. And one day he came in and they had shut the lights off. Now this was boys and girls. And he turned the lights on and said, "No more CYO!" So he threw it out of the church.

A: Oh boy.

B: Yah, yah. So that was sad.

A: Now was he American born?

B: No.

A: Okay.

B: Nope. I don't (--) I remember one priest we've had since I've been going to Saint Anthony's that was Portuguese that was American born.

A: And who was that?

B: That was Father Gomes. (A: Okay) He was, and he was only in our church for a while, but he was American born. In fact he came into the priesthood late in life. He was a Navy officer and then he became a priest. But he was Portuguese. Then after, shortly after that they got Irish priests, because there aren't too many Portuguese priests to be had.

A: Yah. So who was the first non-Portuguese priest?

B: I remember Father Glen. (A: Okay) And that might have been around ten or fifteen years ago to tell you the truth.

A: Okay. What was the community's reaction to that?

B: Oh my god! They were so upset. So upset. I mean these people, and I have to say some of them didn't even go to church.

A: Because of that?

B: No, they didn't go to church before that. [Laughs]

A: Oh I see. The ones that didn't go to church were most upset.

B: Yes! Yes! They were really upset. I mean some of them did go to church, but, and they couldn't believe that we didn't get a Portuguese priest, and how could they do, the diocese do that to us and everything. And they even went to the (--) And these were the very uppity ones in the church supposedly at the time.

A: And when you mean uppity, kind of the leaders, lay leaders?

B: Yah, you would think. Umhm, yah.

A: And then what happened after he came?

B: Well after he came he made his (--) I mean we, I loved him. I thought he was great. He was great for everybody. You know, he was a priest. And a lot of people liked him. A lot of people liked him, but a lot of people didn't because he wasn't Portuguese.

A: Yah. Did anybody stop going to church that you know, because?

B: Supposedly they did, but I didn't see that happening. (A: Okay) But of course I go to the English speaking mass, so.

A: So with Father Glen coming in, do you know his full name?

B: Frank Glen.

A: Frank Glen. (B: Yup) How did they cover the Portuguese language service?

B: They used to have a Brazilian priest who would come in and do the mass in Portuguese.

A: Okay.

B: Or, you know, they would have somebody come in because we always had one mass, or two masses, one on Saturday and one on Sunday in Portuguese.

A: And is that still the case?

B: That's still the case, but now it's really (--) After he left, and he was practically driven out.

A: Who? Father Glen?

B: Yah.

A: Why so?

B: Because they hated him and they would tell him. You're not Portuguese, you don't belong here. They would tell him. And it sort of wore on him. So he was driven out and Father Hughes came and he was okay. He was fine. And now he's gone. I don't know why, but he's gone.

A: Okay. What was his full name?

B: Charles Hughes. With the collaborative, I don't know if you're aware, but the churches now have what they call collaborative, which means that you are a member of three churches now. Because these priests, the priests can do three churches.

A: So which, which other churches are Saint Anthony's affiliated?

B: Saint Anthony's is affiliated with the Holy Trinity and the Immaculate Conception.

A: Okay.

B: And of course who is the most powerful there? [Laughs]

A: Tell us.

B: Yah, the Immaculate! And so they, Father Sannella, who is very nice, you know, he's done mass at our church, he, he became the pastor. And I guess that, this is the rumors, that Father Hughes was a little upset about that. So he said he was going to retire, but then the Holy Trinity priest got sick. So they asked him to stay, or something, or told him to stay, I don't know.

A: So does the Holy Trinity not have a Polish priest?

B: I'm sure they have one to do the mass I would think.

A: Okay.

B: But I'm not sure. I'm not sure. Same with our church, we're not going to have a (--)

A: So is there a, are people (--) I mean I'm trying to phrase a question so I'm not putting words in your mouth. What are people's thoughts about being part of the collaborative?

B: Um, to tell you the truth I don't know, but I'm sure they're upset about that. I'm sure that again, those people that were against Father Glen coming because he wasn't Portuguese, how dare they put somebody other than a Portuguese priest. And they were going to Portugal to get a priest. It never happened, but.

A: Yah, they were trying to find somebody?

B: Umhm, I guess.

A: Interesting. How about other priests, earlier ones?

B: Um, well I just remembered (--)

A: You started out with (B: Father [de]Silva) essentially with Father [de]Silva (B: Yup) was the one that you remember from youth?

B: Yup, and then there was another Father Silva [Rev. Eusébio F. Silva] (A: Yah?) who was, he was a younger one, and he was okay. He was fine, but, and then it was Father Glen.

A: Okay.

B: I mean they lasted a long time when they came to our church.

A: Yah, well Father Grillo was there for a very long time right?

B: Father Grillo was there, he baptized me. (A: Okay) Yah, yah, but he died.

A: But he was gone by the time you were kind of old enough?

B: Yes, yah, when I knew yah. Yah he died.

A: So tell us about any stories for the Fathers Silva, either one?

B: Um, well I told you about the CYO. (A: Yah) The other Father Silva [Rev. Eusébio F. Silva] he was like non-essential. He would just do whatever you wanted him to do. He was very, and which was good, because like I said, these people with the “power” so to speak, they ran the church, but that’s okay because they were hard workers too back then. (A: Umhm, umhm) Today these people that supposedly have the power, or whatever, they’re not hard workers. They don’t put anything into the church you know.

A: Okay. Any local folks become priests, any Lowell boys?

B: We did, we had a boy become a priest. I remember we went to his Ordination. Well we went to his first mass, that was it, and he was a priest. His parents were so proud of him. And then he left the priesthood. [Laughs]

A: Oh really. (B: Yah, yah) Okay. Do you remember his name?

B: Dominique. It was Dominique something, but I don’t remember. (A: Okay) I was young, and when this all happened, but it was still, wow, he’s a priest, you know.

A: Any understanding why he left the priesthood?

B: I have no idea. Again I was very young. They sort of try to keep things like that from you.

A: Yah. Any sisters in the Portuguese Community?

B: Not that I know of.

A: None huh?

B: No. We had one. When my kids were in CCD at Saint Anthony’s we had one sister and she was Portuguese, but she didn’t come from around here.

A: Yah. Do you remember what order she was connected to?

B: I don't. I don't remember.

A: And what was her role in the community?

B: She was the, she became the CCD Coordinator.

A: Okay, and was she based out of the (--) She wasn't based out of the rectory. [Laughs]

B: No, she wasn't. She was out of the Diocese.

A: Okay so maybe she come out of Boston or something?

B: Yah, yah.

A: I see, okay. Good. Any other changes, or any other stories about the church that you want to share?

B: No, I'm just, it just amazes me that the, because I taught CCD for many, many years and when, when I was growing up and went to CCD, the people, like you would go there and everybody wanted to be American. Everybody wanted that English speaking. And most of our teachers, they spoke English, but they also had, they were, a lot of them were immigrants who were trying to speak English, you know, and but everybody was American. Speak English and we want to be American, and we love America. And then I started teaching CCD, and what a change. They didn't want to be American. They liked being Portuguese. That's who they were first and foremost and pooh pooh on America.

A: Why do you think that was the kind of identification?

B: I think it's just an attitude from their parents. I think they came over. I don't know why they even come over. I mean it took all I could to say, well why don't you just go back? [Laughs] But yah, they didn't want to be American. We're not American. And they looked at me like, "Well who are you? You're American. You don't understand Portuguese people?" That's how they were.

A: Now you were doing CCD in English right?

B: Oh yah, yah, we did it all in English, yah.

A: And so do you have any, like is there an illustration that you came away with this?

B: Well even the girls would, you know, as I said the kids were wonderful. I loved all the kids even though they hated America, but the kids were nice, they were really nice. And the girls used to talk to me. You know, we would talk and they said, "Oh, we would never marry anybody but Portuguese guys." And it's funny, because these girls that told me that did marry Portuguese guys.

A: They did?

B: They did, yah.

A: So where does that come from? How does that shape, you know, that kind of philosophy?

B: From their parents, grandparents, you know. And one thing they did too was they went back to Portugal every summer. (A: Okay) Every summer they would go back and stay for the summer, whether they had grandparents or aunts there, or somebody, they would stay and they loved it. One of the kids used to tell me, "Oh my God I love that country so much." And it is beautiful. And so why don't you just stay there? [Laughs] You know, I just, I don't know. But anyway.

A: So this identity if you will, how do you think that has impacted the community at writ large?

B: It separated a lot of people, because these people that don't like Americans also don't like certain Portuguese people. They don't like the Spanish speaking people. So that's been a rift too.

A: Like people from Puerto Rico, or Dominican?

B: From Puerto Rico, or something, yah. Yah, they all have that little, nope, this is who I am. This is the island I'm from. So the islands became, "Ooph, we don't want to deal with you?"

A: Really?

B: Oh yah, it was very, very you know, this is my ownership that's yours. You stay there.

A: So would this, this mentality was primarily from the folks that had come from Saint Michael?

B: Saint Michael.

A: Okay. And those folks came when?

B: I would say in the late [19]60s, yah, and [19]70s.

A: And how come those folks didn't come like when the first group of Portuguese people came one hundred years ago (B: Yah!) whatever?

B: I know! I don't, I don't know. (A: Okay) Why would they not? Yah, why didn't they? Maybe it was more prosperous, because Saint Michael, we've been there and it was, it's the capital of the Azores. (A: Okay) And it's, it appears to be more, more to do there as far as work.

A: Okay, okay, and that was probably historically the same.

B: I'm sure. (A: Okay) And in Terceira where we were, like I said, the Island is beautiful. And if you were born there why would you leave, because it's absolutely gorgeous? But there isn't much to do if you're not a fisherman and stuff. And I'm sure these people, maybe they heard about America and stuff, and so they came here, but they were Americans. They became Americans. Even in their little villages they were still very respectful of everybody else.

A: Yah, yah. So is there kind of a, I won't call it a riff because that's too strong, but is there a (B: A separation) separation today between different Portuguese peoples?

B: Yah, I would say. Yup.

A: And how do you describe that separation?

B: Well it's mostly with the kids believe it or not, at least that's what it's portrayed as, but I think a lot of it has to do with parents. But it's just this, I'm from this island, so you're not you know.

A: Did you see that outside of CCD? Did you see that occurring (B: Yes) within organizations?

B: Yes, yes.

A: And so you don't have to mention names, but could you tell a story about that?

B: Well they would, like if you'd go to a meeting or something, if they were from this island they would stay with those people. And if they were from this island they would stay with those. And then they would say (--)

A: And you mean physically sit?

B: Physically sit, they would not even bother with you. And then they would turn around and say, we'll we're going to have (--). Say for instance Madeira, they still have it, Madeira night. They were going to have Madeira night, which was okay, but they were trying to outdo each other, every island was trying. So they each had, you know.

A: And this was at the church or?

B: At the Holy Ghost Park.

A: At the Holy Ghost Park.

B: They would rent the park and do that. (A: Okay) They still have the Madeira night. We go to it. It's very nice, but (--)

A: But there's a little rivalry maybe in it?

B: Yah.

A: It's interesting, isn't it?

B: And when I was growing up we had people from the Azores and people from Madeira that had come over. And it was always joked the Madeirans are very smart compared to the Azoreans, which they were in essence. They had a little bit more schooling I guess, and, but they all got along. Even though they would kid each other they all got along.

A: What was the kidding about?

B: Well they would say, "Oh you think you're so, you so smart because you're this and I'm this. So you know more than me, you tell me!" You know, things like that they would kid each other about, but.

A: Was there, at a time was there a, a kind of (--) I'm not having my words come out today. I apologize. Was there a, if you were from Madeira you only married a Madeiran?

B: Not really. No, you didn't.

A: So that wasn't evident way back like (B: No) your parents' generation, or your generation?

B: No, no.

A: I mean there was probably, obviously, a lot of inter-Portuguese marriages.

B: Oh yah, there was. My parents were Portuguese.

A: And you've told the story that you know, was you had to prove your husband's bloodline (B: Yes, I know) In order for it to be (--)

B: Yes, oh my goodness yes, because you know when you were going with somebody it was like, "Is he Portuguese?" That was the first question.

A: Do you remember other people getting married to non-Portuguese?

B: That were Portuguese, yah, most of my, in my generation they did.

A: Okay. So how did they deal with family? Or were other families more opened to the idea?

B: No, not really, more so than mine probably, but not really. They got flack until they could prove that they were okay.

A: Yah. Do you know a story of another couple or two?

B: That were (--) No, I can't think of any, because they just got married and that was it, but they weren't Portuguese the other person. Mostly girls that went into, although guys did too, they married non-Portuguese.

A: But maybe it was more the Portuguese men would marry an Irish girl or something?

B: Yah, probably. I'm just thinking of Glen Mello who married his wife. She's not Portuguese.

A: Okay.

B: She's Irish. Durkin was her maiden name. (A: Okay, okay) And his sister Brenda married, I think he was Polish.

A: Okay.

B: Something so.

A: Now how about your parents' generation? Anybody there marry a non-Portuguese?

B: Ah, not that I know of.

A: No, no love between an Armenian widow and some bachelor man? Okay.

B: No!

A: Because I've seen that happen in other instances that exist [unclear].

B: Yes! Yes!

A: What else about being Portuguese in Lowell? What does that mean to you?

B: Well it's a proud thing, because Portuguese were always noted to be hard working; always hard working and honest people. So it was kind of proud to be of that ethnicity. It was. In fact I can remember when we went to England and you know the sheet you have to fill out when you go into another country, and it asked for ethnicity and I put down Portuguese. And my husband who is the mongrel looked at me and said, "That's not what you are, you're American," because he put American. It was easy for him. He's that mongrel. [Laughs] And I said, "No, I'm Portuguese." Well when I went up to the guy he said to me, "So you're from Portugal?" I said, "No, I'm from America." He said, "Well do you like to be American?" I said, "Yes I do." And he said, "Well why did you put Portuguese?" I said, "Because that's what I am."

A: You can be both.

B: Yes.

A: And you can be proud, right.

B: I know, but it wasn't. It was American, which amazed me. I said, "America isn't ethnic."

A: Not, no. No.

B: So why would I put American? But my husband had no problem putting that, because he doesn't belong to anybody. [Both laugh]

A: So there's kind of a stereotype out there of the Portuguese Community that I've kind of heard and felt and imbibed you know, growing up here. And that is a kind of a quiet group, (B: Yup) hard working, (B: Uh huh) people that don't, and I don't want to sound disrespectful, but don't necessarily make the grade.

B: Exactly. Exactly.

A: And a group that you will very, very rarely see in the day-to-day.

B: That's right. Well today (--)

A: And for clarification the day-to-day is what the Lowell Sun had for arrest record.

B: I know what it is.

A: Well I just wanted to put that down so fifty years from now somebody will say what is day-to-day?

B: Yah, that's true, say, "What's day-to-day?"

A: But so I want you to react to that statement on each point.

B: So you're seeing quiet.

A: You've already talked a little bit about hard working.

B: Yah. Well when my (--)

When I was growing up I felt that they mistrusted other Americans. It wasn't a mistrust, it was almost like afraid of what they do. They're Americana, you know, they (--)

They're going to turn you, you know, they're going to make you (--)

It was just this, and then I figured it must be some kind of ignorance that they have, that they're not understanding that these people are (--)

It was almost like a mistrust, but it wasn't a bad thing. I mean they didn't go and say, "Oh, I don't trust you." They didn't do that. They had respect, but it was almost like, oop, we can't mix, we can't mix.

A: So was there a self-imposed separation?

B: For the most part, there couldn't be though because you had to deal with other people. You had to so they did, but they were cautious. It was a cautionary you know (--)

Like I would be in

with other people. It wouldn't matter to me. I don't care who you are, or what you do, or whatever. It's who I like. And they couldn't understand that they're not Portuguese. And then of course it was the big Catholic thing. But it's funny because I always chose Catholics as my friend. Not that that was prerequisite, but it's who I chose.

A: Well but also, especially for your time period, the Catholics were the vast majority of the city. I mean if you (--)

B: Was it?

A: I think so.

B: Yah, you're probably right.

A: I mean it was about, it was probably over 70%.

B: Yah, probably.

A: You know, by the time, by you know, say 1950 or something. Obviously we have a lot of Orthodox people during that time period, (B: Yes) a lot of Jewish people, and a lot of Protestants, but I still think by mid-century I think, you know, those Irish folks and those Polish folks, and the smaller groups, oh and the French.

B: You're right. I don't think I knew a Jewish person until I went to high school.

A: Well that was probably because of the neighborhoods, you know, the kind of segregation of the neighborhoods. So.

B: Right, because the Jewish people were segregated too. They had their own. Like I said, everybody was, and the Greeks, same thing.

A: Yah, yah. What about the Portuguese not quite making the grade? And again, I don't want to sound disrespectful when I say that.

B: No, no, I agree with you, they don't, because number one, they don't stick up for one another. You know, if you had the Greeks, like Paul Tsongas, I mean when he was running every Greek in the city would back him. Even if they didn't like him they'd back him, and that was, that was okay, but Portuguese? We had a couple of people who ran for city councilor who just couldn't make it. Look at Joe Mendonca.

A: Yah, he's been kind of in and out and on the bubble.

B: I know, in and out, in and out. But if he had all those Portuguese voters going for him it might do it, but they don't. They don't support.

A: Where is Joe's family originally from? Do you know?

B: I think he's from the Azores, (A: Okay) but I don't know from which, which island he's from.

A: Any interesting, Joe Mendonca of course is a very kind of important personality for the Portuguese Community, and he's contemporary. Back in the older days who were some of the kind of prominent people?

B: You had Gladys Picanso.

A: Yah, tell us about her?

B: She was, she was unbelievable. She was a hard working person. She would do these Holy Ghost Feasts like I said. She would be cooking. She'd be serving and everything. And well at the time I thought she was old. I don't know, she might have been forty or fifty, and she was running around doing all this. She would do that. She would organize things. She could organize cook sales, penny sale, anything you want, Gladys was the one. There was Gladys, Sally Correia, they used to fight all the time. And Dee Mello, and Angie Mello, Glen's mother, and those four were the four I remember being very prominent. There were a few others too, but yah, they sort of were the followers of them.

A: Now where were those folks from in the Portuguese geography?

B: I think every single one of them, Gladys was born here I'm pretty sure, unless they came over when they were little. And Sally and Angie, and who else did I say?

A: Dee.

B: Dee, I think she was born here too, and every single one of them came from the Azores.

A: Okay. So.

B: I mean their parents did.

A: Yah, yah.

B: And every single one of them married Portuguese.

A: Okay. And did they also all marry Azorean guys?

B: I believe so. I believe every single one of them was Azorean.

A: Okay and then what about the men, the male side of the house, (B: The male) who were some of the famous personalities in the community?

B: Their husbands. [Both Laugh] Because (--)

A: By default.

B: By default, because there was nobody else.

A: So the women were some of the strongest leaders in the community?

B: Absolutely. Absolutely.

A: Now you talked about the sodalities, or the societies I should say (B: Umhm) before, so was the women's organizations stronger than the men's?

B: Well yes. (A: Okay) There were more people that belonged to the women's. I mean everybody that was a woman belonged to either one, or both.

A: Okay. And why do you attribute the women having such a strong kind of presence in the kind of civic and religious life.

B: Oh some of them didn't work, but I think all these women did.

A: They did?

B: Yah, they worked.

A: Do you know what they did for work?

B: Gladys was my hairdresser. (A: Okay) And she was, yah, she had her own shop and a very well run and very good shop. And who else was there? Dee Mello, she was at the International Institute. She was the Executive Director.

A: Oh yah? Deolinda?

B: Yup, Deolinda.

A: Is she still around?

B: No.

A: Okay.

B: No.

A: Long gone.

B: And Sally worked for Porter Chevrolet.

A: Where was that?

B: In Cambridge.

A: Oh really?

B: Yah!

A: And what did she do, work in the office there?

B: Yah, she was like one of the head secretaries there, or something. And Angie worked in a dress shop. She was a, you know, but they all worked.

A: And they all had kind of different careers at different levels.

B: Yes, yes, you're right they were.

A: Yah, very interesting.

B: And their husbands were very different.

A: How so?

B: Well Angie's husband was a philanderer. He would fool around with everybody. Gladys' husband was sort of a (--) Gladys you have to know was very, very strong. Her husband was sort of like (A: Mr. Milk Toast), yes, yes. [Laughs] And Dee Mello, I didn't really know, I knew her husband, but I didn't really know him to know. And who else? Sally, Manny was, he was sort of a philanderer too. Yah.

A: A few of those around.

B: Yah, I know, but it was odd back then I guess, and especially where I was young and I heard these things that were going on. So.

A: Did people have, you know, we know that there was like the, what's it called, the Band Club?

B: Oh yah.

A: Were there other places, drinking establishments for the Portuguese Community?

B: We just had the Portuguese Club and I don't know if it's the reds or the blues now. It's up on Charles Street.

A: What about Al Mello's Café?

B: Al Mello's Café? It really, he wasn't part of our community. He was Portuguese. So, yah, they went there to drink too, the men, "The men".

A: That wasn't near the neighborhood necessarily though right?

B: Oh yah! (A: Was it?) It was right at the corner of Charles and Central Street.

A: Oh it was? Okay.

B: Yup, but it was always (--) You never heard any ruckuses from there, or anything.

A: Would women go in there?

B: I don't know. I didn't think so, but I could be wrong. I could be wrong.

A: Some of the old bars had a ladies entrance. I think it was like a city ordinance or something.

B: Yes. Yes, you're right!

A: Or maybe a state law or something.

B: And again, you know, they kept a lot of things away from you. So unless you could sneak up there and look in. Like we had a pool hall at the corner of our street.

A: Okay.

B: And no girls could go in. (A: No?) No.

A: And that was owned by Portuguese?

B: Nope. It was owned by Juknavorian, which was Armenian.

A: Okay, okay. So off limits for females?

B: Off limits, which (--)

A: Even a married woman?

B: No, no married, no women allowed. [Both laugh] Thank God that's all changed now.

A: Was there any other places that prohibited women?

B: Not that I know of. Not that I listened to.

A: Tell us, do you know much about Dee Mello? I've always been fascinated by her.

B: Yah, she was a smart woman. There was a rumor that she fooled around with the priest.
[Laughs]

A: Oh boy.

B: Yah, but she was a nice, they were all very, very nice, very prominent in the church, hard-working people, you know. So, I (--) She had a son Bobby, and I think we were at her house once.

A: What do you know about the International Institute?

B: I was on the board at the International Institute at one time.

A: Oh you were, okay.

B: It was a, it was a wonderful thing at one time because you could go there. I can remember my mother, they sponsoring somebody who was coming in from Portugal. And they used to go to the institute. I used to go with them when I as little to talk about these people coming in and this is what they were going to do for them. This is the job they had for them. And it would happen. And I can remember my mother gathering like furniture for them. And they would get their apartment. And they would come to it from Portugal. They'd have their apartment ready. And it wasn't only my mother, it was other people who would help and donate. And then they'd go to their job. How easy is that huh? It's not happening today.

A: Yah, well the government does everything today. [Laughs] So Bea, any other stories you want to share about being Portuguese, the Portuguese Community?

B: Not really. I could talk about my high school days. And I think I told you there was like separations of schools. We had, we had the upper, the middle and then there was us you know. And not that we were low class, but we were just, we were quiet, quiet people again. And we came from the Butler. There was a couple you know of that. And it was just funny when I first went into high school how you noticed that these people from the Daley at the time would be like, "Oh, I know what I'm doing. I'm here. I'm the king." And you'd be like, "Hm, okay."

A: So even like the middle schools of the city had certain kind of reputation connected to it?

B: Absolutely. Absolutely.

A: And somewhat based on class?

B: Yes, absolutely.

A: So what were the upper class schools? The Daley (--)

B: The Daley, the Moody, those two.

A: Okay. This is before the Reilly School was built right?

B: Yes, yah, we had, we like had the Daley, the Moody, the Butler, the Bartlett.

A: What did it mean to come from the Bartlett?

B: They were with us.

A: Okay.

B: Umhm. And what was the one in Centralville? There was on in Centralville.

A: Was there a school in Centralville?

B: Yah, or Pawtucketville, someplace.

A: Was it Greenhalge [Elementary School]?

B: I don't know. It was a middle school.

A: I think the kids from Pawtucketville went to the Bartlett.

B: Oh okay.

A: Because you know, there wasn't that many.

B: There wasn't that many people at the time there, yah, but it was one in Centralville.

A: And I think because the French went to French schools for the most part (B: Yah, they did) you didn't need like another middle school in the other part of Pawtucketville. Is it the Greenhalge as a middle school, or is that an elementary?

B: I thought it was an elementary. I can't think of the one in (--)

A: So what did they do from (--) What about, there must be, what about the Coburn [Middle School]?

B: No that was where I went. That was a middle school.

A: And that was where? Lawrence?

B: That was on Lawrence Street.

A: So what's the one up on Christian Hill. There was a school (--)

B: That is, oh yah, it's in a park or something? I can't think of the name. Robinson [Middle School], the Robinson is the middle school today, but it wasn't there when we went. I don't know.

A: Yah, there's another brick, because they just rehabbed it and they have veterans in it.

B: Oh, okay.

A: It's on Fifth Street I think.

B: But yah, it was very obvious.

A: But the Moody and the Daley. So the Highlands and the Belvidere.

B: Exactly.

A: And Irish.

B: Exactly, yup, Irish and (--)

A: What about the Jewish community, because by that time I think they went to the Daley.

B: They did. They did and they came to high school, and they were part of that, you know, I'm up there.

A: Okay.

B: You're not! [Laughs] So stay where you are.

A: Yah, yah.

B: But then it became okay, you know, we did mix, but it was funny how it was one, two, three. You know, you knew the classes there and the teachers treated you that way too.

A: Yah. Were there any teachers who were Portuguese?

B: Nope. (A: None) Nope, not when I went to school.

A: Okay.

B: Yah, there have been.

A: Yah, yah.

B: But nope.

A: How about Portuguese people working at City Hall?

B: None that I know of, nope.

A: No Police Officers?

B: There were. Danny? Danny? No, I didn't know any Portuguese police officers. Fireman, Danny Correia.

A: I think Correia right?

B: Yah, Danny Correia, but I think he was the only one at the time.

A: Really? (B: Yah) What was his story? Do you know anything about him?

B: I just knew him to talk to. My husband was a fireman in Lowell, so.

A: Oh okay. That's what he did for his career? (B: Yup) Okay, any other interesting people from the community?

B: Nope, none that I can think of.

A: Joe Camara told me that there was somebody that ran for city council.

B: Yup, Joe Costa.

A: Way back when. (B: Yup) Did he ever win?

B: Nope, and he ran many times.

A: Okay. What was his story?

B: He was, he was sort of a loud mouth, but he was a politician. And you would think the Portuguese people would get behind him, but they never did.

A: No? Why?

B: No, in fact they would denounce him. They would say, "No, I'm not voting for him." Yah, I don't know why. I don't know why! It's how they (--)

A: So what did he do for work?

B: I don't know what he did. He was like a laborer, but I don't know what he did.

A: Okay.

B: But that's how (--) That's about it.

A: Any final thoughts?

B: No, I'm happy, I'm happy about this. I think it's great to get it out there, to let people know what it was like and what it's like and what is it going to be.

A: Good, good, good. Well thanks very much for your time Bea.

B: You're very welcome. Thank you!

Interview ends