

“Having Our Say”

Voices from the Cape Verdean Community

Barbara DePina talks about her grandfather's adventures in whaling.



“The harpoon stayed in the whale and the whale carried the boat with it, you know and the whale came back and hit—hit his boat—the stove boat—and broke it in half...he decided this is not for me”.

– Barbara DePina

Barbara DePina
August 13, 2010

Interview with Barbara DePina
Conducted August 13, 2010
By Ann Marie Lopes

BEGINNING OF FILE

ANN MARIE LOPES – The interviewer is Ann-Marie Lopes. It is Friday, August 13th and I am here with --

BARBARA DEPINA – Barbara DePina.

ANN MARIE LOPES – And could you just give me your birth date?

BARBARA DEPINA – Nine, two, thirty-three.

ANN MARIE LOPES – Thank you. We are at 117 Willow Street, which is Mrs. DePina's home and it is 2:10. I've explained to you what the proj -- what the program is about and I just want to know, first of all, who in your family was the first to come here from Cape Verde?

BARBARA DEPINA – Not the grandparents. My mother. My grandparents, both sets came here from the old country.

ANN MARIE LOPES – When did they come here?

BARBARA DEPINA - In the late 1800s and early 1900s.

ANN MARIE LOPES - From where?

BARBARA DEPINA - My grand -- my mother's mother came from Saint Vincent.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And her name?

BARBARA DEPINA - Her name was Christina Rose Gomes.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. And she came from Saint Vincent and do you know how old she was when she came?

BARBARA DEPINA - No, I don't.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. Now -- and your grandfather came with her?

BARBARA DEPINA - Her father died in the First World War.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Your mother's father?

BARBARA DEPINA - Mmm-hmm.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK.

BARBARA DEPINA - He was from Italy.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Your mother's father was from Italy?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah. And he was in the Italian Army, which was against our country, but

--

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. And he died during the First World War you said?

BARBARA DEPINA - Uh-huh.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. Now so that would be your grandmother's husband?

BARBARA DEPINA - They weren't married.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. So that -- that would be your grandfather?

BARBARA DEPINA - Mmm-hmm. John Cabeca.

ANN MARIE LOPES - John. Would you spell the last name? C-A --

BARBARA DEPINA - C-A-B-E-C-A. I think that's the way you would spell it.

ANN MARIE LOPES – C with a cedilla no doubt.

BARBARA DEPINA – Yeah. And my mother was a twin. And her twin died when she was two years old in San Vincente. My mother came here with her sister and her cousin John, John Santos -- I had all the dates. I forgot. She was eight years old, anyway, and I always used to talk to her about her trip over here.

ANN MARIE LOPES – Tell me about it. What was it like?

BARBARA DEPINA – Well, the ship was two weeks late coming to America and we think it was because of the -- the leeward winds from the coast of northwest Africa. And so it didn't have enough food and they almost starved to death. And our cousin Johnny turned around and said -- I asked him I said, "Johnny, what happened on the boat?" He was sick in the hospital when we were trying to get his memory going and he says, "Oh." I says, "Remember something happened?" He says, "Yeah, there was no food on the ship," and a German freighter came by and gave them food and gave them enough food to last them to come in to port.

ANN MARIE LOPES – This is 1890s you said?

BARBARA DEPINA – This was 1920s. Yeah, 1920s. My mother was eight years old. When she came here she was eight years old and she went to Rogers School in Fairhaven. Her mother had her a shack on -- in Scontick Neck on Shaw Road.

ANN MARIE LOPES – What did she do? What did your grandmother do?

BARBARA DEPINA – My grandmother did housework in Padnarum and Salter's Point in Dartmouth and my mother says she had to take the trolley -- a horse-drawn trolley, you know, and get several different ones to get all the way to Dartmouth. My mother would have to walk to school. She said there was never any lights on the street at night and she used to cry at four, 4:30 it got dark and she would come home from school and go to some man's house on Shaw Road, get a big bucket, take it home, to get garbage and

bring the garbage to his man so he could feed his pigs and she could bring home fresh milk.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So that was the trade?

BARBARA DEPINA - Uh-huh. It was a trade. But the thing is I was asking my mother about what was her experience when she -- I said, "Ma, what was the first thing you noticed when you came to this country?" And she said -- her eyes were up to here on the railing, up to her nose. And she saw all these lights and she never saw lights in her life. In the old country there was no electricity and she just said, "I just stood there with my big eyes looking around" and I says, "Boy, that was some experience." She says, "You bet it was." And then I asked her -- I used to always ask her questions about the old country. It was her job to bring the water up the hill because my grandmother lived on a hill in Mandela, San Vincent and she had to wear those -- I forgot what you call those things that holds the buckets?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yup. That goes over your shoulders.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, she'd go all the way down to the square, fill up the buckets and then bring them up to my grandmother's house. That was her main job. In this country here, she was petrified when she saw lightning. She never saw thunder -- lightning or heard thunder. And she experienced lightning hitting a tree and splitting the tree while it was standing up that way and the results of that is every time it rained and it started to thunder, she would hide under the bed and she brought us up that way. She would grab us and --

ANN MARIE LOPES - What I'd like to do is I'd like to know more about your grandmother and her life in Cape Verde and why she came here.

BARBARA DEPINA - I really believe that her uncle came first. Mr. Custodio -- Manuel Custodio. I think he was the first one in her family that came here and probably the other members of her family.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So they were here -- so she wasn't coming over alone. She had family here.

BARBARA DEPINA - She came with my mother's sister -- my mother's oldest sister to earn enough money to send for my mother.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So when was your mother born? What year?

BARBARA DEPINA - My mother's 20 years older than me. I was born in 1933. She was born in 1913.

ANN MARIE LOPES - 1913 and she was eight, so we are talking about them coming over in like 1921? Because you said it was 1920s.

BARBARA DEPINA - Probably that -- yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. How did your -- how did your grandmother meet your grandfather?

BARBARA DEPINA - She was working at the golf links in San Vincent. So there was all rich people that come from all over the world because, from what I understood it, the San Vincent, even to today they have one of the best golf ranges out there. Golf links rather. So she was a -- she was a matron there, so she made good money.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And he came -- he came over and he was a golfer?

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, I think -- I think he might have been a golfer or just a big flirt. Who knows? That -- that part they didn't tell us much, you know, they didn't like talking about that. They kept a lot of that stuff from us.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Now you said that she had a store?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, she had a store.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So, first, was she a matron first and then she opened her store?

BARBARA DEPINA - Both. Both.

ANN MARIE LOPES - At the same time?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah. Because she got married to Bartholomew Gomes. A very tall nice man. I don't remember him but my mother thought the world of him.

ANN MARIE LOPES - But he wasn't your mother's father.

BARBARA DEPINA - No, no.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. So how many people in your mother's family? How many siblings?

BARBARA DEPINA - She has -- she has the one that passed away and then a sister Mary Ines. She has one sister.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. So there were three. Now there's two.

BARBARA DEPINA - Mmm-hmm.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. Now your grandmother is in Cape Verde, she has a store, she has another job that she works at and she -- she has -- what does she do for fun over there?

BARBARA DEPINA - They did their dances. My mother said the ladies would come in and they would all dance in the kitchen and the men would be either playing cards or doing that game with the aggie. What do you call that game? You never heard of that game that boxers like this here and it has the -- stones in it.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yes, I know what you are talking about.

BARBARA DEPINA - (Overlapping dialogue; inaudible) and they'll sit down as usual and tell Cape Verdean myths.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Do you know any of those?

BARBARA DEPINA - I know quite a few of them.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, tell me one.

BARBARA DEPINA – OK. I wish I could say it to you in Crioul because it's really funny. One man came to this country to meet his son's godfather. And so he took his friend all around the village and he says, "Compadre -- you know what compadre means?" He says, "What's a compadre?" "Look, you see those wires up there? If you want to send your son something new, you send it by that telegraph wire." So the man says, "Oh, that's pretty good." So he went to the store and brought new shoes for his son and didn't even talk about it to the compadre climbed up the pole and tied them to the pole -- to the wire and it was late at night and he just figured it's going to go to the old country, so the next day he and his compadre were walking down the street and he told the old man, "[Speaking Crioul] compadre [speaking Crioul]. Look, look compadre. I bought my son new shoes, I put them up there, and he sent me back his old shoes." And what happened during the night some tramp went by, saw the shoes up there, and took them down and put his old shoes while he was up there. And then afterwards the compadre took him to the store and the (inaudible) says, "Come on. We are going to go for a ride in my new car. And they go off in the car and he says, "Look, compadre I put my foot on the pedal and I put it in first speed and I go 10 miles an hour. Then I do the second speed." He explained the whole thing, right? And he says -- in Cape Verdean he says, "[Speaking Crioul]." Thirty miles per hour, right? And the man says, "Gee, that's good. How come it goes so fast?" And he says, "[Speaking Crioul]. I buy oil and I put the oil in the car." He says, "I'm going to buy oil right now." So they go in there and he tells the man -- he gets the oil for the car, which is gas, really. The compadre turns around and says, "Gee, that's good. Makes your car go fast. How come?" He says, "That's good oil." He says, "I buy Esso." {laughter} "It's a good oil and sometimes I buy Soo no co." Sunoco. {laughter} And you sit there and you just have to laugh because my uncle could rattle them off, you know. And there was this man in Africa, well, from Cape Verde -- from New Bedford and he was stationed in Africa and he went around telling all the men

in each troop that they needed food in the Cape Verde islands, that he is filling up the truck and he is going to drive to Cape Verde islands. And the men in the troop all gave stuff out of their canteens. They gave him money, they went into the mess hall and stole food. Now, Joe, is going all over collecting all this food. Now there's no way you can drive to Cape Verde from Africa. So when he put that in Crioul -- and this is a true story - - it really happened -- this movie's "Kelly's Heroes" with Clint Eastwood, Telly Savalas does this. Well, this guy Joe he had no problem. He made a fortune. {laughter} And there is some other nice jokes too that --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- Let's go back to your grandmother for a little bit. It sounds like she was doing OK.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, she did good. She worked hard. She was skinny. She was four feet eight. She was size two shoe.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's tiny.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's really tiny.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, yeah. And she was an excellent swimmer.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And she'd swim in the ocean obviously.

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, at Mandela that's right off the water. My mother says she would go in there and get an eel and -- I love eels -- and she would bring the eel and put it on this giant rock outside the house, let the eel sit there and chop it for two days let it sit in the sun and it dries out and then when you fry it, it tastes like saltine crackers.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Saltine crackers!

BARBARA DEPINA - Yes. I went ice fishing one time and I got an eel and boy, was it delicious and I cooked it on the grill -- on the BBQ grill. She was pretty sharp. She was very wise.

She was very strict. Children should be seen and not heard. We weren't allowed to sit in the kitchen while any company came to the house.

ANN MARIE LOPES - This was your grandmother?

BARBARA DEPINA - My mother's mother. There wasn't much love there because if she'd get her strap out for you we're talking, you know. She had some beautiful stuff in her house.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So this is her house? The one she bought when she won the lottery.

BARBARA DEPINA - No, that house I don't remember because I think I was very, very small. I remember the one over here on North Street and on Acushnet Avenue. I remember that house and it seemed like all the Cape Verdean people had this glass cabinet and they had two doors, a glass doors and it was round in the front and this is where they put all dishes that they never used like antiques and, God forbid, any of us if we opened up the door. We wouldn't have any fingers left. My grandmother brought us up like that.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So she decided she wanted to come to the United States to be with family?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yes.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And she got here and you said she was a --

BARBARA DEPINA - -- Matron. --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- and housekeeper here.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah. She worked at the golf links.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Here?

BARBARA DEPINA - I'm sorry. Yes, she was a housekeeper. Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Now when she came here she only had your mother as her only child?

BARBARA DEPINA - And my mother's sister Mary.

ANN MARIE LOPES - She -- so she's older than your mother or younger?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, Mary was older than my mother.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Same father?

BARBARA DEPINA - No. Her father was English.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK.

BARBARA DEPINA - My cousins don't want to hear that. Too bad.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. So your mom -- your grandmother's here. She does -- she does well. She works hard.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yes.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Your mom -- you talked about your mom going to school in the dark.

Tell me the story again about the boat. What you -- you asked your mother what she remembered coming over on the boat?

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, yeah, the thing that she remembered the most because she was worn out and tired and hungry, you know, they have to eat -- this food was given to them very, very small doses so that they could survive. Because if they had waited another few days they probably would have all died but they were on that boat two weeks without having decent meals. They were on the Greyhound. She cries when she talks about that.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Must have been hard.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - When your family came here, do you know -- did they live in the Cape Verdean neighborhood and they were in Fairhaven?

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, there were Cape Verdeans all the way up to North Street, but they were in between Portuguese, Polish, and French. But there weren't that many because we were all down basically from Prospect Street up to Pleasant Street and then, little by little as they started to get better jobs they moved into different areas where they could

buy homes. But my -- my mother's mother left here in 1938. She went back to the old country --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- To stay?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah. She went to go take care of business, but she never came back because she had -- she had a step-daughter a girl that she adopted to run the store for her. So she went back and I guess things weren't going right and we tried to get her back here and I had put up my home as collateral because in 1960s you had to have at least \$5,000 in the bank to sponsor anybody from the old country. And now they don't do that. We had a hard time getting her to come back here. She used to cry coming -- she used to write letters all the time about coming back and she would send numbers from my aunt to play so she could hit the numbers.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Well, she hit the --

BARBARA DEPINA - -- And my aunt always hit on them.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Really? Explain the numbers game to me.

BARBARA DEPINA - Oh, no. You want me to get arrested?

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. Let's talk about how your grandmother met Bartholomew Gomes.

BARBARA DEPINA - I don't -- I don't -- I don't know about too much about that. He worked in the old country, but I don't know what kind of job he had over there. I don't know if she met him over there or over here. I was looking for his name on the passenger list of the Greyhound. I am going to see if I can find it. But I do know that he worked in the lighthouse in Fairhaven or New Bedford. That was one of his jobs.

ANN MARIE LOPES - The Greyhound is the name of the ship.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And so what did he do in the lighthouse, do you know? Was he the lighthouse keeper?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah. I think that he was the only one -- they would work so many days and then he --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- Rotated.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, they would rotate.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Now, they meet. How old is your mother at this time? Do you know?

BARBARA DEPINA - I don't know.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Did she ever tell you what they did -- what she did as a kid to have fun?

BARBARA DEPINA - Her mother didn't let them have fun because they were trained to work.

They had to work. My grandmother was very strong with the work ethic. And she would take my mother's sister with her. She trained her how to do housework in Dartmouth and then my mother in turn started doing housework when she was 15. She went out and did housework, too and she worked for the rich people up the West End and turned over all her money to her mother and you didn't question it. Even when we were growing up us kids -- the week I got married my mother -- I was working and my mother only gave me \$2 out of my \$49 paycheck, which was a full week's pay.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Were you living with her at the time?

BARBARA DEPINA - When I got married?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Mmm-hmm.

BARBARA DEPINA - No. But before I married, yeah, but for my -- when I got married that week that I got married she took my check.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's why I was asking if you were living with her at the time.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah. Yeah. And she gave me \$2. Thank God for Salvation Army because I had Salvation Army shoes {laughter}. We were brought up with Salvation Army shoes.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So how did your mother meet your father?

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, according to my father's sisters, my mother was a beauty. And all the men were crazy about my mother, but my father charmed her the most.

ANN MARIE LOPES - How did he do that?

BARBARA DEPINA - Easy. My father was handsome at that time and he was an excellent dancer. Oh God, my father could ballroom dance. Name any Crioul dance, he could do it. And they made a wonderful pair.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Did they date?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yes, they dated. They dated for, gee, I think my mother said that they dated for about a year or two --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- What did they do on their dates? Go dancing?

BARBARA DEPINA - They went dancing, they went to the theaters --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- Which theaters?

BARBARA DEPINA - You know, to the movie theaters. And my father and his brothers -- I have five uncles and five aunts -- all musically inclined and every weekend our family would gather and just play the guitar and sing and play the guitar and sing. Our family was very closely knit and my grandfather taught them all how to play the guitar and then they picked up music else -- you know, other kinds -- they improvised a lot.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Your mother's name?

BARBARA DEPINA - Adeline.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Last name?

BARBARA DEPINA - Her married name? Her maiden name Adeline -- Adeline Gomes.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. And your father's name?

BARBARA DEPINA - Henry Fermino.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So your mother is Adeline Gomes Fermino?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES – What was New Bedford like when they were growing up? When they were dating?

BARBARA DEPINA – I know they were at the beach. There's a lot of pictures of them at the beach. And my father was an excellent swimmer. His mother -- my father's mother -- swam from Portagee Navy Yard all the way to that first island near Fairhaven. Fifty-two years old. I take after her. She used to love the water and my father inherited that. My father was a merchant seaman, so I don't know if he -- if he stayed on the boat long while he was dating my mother, but he had his five brothers to watch out for my mother, you know. I'm very close to all my uncles. They are all gone, but I was very close with them.

ANN MARIE LOPES – How long was he a merchant seaman?

BARBARA DEPINA – Forty-nine years.

ANN MARIE LOPES – Did you ever talk to him about that?

BARBARA DEPINA – Plenty. We got pictures in the scrapbook of my father during the Second World War going up north and they went towards the Arctic so they could get to Greenland to bring the cargo over for the soldiers in the bases over there. And the lines of the ship were like this thick with snow, with ice. And my father has a picture with icicles from his nostrils. And on his eyes and they were waiting for the ship that was called the icebreaker to break the ice open for them and it took days for it to break into the ice and they had to be careful because there were German subs up there. Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES – Were his parents in Cape Verde and came over?

BARBARA DEPINA – My father's family came over way before my mother's family.

ANN MARIE LOPES – And where were they from?

BARBARA DEPINA – My grandmother was from Brava.

ANN MARIE LOPES – And her name?

BARBARA DEPINA - Her name was Dominga. Dominga Fortes Fermino.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And your grandfather?

BARBARA DEPINA - My grandfather was from Saint Nicholas, São Nicolau.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And his name?

BARBARA DEPINA - Valentine Fermino.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And they came over. Where they married at the time?

BARBARA DEPINA - No.

ANN MARIE LOPES - They came over young?

BARBARA DEPINA - They met -- they met over here.

ANN MARIE LOPES - How did they meet?

BARBARA DEPINA - My family donated a whale's tooth to the museum. Do you recall that story?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yes.

BARBARA DEPINA - OK.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Well, you can tell me that story again.

BARBARA DEPINA - OK. My grandfather, his father, and his grandfather owned two whaling ships. One was the Sadalia and one was the Star. And my grandfather stowed away on the Sadalia or the Star. I forgot which ship it was. And he didn't like it. He was 14 years old and his father caught him. His father made him work. And then later on his father put him to work on the boat and he had a bad experience and he was on the stove boat -- you know the stove boat when they go out to get the whale?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Mmm-hmm.

BARBARA DEPINA - And the harpoon stayed with the whale and the whale carried the boat with it, you know, and the whale came back and hit -- hit his boat -- the stove boat -- and broke it in half. Yeah, so it terrified him so he waited until he was 18 or 19 years old and

he decided this is not for me. My grandfather was very intelligent. His -- his father was always out on sea and his mother passed away so he was brought up with the monks and very well educated. He could read --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- The monks on Cape Verde?

BARBARA DEPINA - In Cape Verde where they lived in the cloisters or wherever. My grandfather could read and write in English and in Portuguese because there was no Crioul vocabulary then because it was all Portuguese. So he went on the boat and then the first chance he could get on another boat he came to this country and never went back. He got away from working for his dad because the ships that my great grandparents owned were docked right in São Nicolau in his village.

ANN MARIE LOPES - He owned his own boat.

BARBARA DEPINA - My grandfather, my great grandfather, and great-great grandfather owned the whaling ships.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Do you know the name of those?

BARBARA DEPINA - Sadalia and Star.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And they owned their own ships, they went out whaling, then they went back to Cape Verde with the catch?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yes.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. You have a very old whaling history.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yes, way, way back. Way back. In fact, my grandparents met through my father's cousin Jime Fortes. He worked on the boat that my grandfather was on and he got to like my granddad and they became good friends and he used to like to scrimshaw. So he'd scrimshaw -- a whale's tooth is about this big --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- Which is three inches?

BARBARA DEPINA - Three or four inches. In fact, it's encased in a special casing at the museum and it's right on the first floor. When you go in it would be on the east side of the museum because there are -- they claim there are only two Cape Verdeans who ever did scrimshaw but they can't remember the name of that person in that era, OK? So Jime gave that whale to my granddad -- that tooth -- as a gift and when they came to New Bedford, Jime took my granddad to meet my grandmother because my grandmother took in all her nephews as they came into this country and that's where Jime was living and he met my grandmother there and they got married.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So your grandmother, it wasn't a boarding house but she took in people as they came over?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, our people -- all our people did that. All our people did it. But some of them made their houses into boarding houses because of the people worked so hard to make money to send for their families and I remember, like, remember the story I was telling you about the B-29s, the band, and they wanted to learn how to become a citizen and still practice together for the band and they live with this woman called Mari Grill on Walnut Street and she had a three tenement and they used to board rooms over there and they had one room where they would go study and it was 10 cents a week for the rent and that was a lot of money for them. Because you know how much a penny would buy in those days?

ANN MARIE LOPES - I don't.

BARBARA DEPINA - You take a dime and go to store and you come home with a bag of groceries. So they ran -- they kept running out of money and it took those men from 1914 or 13 to 1927 before they became citizens.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Tell me what your father did -- when he came over he didn't like whaling you said.

BARBARA DEPINA - My granddad.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Your grandfather. I'm sorry.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah. That's right.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So what did he do?

BARBARA DEPINA - I think he worked at the rope works. I think he worked there for quite a few years at the rope works up on -- on Ash Street up the West End. A lot of Cape Verdeans worked in those rope works making the ropes.

ANN MARIE LOPES - For the ships?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, for the ships and other things. And then I remember him working at Hathaway Mill. I remember seeing him go to work with his big lunch pail and he would walk there. I remember seeing him doing that and then I don't know what else because he worked -- he worked hard enough because he had a car. Very few of our people had cars in those days. Everything was the trolley.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Your family sounds very industrious here. What did your father do? What was his first job?

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, my father was a chef. His first job before he met my mother he was with -- he worked for the Duff Coal Company. He was a chauffeur. Well, he -- they called it chauffeur. He was a truck driver. He would bring the coal all the way to Provincetown and back. That was -- that was his route. Bringing coal to the Cape and coming back and filling up, going back. Now I remember him coming home when I was a kid when he was still working for Duff with black under his nose. Then -- see, my father used to get restless, he'd go back on the ship and he'd come back and --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- So he was doing the coal thing and he was a merchant marine?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, he kept getting different jobs. He was always lucky. During the Depression things were kind of rough and my brother Bobby was born blind in 1938. And thank God that my father was working for the WPA. The Work Progressive Program. And they put my brother Bobby in a school for the blind. It was a nursery school called Braleys outside of Boston and they gave my brother Bobby a few operations but Bobby didn't have the pupil in his eye. So -- not the pupil -- a little small thing -- is it the pupil?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Mmm-hmm.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah. And there was no eyeball and they couldn't help him but they taught him Braille very young and then they sent him to Perkins in Watertown and he graduated from their high school.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Back to your father for a second. He was a merchant mariner, he did the coal route, and what did he do for the WPA?

BARBARA DEPINA - WPA he worked at the -- we got a picture of him at the Buttonwood Park taking care of the bears, the different animals. And we had a poor farm down on East Rodney French Blvd. You ever heard of the poor farm?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Mmm-hmm.

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, he used to work there, too, shoveling manure because all the people that had been homeless lived there and they had their own farm. They grew their own food, so my father would do -- shovel the manure and get all the junk out of it and then putting it on the farm to enrich the soil. And I remember going down every now and then to visit my father while he was working there. When I would go to the beach I would take my brother Bobby and we'd go sit down there for awhile. The place was clean. It was a wonderful place that they had. Thank God there was nobody living in the streets then. You know, and then they had animals, they had the cows, and the horses, so he worked there and then he got tired and he went back on the ship. And then he'd come

back he was a -- he was a cook in some restaurants, then he went back on the ship, so we never knew how long he was going to be home, you know. He'd leave and the uncles would take care of us kids.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Did his brothers do merchant -- were they also merchant mariners?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, his brother Jimmy was a mariner. I think Jimmy was the only one.

Then, during the war, I have five uncles all in the service and my father was also considered being in the service because he was bringing cargo to the soldiers during that time.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Merchant mariners had a dangerous job --

BARBARA DEPINA - -- Yes, they did. --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- because they weren't allowed to carry weapons.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, my father was telling me that. They put a machine gun on the ship but they couldn't touch it. At that time they'd have to have -- I was doing a story on the men that worked on these special ships and they would have a square of merchant's ships and these -- what was the name of -- it wasn't Liberty's ships. Was it Liberty ships? And these ships would protect our ships and they'd have two in the lead and two in the back and two on the side, so that the Navy -- this was Navy personnel and they would take care of any subs that would come near our cargo ships and my father said it was dangerous.

ANN MARIE LOPES - These is World War I?

BARBARA DEPINA - Two. World War II.

ANN MARIE LOPES - World War II. OK.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah. When we had victory in Europe we -- just prior to that we had an embargo on Russia -- the area around Russia. No ships could come near Russia and ironically America was sending supplies to Russia because Russia helped us with the

war, OK, and Russia took our supplies that we gave her and she sold it to the Japanese.

So no money came home for almost a year. My father was stranded out there.

ANN MARIE LOPES - In Russia?

BARBARA DEPINA - No, on the boat.

ANN MARIE LOPES - On the boat.

BARBARA DEPINA - But near there. I can't remember that. It was mostly in Germany and they would have to stay on the boat, OK, and then they would have some free time, but my mother didn't get any money. The company didn't send her any money.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So what did she do?

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, she did housework and she worked in the pajama factory in the Kilburn Mills. Yeah. She worked housework during the day and she -- she did stitching at night, so it was my sister and I that took care of the kids at home. Fortunately, we lived in Bay Village, so everybody took care of everybody's kids. We were lucky to have Bay Village, I'll tell you. It was beautiful living in Bay Village. I just loved it. We had to go there when the -- after the hurricane. That 1938 hurricane ruined a beautiful Cape Verdean community.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Really? How?

BARBARA DEPINA - I was born on Griffin Street and then my mother and father moved to Water Street and it was a three tenement house. Now you see how high that house there is. That would be considered a three tenement because the attic would be made into an apartment, right? One gigantic wave came between Pairpoint and Howland Street -- you know where Pairpoint was? And it just came over and engulfed all the houses in its path and it took a long time for it to ebb back. So my father sent his friend Roy Brookes to come to the house to get us in the rowboat, so all we had to do was go right out that third floor window and into the boat.

ANN MARIE LOPES – That's how high the water was?

BARBARA DEPINA – That's how high the water was just in that one block radius from

Prospect Street all the way up to the Avenue. And as we got on the boat, the boat kept sinking and sinking because now the water is leaving. I was five years old. I'll never forget it as long as I live. I'll never forget that and we got into the boat and Roy was trying to get the rest of my father's family and there was 38 of us that lived in that area. Yeah, my father's aunts and cousins. Anyway, by the time we got to the Avenue, Tarzan's sister was living on First Street and she come running out of the house. Imagine being a kid and hearing this woman screaming and this is broad daylight and I saw this gigantic water rat chasing after her, grabbing on to her skirt and Roy was so afeared that he's going to get into the boat because they don't like to be wet. They want dry spaces. Roy took that oar and he must have killed the rat because I don't remember anything until I got to my aunt's house on Tremont Street. My grandfather and my uncle and my father were waiting for us on Pleasant Street. The water wasn't that high there and they took us in the cars. Thirty-eight of us stayed at my aunt's house on Tremont and Union Street. Thirty-eight of us because my father's aunt Carlotta lived there Fanny Fortes they were living across the street from Sid Rozario, my aunt Ada lived on First Street, my father's sister lived two doors away from us. My aunt Annie and my grandmother lived on Grinnell Street so my father had them all picked up and brought up there.

ANN MARIE LOPES – So do you remember that community?

BARBARA DEPINA – Yes.

ANN MARIE LOPES – Tell me about that.

BARBARA DEPINA – That was the favorite part of my life was Water Street.

ANN MARIE LOPES – Oh, boy!

BARBARA DEPINA – Oh, my God and I treasure it because when the war started we lost so much of that tight family -- I haven't got the words right now but on the street that I lived I lived between Grinnell and Howland. There were two bakeries stores, OK. There was Ziman's -- Jewish food that he sold there -- then across the way was Alpert's? Chickens and then on the corner was Pildis groceries and Curhan's? and next door to Curhan's was Waterman's store where you buy your clothes. So we all knew each other. Everybody knew each other. Everybody knew each other -- everybody would say hi, goodbye. On Fridays, [Bashi Garrett had a -- she was a Jewish woman with her sister -- they would hire us and give us a penny to go and light the stove on Fridays because that was the beginning of their Sabbath, so they don't do any work. You know, we learned so much about the different ethnic groups right in our community because we had Portuguese people living there, Italian people, and we, on the first floor of the house I lived on was a fish store. And everybody would come in the store. They knew all of us kids by heart. All our names by heart. So I get up in the morning and I was this skinny (holds up pinky finger) and everybody wanted me to gain weight. I get up in the morning, I go across the street to [Mari Shalone's?]. I'd get couscous. You know what couscous is, right? I'm eating that I come next door to [Mari Belay's?] house. She gives me bread and butter and sugar. I go next door to [Mari Shakine's?] house I get [goofong?]. Come all the way back and I go to [Mari Taber's?] house and I'd get some couscous some more. Some more to eat.

ANN MARIE LOPES – But you still didn't get fat. You still look skinny. That's because you did all that walking in between.

BARBARA DEPINA – And my milkman was from the Model Dairy and he had a horse-drawn milk wagon and I'd sit with him and go to all the deliveries on Water Street and he'd come back and drop me off. I looked forward to that. Then we had the ragman. The

ragman would come by. You heard of the ragman? This man used to come by and he had a horse-drawn wagon and he'd be out on the street, "A rag? A rag?" and everybody would come out with their rags and sell it to him. He'd pay maybe a nickel for a big bag of rags.

ANN MARIE LOPES - What did he do with them?

BARBARA DEPINA - They recycled them. Because we had a rag mill near the Verdean Hall on South First Street. And the ragman was also the boogeyman, so when we heard, "A rag? A rag?" we all run in the house because our parents would tell us they're going to put us in the bag and give us to the ragman. Then we had the man that came by on the vending cart sharpening scissors and knives. We had the men delivering coal and any coals that we found on the ground we would pick up and give it to the families who had coal stoves. We had oil stove. And the iceman. When the iceman used to pick the ice, he'd look up in the window and he'd see what size you want. Fifteen cents. Twenty-five cents. You heard of that? They have these gigantic clippers that would clip onto ice this big you know, and they would -- he would bring it up the stairs and he would put it in the ice chest. That's where we -- our refrigerator. And we would love that fresh ice. We would lick the little chips and you'd see us -- all of us kids running down to get those ice chips. It was exciting. It really and truly was. Sit out on the roof and take our baths on Saturdays out on the sun roof. {laughter} Cold water flats, you know, you can only afford to heat up that stove once a week with a lot of water.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And if you were the last one --

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, no, I shared my bath with my brother and me and my mother would put on the RCO radio -- RCA radio -- and we took our baths when "Fish Shampoo Hit Parade" came on. I still remember the "Fish Shampoo Hit Parade." {laughter}

ANN MARIE LOPES - Shampoo? That's the name of the sponsor?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, that was the name of the shampoo. Fish, yeah, Fish Shampoo, yeah. We learned a lot of songs that way. Coming up we were so family oriented the grandmother was the nucleus of the whole family, but when we were going to school during the war, we were so patriotic. Our principal insisted on us learning all of the military songs and you better know them. You better know them.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Do you remember them still?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yup. "Anchors Away, My Boy" and the other one was "From the --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- "The halls of Montezuma."

BARBARA DEPINA - That was my favorite. I loved the Marine song. "From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli." And, of course, I was super gung-ho because my uncles being in the service. My uncle Freddy was wounded with the kamikazes on the Bunker Hill and my family kept it from me, but I saw it in the RKO News in the movie theater. Because every week when they showed you new movies, they showed you the latest news and whenever they showed that ship the Bunker Hill and the tip torn off, I flew home. My mother and father weren't home so I went to grandma's house and I saw all my family there and I am screaming "Uncle Freddy's dead! Uncle Freddy's dead!" And they had to come in and calm me down and he was -- he was 17 years old. He lied about his age -- because he went on the entertainment -- he was in the special units. My uncle Freddy was a boxer. So he went with his boxing team and he became the Navy champ for three years on the ships. I've got his pictures. I put it in the paper when he died. He was a filler and he would fill-in on the hanger and the guy that was in charge of the hanger where my uncle Freddy was it was the last decision for the planes to land. And he had my uncle help him and my uncle went to go pick up a body and the head and arm fell off. He was crying when he was telling me about it. And he would never talk

about his experience up until three years ago to me. And I got all of that from him before he died.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Sounds horrible.

BARBARA DEPINA - It was. It was. It really wasn't. Our soldiers, they had such a rough time.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Back on Water Street, because that was a really happy time for you --

BARBARA DEPINA - -- Yes it was. --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- would you say -- what were the boundaries of the neighborhood.

BARBARA DEPINA - OK. From my grandmother's house on Acushnet Avenue all the way to Prospect Street I had cousins that lived there. They weren't first. They were second cousins, OK? But those were the areas where our families trusted each other, so the kids could go in and out and visit. I don't ever remember finding a door locked, you know. There was one -- one lady Mrs. -- Mrs. Ramos and her kids and I were very close and then there was the Espinozas, the Barretts the other Ramos' on Howland Street, the Pina family. Oh, my God we had four Mello grocery stores, two on Howland, one on Water Street and one on Grinnell Street. And they could speak excellent Crioul.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So you never had to leave the neighborhood?

BARBARA DEPINA - No, you had your school chums, you know, all the school chums we all played together. We used to go down to Pairpoint and get the broken glasses to play hopscotch and we always challenged each other to who got the prettiest glass. And then we would use it instead of using stones when we go to the schoolyard because I want to Acushnet Avenue School. And then when the war started we moved to Bay Village. We moved to Bay Village I think two weeks before the war started. The war started December 7th and we moved to Bay Village, my brother Bobby was a year old. He was born November 10th, yeah, so we moved into Bay Village and --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- 1941.

BARBARA DEPINA - Bay Village opened up in November 1941.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So you were one of the first people in there.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, well, all the people who had to move out of their houses were the first to move there.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And you had to move because of the hurricane --

BARBARA DEPINA - -- Yeah. --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- and the hurricane damage?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, because the -- yes, yes.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Because you never went back after the hurricane.

BARBARA DEPINA - No, the houses were all torn down.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Because they were destroyed.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's too bad.

BARBARA DEPINA - It was too bad because some of them weren't that bad, but it became rat infested and cockroaches, so my father worked for the company that tore them down and also worked for the company that built the Bay Village.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Right through the WPA?

BARBARA DEPINA - No, this was -- no, this was not WPA. Federal government built the Bay Village. Bay Village and Presidential Heights were the first federal housing projects, in fact, they were the only housing projects for years. Then the state built Blue Meadows and West Lawn and --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- United Front?

BARBARA DEPINA - No, the United Front was private.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So where's Presidential Heights?

BARBARA DEPINA - Presidential Heights is off Mount Pleasant Street and it's identical to Bay Village, but we were coming up it was strictly white people that lived there and Bay Village all the white people lived on the south side of Monte and all the people of color lived on the north side of Monte Park. But it was tolerated. We didn't question. We didn't know any better until our men came back home from the war. Then we realized, you know, the things that we were deprived of but we had to do it. You had to be very cool about it, oh, yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So in your neighborhood you were very happy but very insular you didn't really know --

BARBARA DEPINA - -- You don't miss it. If you didn't have it, you can't miss it. And we were perfectly happy when we were in school with our white friends as well as our Cape Verdean friends. We never thought about being called Negro or -- I don't recall them using the word Nigger then but they would call us Black Sambos, you know, so you wouldn't get it that often because they had to walk through our neighborhood to get home, you know. And when I lived on -- in Bay Village, I was allowed to go to the west end to play on weekends because I had family up there. So I grew up in two communities, which was fine. I enjoyed that. I enjoyed that because I had family in the west end and family down on the park. We had curfews. You had to be home by supper time when it was winter.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And then everybody ate together?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yes. You better be home on time. If my father was home, we better be home on time.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Because supper was served at this time.

BARBARA DEPINA - That's right. And then you have to eat what's leftover there, you know, if it's cold or what. You don't go to bed hungry, but you don't get to eat what's left because

everything gets put away, you know. And in those days, every bit of food was used. Nothing was thrown out. If there was leftover mashed potatoes my mother would save it so we could make fishcakes at the end of the week because my brother would go to the wharf and the fisherman would throw fish, even if it was rotten and my father and mother taught me how to fillet the fish and how to get rid of the rotten. And you get a fish this big sometimes just -- just this much would be good.

ANN MARIE LOPES - For the tape recorder. This big be like a foot, 12 inches?

BARBARA DEPINA - Twelve inches or more.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And then you would end up with just like four inches of good fish?

BARBARA DEPINA - If we were lucky then I put it in the grinder with onions and I'd season it and God, it used to come out so delicious. And all the bread that we didn't eat was put in the freezer part, which is where they had the ice trays because we didn't have freezers in our refrigerators and we -- bread pudding and it was delicious but you can't get me to eat bread pudding today. I won't eat Spam if you made it with gold. I won't eat Spam. I won't eat pea soup because the government used to give away free food to the poor and we'd go down to the -- near the City Mission and we would get the peas, split peas, the hard ones and my father would make delicious pea soup with the pork bone and then he'd save that pork bone and put it in the baked beans that he made the next day. My father was good at making stuff like that. Can't get me to eat pea soup today either.

ANN MARIE LOPES - You said your father was a chef?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Was he the primary cook at home, too, or did your mother cook?

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, my mother was -- no, my father was a better cook than my mother. My mother was -- she -- my mother was into creamed carrots -- creamed carrots. She learned how to eat that stuff when she worked with the rich people, so she had to get

away from the Cape Verdean style of eating and food, so she could last at the job because they had to give her her lunch, you know. And she tried to pass it on to us. I hated her farina because it was always lumpy.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So your father helped keep things Cape Verdean food going?

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, my father -- my father didn't cook so much as Cape Verdean as he did because he was working on passenger ships and the majority of the jobs that he got was oil wiper. He was lucky when he could get a chef's job.

ANN MARIE LOPES - What's an oil wiper?

BARBARA DEPINA - You keep the oil pipes wiped clean. He worked down below deck.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So would you say your family had strong ties to the water then?

BARBARA DEPINA - Most naturally. Yeah. I got uncles that were -- well, we called them uncles. In the olden days older cousins were called titios and on the Fortes brothers they had the first swordfish business. They had the first swordfish boat.

ANN MARIE LOPES - In New Bedford?

BARBARA DEPINA - And there's a book -- there's a book written about them, yeah. Betty Youngblood gave it to me and there was a John Henry and Tony. They worked on that boat. They went out as far as Block Island and they came back with swordfish and other kind of fish. They would come and share whatever fish they had leftover to the families.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Do you remember going down to the dock a lot?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah. They'd throw -- they'd throw the green bananas out and the old timers used to fry them.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So whenever a ship came in, you went down?

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, my brother did. That was my brother's job. I would go sometimes to see my uncles because I missed seeing them, you know, my great uncles. And it was

nice going on the boat but then it would start to smell all fishy after they'd come back, you know.

ANN MARIE LOPES – It's interesting because I've interviewed other people who don't have any ties at all to the water.

BARBARA DEPINA – They don't want to admit it. Why?

ANN MARIE LOPES – They were born and raised in New Bedford and they don't have a memory of going down to the wharf and meeting ships or --

BARBARA DEPINA – -- Well, those were important times for the families. You know, you want -- you see all our songs if you know the Cape Verdean songs, none of our songs talk about war because there was never any war in Cape Verde. Amilcar Cabral fought his war in Guinea-Bissau. Nothing was done in the Cape Verde islands, so the songs that they sing about [singing in Crioul] they are talking about their men coming home on the boat. Or they are talking about the men that died on the boat. Their sons and their fathers and their husbands and the other songs would depict death in -- natural death and those were what they called the mornas the sad songs. Then they would have the happy songs, you know, and Vicki Viera she sings a lot of nice songs. And she talks about the square. Each village had a square. Now, in the slavery days. All the slaves would get together at the square, so that they could listen to the masters give them their so-called religious training and let them do their little thing sometimes the slaves were allowed to play and everything, so that square grew into the main -- main area for our people. So when Cape Verdeans got married, they would invite people all over the islands and it took, like, three or four days to come across those waters because some of those waters between the island are very dangerous. Very rough. So they would use the square and the people that lived in that village would feed the people. They'd stay for three days.

ANN MARIE LOPES - For a wedding?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Wedding celebration.

BARBARA DEPINA - And it's a celebration like with the African people, how they celebrated, of course, there's was a seven day trek. Because they had to walk from their tribe all the way across to another tribe to get rest and finally get to the area where they want to go, this was -- this was brought -- this kind of thing was brought with the Africans to Cape Verde. You know, the roots to Africa are very well known to our younger generation, but they don't know their Cape Verdean roots because you don't find it in the history books. You have to go buy the books to teach them that.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Or it has to be passed down.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yes, yes, and thank God we have some Cape Verdean teachers out there because I know I teach my kids that. I know when I first started teaching African Black history I was not liked.

ANN MARIE LOPES - When was this about?

BARBARA DEPINA - People were upset when I was working in -- I am not going to say the name -- I was working in this one school here and they complained about it and I did my student teaching at Wareham High School and they were upset about it and I said, if I'm lying then put me in court. I had proof of what I was saying. And my mother was never told that there was a slave colony and she lived in that country. And it was never told that originally it was a penal colony. Now the slaves, when they first became the chattel, when they made friends with -- when Portugal made friends with the men in Congo -- that was the king of the Congo, he told them to go to Madeira and that's where the first slave colony was was in Madeira, but Portugal realized economic value of Madeira because it was full of vegetation. He put them on the Cape Verde islands. Yeah. That's

why there's a lot of dark people in Madeira. If you ever noticed, you know, there, yeah, that island is beautiful. Cape Verde had nothing but goats.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Do you keep the Cape Verdean traditions?

BARBARA DEPINA - I do my best.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Tell me again about the carnival that you run.

BARBARA DEPINA - The carnival is -- it's -- let's see. What's the other word -- you heard of the mosque?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yes, but please explain.

BARBARA DEPINA - The mosque is when the crops, like when the crops came in and there was a lot of food, they would celebrate their thankness to God and they would build this tall -- see where that -- where that clothes line roller is?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah.

BARBARA DEPINA - Just above it to where it looks like a wishbone that's how tall they would make the pole and then there would be a crossbar on it and they would fill it up with food. You find every kind of fruit, every kind of bread, every kind of cake.

ANN MARIE LOPES - I've been told they try to make it like a mast of a ship.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, it's supposed to be symbolic of anything that the island wants it to be. OK. The men would go up there and start chopping down. All the food would fall down and we'd catch it and I remember that as a kid. Today they are not -- they don't elaborate as much, but they do do some replica of it and oh my god the Cape Verdean women from the old country can they bake. Oh God, they make the most delicious -- my -- my grandson Darren's mother-in-law and her family, they make the most delicious pastry and it's all Crioul. And I got introduced to it when Boston College every year does an ethnic thing and they recognized Cape Verdean and it was my first opportunity to see the bartook (?). OK?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yup.

BARBARA DEPINA - And he took -- they had that conch, a big conch and they played that and they had the uniform -- the costume -- because Portugal did not allow them to play it for 300 years.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Because they -- because?

BARBARA DEPINA - Because it's a song that talks about their struggle. Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Talks about the Cape Verdean struggle?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Under Portugal?

BARBARA DEPINA - Mmm-hmm.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So you carry on these traditions or you feel -- they came from your grandmother to your mother to you, carrying it on?

BARBARA DEPINA - My father's mother mostly. Because my mother tried so much to become Americanized and she was self-taught and taught herself her own training -- she trained herself to become a citizen and she became a citizen in 1955 without going for any help anywhere because she was tired of going to the post office every January to get her green card and she wanted to become a citizen so that was the proudest day of her life. I remember my mother -- my father's mother going to the Bay Village hall and studying there. They had the school there for -- for the Cape Verdeans that wanted to become citizens. Yeah. And my grandmother come out of it and she could count money, but the only thing she could write was her name. But she was proud. She was so proud.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Mmm-hmm. She did OK.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, she did good. I used to be all -- so happy for seeing her go to the Bay Village hall and learning. That hall in Bay Village did a lot of things for the Cape Verdean community.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Where was that?

BARBARA DEPINA - You know where the Cape -- where the Bay Village office is? Not the Boa Vista part. On the Avenue and Cannon Street.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. Near -- across -- diagonally across from Monte's playground.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK.

BARBARA DEPINA - There's a hall there but now they use it as a warehouse. But we used to have our Boy Scouts, our Girl Scouts, our Brownies there. We had our record hops there. We had christenings there. Even people use it when they get married. It was a nice hall. This is where they had the citizenship school. And prior to that they would have to go to the public school at night and then before that it was just the men that went to school. And I got there first. I got a paper of their first public -- they -- they -- they had a play and it was the first time the Cape Verdean men spoke English in public.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Really?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Wow.

BARBARA DEPINA - And to get back to the carnival, the carnival used to be celebrated at the Sociedad. You know what the Sociedad is? The place where the Cape Verdean people came and they paid for insurance --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- OK. Is that the Beneficent Association?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah. Yeah. It was on Walnut and the Avenue --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- They had a nice building that burnt down, right?

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah. It was solid. It was old, but I don't know what happened over there. We all cried about that.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That was sad.

BARBARA DEPINA - So in -- in the carnival pictures you would see all different kind of costumes of everything on this earth. They would dress up like Carmen Miranda. The majority of the men liked to wear soldier and sailor uniforms and they would have a wonderful time and the majority of the Saint Vincent people lived in Rhode Island. There are only about nine or 10 Saint Vincent families here, so my grandmother got together all the Saint -- my mother's mother got together all the Saint Vincent people in New Bedford. The São Nicolau people and the Brava people there were so much more of them here. We don't have that many Fogos in this city. The Fogos live in -- in Dorchester 'cause I joined amiga de Fogo group. I joined the amiga de Boa Vista Group. We still have those kind of things, but it's not like when we came up.

ANN MARIE LOPES - How is it different?

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, when we were coming up you had to be Brava to marry Brava or you had to be São Nicolau to marry São Nicolau until the family learned to accept you. And I'll never forget my husband's family was from Fogo and my husband is dark skinned. I brought him to the house to meet my grandmother and my grandmother said in Cape Verdean [Speaking Cape Verdean]. "Oh, he's American colored." And my husband answered her in Fogo -- I thought I died. And he told -- he says, "No, I'm American." And he looked at her and he went to go kiss her and oh, she was so happy. She was embarrassed but she was happy because the old timers were like that. They wanted you to stay within the group you were in and there was no room for expansion, not realizing that they expanded themselves just by coming to this country. When my aunts married out of Cape Verdean, oh, my grandmother had a fit but she learned to love her new son-in-laws.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah, that's probably true in a lot of immigrant communities.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, I guess so. But our Cape Verdean kids need to be aware. I know my family does. I am going to be doing a tape for them and let them know of their heritage because they keep asking me questions.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Are you talking about a digital tape or a video tape?

BARBARA DEPINA - I want to do -- I want to do the digital. It was all set up --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- Which one?

BARBARA DEPINA - Both! Both! I want to do that, so I can show them the pictures. I already have two videos of some of my family reunions. And there's over 400 of us. Yeah. We had -- I did a big one for the matriarch of the family and she was funny. She was so funny. We put it in the -- what's the name of that program on TV? "The Munsters." You know, how the mother sits on that big wide wicker chair. Well, we got that all set for Lilly, we dressed her up in a red robe and we took one kid some drum major stick and we made it like it was a scepter and she sat on the stage with her skinny legs showing. Oh God, it was comical. We made her son a knight in shining armor, her brother was the other knight. My aunt Vangie was the lady in waiting because she would be next -- the next matriarch and then my aunt Lillian and my aunt Ruthie became their maids. And they were all up on the stage and the Standard Times did a two-page write-up on it. It was -- we had a ball. We had so much fun and Lilly was -- I think she was 91 years old. Now the oldest one in my family -- the oldest female in the family is my Aunt Ruthie. She's 85. She's the only one left and then my cousin James, he's in Boston and he's 92. So he'll be the patriarch, OK, but I was too tired. I couldn't get it going. I had it all set-up. I had to stop it.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Your family lives long lives.

BARBARA DEPINA - My grandparents had 14 children. All but the youngest was born in Fairhaven on my father's side, OK? Out of those 14 children, three died at a young age.

One died out here in Nantucket Sound because he was a seaman -- merchant seaman and it was his first experience working on the oil tanker. And the tanker hit a shoal, large stone, and it blew up.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's too bad.

BARBARA DEPINA - So my uncle Tony died in 1932 before I was born. My grandfather, when he died, I had to put up 30 cards just for the great-grandchildren --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- Big family.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah, when he died there was 85 grandchildren. Thirty great grandchildren, and 11 great and we had the five generations. My -- my grandfather, my father, myself, my daughter, and my grandson.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's incredible.

BARBARA DEPINA - And I've got -- right now I've got about 15 great grandchildren. I have eight grandchildren and I've got three kids. I had four. My daughter passed away a few years ago. Yeah, it's a big family and we all know each other because --

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- You're close. --

BARBARA DEPINA - -- we meet every three or four years and they are already calling me up. "Auntie Barbara" -- all my cousins call me Auntie Barbara -- "when are we going to have our next reunion?" I says, "As soon as I feel better." And I have to hire two halls upstairs and downstairs. And I'll be sure to get in touch with you. In fact, we invited the Cape Verdean Ambassador and he was supposed to come, but something happened in Cape Verde islands, so he had to rush over there, but he did send us a letter.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's nice.

BARBARA DEPINA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Well, we've been -- we're over --

BARBARA DEPINA - -- How long have we been here? Three hours? Because I can talk, boy.

ANN MARIE LOPES – We've been here an hour-and-a-half. Well, it's been good.

BARBARA DEPINA – But there's so many things that I like to cover. We need to emphasize that we got to start teaching Cape Verdean history at our local colleges. I was very fortunate. I had a marvelous African professor. Because I was in denial about my black roots, you know until he showed me different. Well, we didn't know any better. I used to always say I'm brown and I'm round until I'm down and I was living in the West End during the riots. And they kept saying, "You're black. You're black." And the black people in the West End says no, we're West Indian. So the people who were from the West Indies refused to be associated with the blacks because black race belonged to Africa, so there was -- there was a big problem there too, you know, the Africans did not like the idea of us calling ourselves black. And I experienced that when I was in SMU. The Africans all took to me because I was old enough to be their mother, so they trusted me. So I'm doing my homework and they come to me to ask me some questions and to get some of their work together. Now I would sit with the prince from Cameroon. Very well educated, intelligent, well-mannered man. Then I'd sit with the four fellows that came from Ethiopia and I'd sit with the ones from Nigeria and Liberia. They would not sit with each other. They were a separate ethnic group and they did not like the idea of me telling them that -- about them being African. I says, "Well, I'm an American." He says, "Well, not in my country." And he says, "And we can't bring any American woman there to marry. We have to go back to our country to marry our own kind." So they're prejudiced themselves. But --

ANN MARIE LOPES – -- When was this?

BARBARA DEPINA – This was in 19 -- I graduated from SMU 1976. I had quite a few black professors there but only one studied in Africa. The Africans that I met, they were very

nice but I had to remember that they were not Africans. I had to remember the country that they came from. I was very interested in the ones from Ethiopia.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Because?

BARBARA DEPINA - I really believed that's where Christ was born.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Really?

BARBARA DEPINA - Because that's where Israel was part of Ethiopia. That whole area that's (inaudible) in that area there and I think that's where the Garden of Eden was. If you look in the Bible and the descriptions that they had of the Garden of Eden and I was reading it and watching something on TV the other day where they are going back to Ethiopia to do more investigation. I would love to see Noah's Ark because I hate people denying that there was a God. Because that's your opinion, you know, I'll do anything to accept your opinion but it doesn't mean I have to agree with it, you know.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Well, I think that we should stop.

BARBARA DEPINA - I wanted to talk to you, too, about the church what held us together too -- that's another important part of our lives.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Well, then let's talk about the church.

BARBARA DEPINA - Well, you ever heard of Father Edmund Francis?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yes.

BARBARA DEPINA - He was our savior.

ANN MARIE LOPES - How?

BARBARA DEPINA - He came here in 1948. There were no teenage places for the kids to go, so he convinced the church to buy that store next door to the church and that was our canteen, our study hall, everything. He got an organ, he formed the junior choir. We competed against others -- other churches and we always won. He -- he had so much going for the kids because we had nothing before that. Because Father John took credit

for it. I had an argument with Ricky Barros on the phone the other day. I said, "Ricky, I am going to come down there. I am going to see you. I am going to show you some things." I says, "You weren't into the church like I was. I was a devout Catholic. I lived in that church. I taught catechism." I said, "Did you know that Father Edmund taught us all Latin? We could not sing in the choir unless we knew the Latin Mass." Then I says, "You go and tell me that Father John did this." I said, "I volunteered with Judy Fonseca, Eddie Spencer, Tony DaCruz, and Anna every Tuesday and Thursday we had a teenage club for the kids in the basement of the church and we served them french fries and soda for a quarter. We charged them a quarter. We didn't charge them to come into the canteen. We called it a canteen. We didn't charge them for anything. We did it for no so we could take them on a trip. Father John sees that the hall is full and that we are making money. Now he wants to charge us rent." So Eddie Spencer says, "I'm in charge of the Boy Scouts and you don't charge me for having the Boy Scouts here. Why are you doing this to us?" So we quit. The kids lost out. John -- Father John was always looking out for money. Ricky didn't know this and Ricky didn't know that Tony DaCruz put that first intercom in the church. I can tell you plenty things about that church. And we had the biggest affair that we had for the church fundraiser. We needed \$77,000 to put in that kitchen. That's how much that kitchen cost.

ANN MARIE LOPES – That's a lot of money.

BARBARA DEPINA – And -- but you should have seen that kitchen. You should have seen all the utensils that hung off that long thing up over the counter where they have the steam pans. I used to be in charge of that. I worked 8:00, 9:00, 10:00, 11:00 masses for four years making breakfast. And we made good money. I couldn't continue it because then I bought my house at the West End. When I was living in Bay Village it wasn't a problem. So we had that big event at the Kennedy Youth Center. Frank Fontaine the actor and comedian, was a college roommate of Father Raphael and he came and entertained and

the whole choir -- we all wore gowns and all the men wore nice tux. And if you heard -- if you heard that we had almost 100 people in that choir. Those guys could sing. We had baritones, basses, sopranos, alto, high sopranos, and I was naming them all to Mr. Ricky. I am going to go down there I'm going stop and -- because Ricky and I both were teachers at Roosevelt. And I grew up with Ricky. Ricky lived a block from me on Madison Street.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Right. My mom lived there for a time, too. I'm going to shut this off now.

END OF INTERVIEW