

José Lima - Oral History

Date: October 1, 2012

Place: 209 County Street, New Bedford, Mass.

Interviewer: M. Gloria de Sá

Interviewee: José Lima

GLORIA: Mr. Lima, to begin, could you tell me your full name?

JOSÉ: José Assunção Afonso Lima.

GLORIA: And your current address?

JOSÉ: 209 County Street, New Bedford.

GLORIA: And where were you born?

JOSÉ: Cova-Gala, Figueira da Foz.

GLORIA: And your date of birth?

JOSÉ: December 4, 1947.

GLORIA: How long have you lived at this address?

JOSÉ: I have not lived here long. I've lived here since July 1.

GLORIA: Really?

JOSÉ: At this address, yes.

GLORIA: Do you own this house or do you rent?

JOSÉ: It belongs to a relative. That relative is in a nursing home, so I pay a symbolic rent, but am here alone.

GLORIA: Don't tell me the house belongs to Mr. António Borges?!

JOSÉ: That's the one.

GLORIA: How interesting!

JOSÉ: He is my wife's uncle.

GLORIA: Oh, I didn't know that. That's very interesting. You are already retired, right?

JOSÉ: Yes, I've been retired for a little over a year, but I'm not yet 66 or 67.

GLORIA: Before you retired you were... What did you do, what was your occupation?

JOSÉ: Fishing. After that I worked... Actually, I can begin with a summary: When I arrived here I went fishing. Afterward, I had an accident where I lost an eye and left fishing, temporarily. I was a partner in a firm that I helped found, called Luso Fishing Gear, and worked for four or five years, more or less. In the meantime I had bought a fishing boat. Then I went fishing again on my boat. Then I left the boat. Then I sold the boat. Afterward, I was working there at Bay Fuel, and now I am unemployed.

GLORIA: Later on I want to hear about that in more detail, but now, could you tell me what was the highest grade you completed?

JOSÉ: I did not finish the fifth year at Escola Industrial e Comercial da Figueira da Foz.¹

GLORIA: Are you an American citizen?

JOSÉ: Yes, I am.

GLORIA: What language do you speak at home?

JOSÉ: Portuguese, as always. It couldn't be otherwise; we know very little English.

GLORIA: So, with your children and your spouse...?

JOSÉ: They always speak Portuguese; they are bilingual. With my granddaughters it's more difficult [to speak Portuguese], but they also speak it.

GLORIA: Currently, your household is made up of you, your wife and anyone else?

JOSÉ: No. I have my granddaughters over once in a while.

GLORIA: Now I would like you to tell me about your family. So, you are married, tell me about your wife. What is her name?

JOSÉ: My wife is Rosa Maria Cordeiro Lima. In Portugal she was a dressmaker. When we immigrated to the United States she went to work in a textile factory.

GLORIA: What factory was that?

JOSÉ: Now, the name...

GLORIA: Was it in the South End?

JOSÉ: It was one of those in the South End. You know, down there in front of Aliança.² More or less in front of that restaurant. It has some stairs going up...³ But afterward, in

¹ A public, vocational high school.

the meantime, my youngest son had gotten married. When his eldest daughter was born, my wife had the opportunity of applying for disability. She had a problem with one of her wrists because of the machines and had already had surgery. So, we decided that she should help our son because, you know, babysitters are very expensive. So she stayed home and we take care of our granddaughters. In the meantime I continued to work. She has been on disability for thirteen.... Let me see... For twelve years, approximately.

GLORIA: So, how old is she?

JOSÉ: She will be forty... Forty?! I mean, 63 on October 9.

GLORIA: Did she also go beyond elementary school in Portugal?

JOSÉ: No. Well, we both come from fishing families in Portugal and my wife had two siblings—a brother who has already passed and a sister who also lives here in the U.S. Since she was the eldest... She was not the eldest; the eldest was her brother. But at age ten she dropped out of school to take care, to take care of her little sister and her older brother. At age ten, she was the one who did the housework—she cooked lunch and dinner. When her mother came home from work—from selling sardines door to door—she would already have dinner ready. Since she was ten... Later on, when we got married... When I was able to (It did not take very long thanks to my job.) I bought a little car and she wanted to take her license, but she couldn't [because she had not completed the minimum four years of schooling required by law.] So, she finished fourth grade then, as an adult. So, that's all the education she has.

GLORIA: They didn't even let her finish fourth grade...

JOSÉ: She didn't have... Because her parents... They faced a dilemma... Who would take care of the children? Back then you didn't have... Back then there were a lot of people in my village, and perhaps in yours as well, who did not finish fourth grade. Many did, but others did not. That happened a lot.

GLORIA: Of course, of course. But that happened more, perhaps, during our parents' generation. In our generation it was not as common.

JOSÉ: Right. Not in ours.

GLORIA: You told me you have children, right? How many?

JOSÉ: I have two. I have a 44 year-old son named João P. Lima—João Paulo Lima, but since he is an American citizen he changed it John P. Lima. He works at Bristol County,⁴ for the *sheriff*. The other one was born in 1974. He is 38 and works in construction. He graduated from *Voke*. He almost finished a degree in engineering—computer drafting... machines, but he didn't finish because he got married. He promised me, “Dad, I'll finish, I'll finish!” and I said, “You'll never finish. You did not finish now. Forget it!”

² A Portuguese restaurant located on Cove St. in New Bedford.

³ Probably Berkshire Hathaway.

⁴ Bristol County House of Correction, in Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

GLORIA: Where did he go to school?

JOSÉ: Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Providence, I think.

GLORIA: Rhode Island Institute of Technology?

JOSÉ: Yes. He is actually very smart, very smart. Both of them. I'm very proud of that. But this one has a talent for drawing, for computers, for... And now he works in construction because... He had a very good job at Brodeur Machine Shop, there in the South, I mean, in the North End, but then they had lay-offs and this got worse and worse, so he went into construction. But he likes construction a lot, too. Now he is doing very well in construction too. He has settled down.

GLORIA: Does he have...? Is he in the union?

JOSÉ: No, he isn't.

GLORIA: And the other one works for the prison, right?

JOSÉ: Right. He works at the prison in Dartmouth.

GLORIA: What did he study?

JOSÉ: He graduated from Voke. He is a machinist. He trained to be a machinist at Voke.

GLORIA: Is that the type of work he does there?

JOSÉ: No, he is a prison guard. Currently he is a lieutenant at the prison.

GLORIA: But he did not go to school to be a prison guard, did he?

JOSÉ: No, no.

GLORIA: I ask because many of the prison guards get their degrees from our university, actually from my department.

JOSÉ: But he did not. He applied there because he needed a job. He was accepted and that was it. He has been there for over twenty years.

GLORIA: Did your sons marry Portuguese women?

JOSÉ: Portuguese. They are Portuguese. But they are all citizens. Coincidentally, the wife of my eldest son is the daughter of a great friend of mine, who was my neighbor in Portugal. But the kids met each other here in America because my son was seven, I mean, twelve when he came here... And she... She was not born here... she was not born in Portugal. I think she was born in Africa—Mozambique. Her parents had emigrated there and so on. I think she was born in Africa. I don't want to give you... I can give the correct information later.

GLORIA: That's OK.

JOSÉ: But they met here and got married. The other one, the youngest, his wife was born here, but her parents are Portuguese.

GLORIA: Also from the Figueira da Foz area?

JOSÉ: Her mother. Her father is from Viana do Castelo. Everyone is well settled.

GLORIA: Don't tell me he married the daughter of Sãozinha...

JOSÉ: Puga? *Exactly!*

GLORIA: How interesting!

JOSÉ: That one is Jorge, who married Marta. He is the father of my two youngest granddaughters.

GLORIA: Marta is a nurse, isn't she?

JOSÉ: No, no. Marta is a schoolteacher. She teaches at that school up in the North End. What's the name? That new school they built?

GLORIA: Yes. Pulaski School?

JOSÉ: Something like that. If you go past that street that goes to Building 19, that goes to Hathaway Road... It's there on that road that then you can take to Voke. Up there, in the North End, at the lights, when you get to the lights, almost. She is a teacher there. The other one, the other one might be a nurse; she works at the hospital.

GLORIA: I was confused.

JOSÉ: That one is the younger sister, Susana. So, you know São?

GLORIA: I know her very well.

JOSÉ: She is a good girl. You know, she went back yesterday. Wednesday... Today is Monday. I think she went back Saturday.

GLORIA: I thought she had been living in Portugal for a long time.

JOSÉ: She has. She was here for three weeks.

GLORIA: And then she went back?

JOSÉ: She went this Saturday. She came here because her younger daughter, Susana, had breast surgery, or something like that. Since she has a baby, she came here to support her daughter, to help her. That's natural. But has been living there for a few years.

GLORIA: Is that so? I thought that they had gone, but then returned.

JOSÉ: Yes, that's how it was. You are not too far off. They went, then came back and bought a house here, which is the house where Susana is living, and then they decided to go again. But I would not be surprised if one of these days they came back again.

GLORIA: You mentioned that you have two granddaughters who are... J

OSÉ: I have four. Two from my eldest son and two from the youngest.

GLORIA: Oh, yes, yes. Very well. Now I would like you to tell me about your origins in Portugal. You were born in Cova-Gala, could you tell me about that place, about your family, your childhood, about the way of life...?

JOSÉ: Definitely. Look, first of all I want to say that, like everybody else, I place where I was born is the best in the world, you know. It's the most beautiful. I'm getting emotional. My childhood was a very happy childhood. My parents, being fishing people, had to make certain sacrifices at the time, but it was a very happy childhood, thank god. I never wanted for anything. They did perhaps; I know they did.

GLORIA: You father was a fisherman?

JOSÉ: My father was a fisherman. He worked in the cod fishery for many years, and later in the trawl fishery in Portugal. I was... My father was one of the shipwrecks of the João Costa. I don't know if you have heard the story of the sinking of the João Costa? You can look it up on the computer; it's a very interesting story—a cod-fishing boat that sank on its way from Newfoundland to Portugal. There, close to the Azores. A fire. For seven days—six days and seven nights—they were lost at sea. They even ate a dog. My father says it's not true. He did not; my father did not eat.

GLORIA: Oh, yes, I heard that story from Mr. António...

JOSÉ: Borges, perhaps?

GLORIA: No, Cortina. The one they call...

JOSÉ: Oh! He was shipwrecked with my father on the João Costa; he was one of the shipwrecks as well. After that, my father never went fishing for cod again. I was about eight or nine. That happened in 1956 and I was born in 1947.

My father had a relative in Matosinhos—Leça da Palmeira... Back then, a lot of people moved there... A lot of the residents of Figueira—from Cova, Gala, Buarcos, Quiaios—migrated there to work in the trawl fisheries. We called it (They did, the communities from that area.) America—the America of the Portuguese in Portugal. My father went there to do trawl fishing and I went to with my mother. And so I lived there for many years.

GLORIA: You were eight, more or less?

JOSÉ: Nine. Nine years old. There were some breaks during which we came to Figueira. My father had a brother there (Had and still has because he is still alive, thank God.), Baló—Domingos Lima, known as Baló. He was here in America for many years and once in a while he would have some contracts to go to South Africa, to Israel... (Israeli...), to South Africa and some other place I cannot remember. They would be gone for a year or two on those contracts and we would return to Figueira. When the contract ended...

GLORIA: And what would they go do?

JOSÉ: Fishing, fishing also. My uncle was a supervisor and he would arrange things for his brother so he could earn a little extra. And then we would go back to Leça da Palmeira. So, I lived there, with some breaks, but I lived there—in Leça da Palmeira, Matosinhos, Porto—from the age of nine until the age I got married, practically. Practically, no, that's not correct; I came back two months before I got married.

GLORIA: From Leça da Palmeira?

JOSÉ: From Leça da Palmeira. I came back periodically, though. I was the kind of person who, even though young, I was always the kind of person... I developed very fast. I mean, my height was... At age 14 I could get in to see grown-up movies, if need be. I did not have a beard, but I already had the body—a grown-up body. And I was always a daring, adventurous man, boy. So, many times my mother did not even know I was already in Figueira by the time she missed me in Leça. During summer, there was no school...

GLORIA: How did you come?

JOSÉ: Hitchhiking!

GLORIA: Hitchhiking, eh?

JOSÉ: The trolleys ran from Leça da Palmeira to Porto; I would go hanging on the trolleys. When I got to Foz there was the Arrábida Bridge... (I watched the inauguration of that bridge—the closing celebration. I watched from this place... With some people who were also watching from there and had some binoculars that they lent us—the kids. It was called Porto Santo and it was close to my house. It was a tall hill and from there you could see Arrábida, up north, up in Porto. So I watched that too.) Then there would be trucks... I would catch one ride, two or three. All I wanted was to get to Figueira. When I got to Figueira I know that I would be... I had my support network; I was all set. Because I had my relatives—my aunts, my mother's sisters. Especially one named Adelaide who had no children of her own, and whose heir I was later on. And I had another aunt who had a business, who was the one who was doing best in life. I knew I could always count on their help. I did not need to buy food, I did not need to look for a place to sleep—I didn't need anything. So, during one of those incursions of mine into Figueira da Foz, I was (It was a beautiful summer day; I can see the image clearly.), we were there on the street on the riverside... There used to be a ferry between Figueira and Gala and there were a lot of girls who used to go to Figueira to (Do you know that sewing

machine, Olivia, Oliva and Singer?) learn how to embroider, how to sew and among them was my wife. I was there in the sun, sitting down, leaning against a wall with a cousin... At the time I didn't know he was my wife's cousin; only when I got to know her better, you know. And there were four or five of them and I asked that boy, "Hey, Ernesto, man, who is that girl, who is that chick?" "That's my cousin Rosa Conim, man. Don't you remember? Don't you know who she is?" "Conim?! Is that João Conim's sister?" That was her brother. He said, "Yes." After that, I could not girl out of my head, you know.

GLORIA: Conim is...

JOSÉ: A nickname.

GLORIA: Ah! I thought it might be a foreign name.

JOSÉ: No, no. Cordeiro. His name is Cordeiro, but his nickname is Conim. So, I immediately tried to go... My house was on the main street of Cova-Gala and their house was right by the beach—100 to 150 meters from the beach. She had... My mother-in-law had a beach tent that they rented to the bathers that would stay at her house. I knew the tent, so I started to follow my wife there, to flirt with her, to la-la-la... And I succeed, you see! My late mother-in-law, God rest her soul, never approved of me; our courtship was always behind her back, always on the sly. As a result, after... Actually, I asked my late father-in-law to go out with her, but it had to be on the sly because my mother-in-law didn't agree. My father-in-law, yes. He adored me and... Truth be told, my mother-in-law might have been a bit right because... I'll explain, I'll explain in just a bit. Meanwhile, my mother-in-law, my wife gets pregnant, because of kids' play, and I returned to Porto. I had no idea whether she was or was not pregnant! I had no idea! I was... My wife went to Leça on a sightseeing tour and we met on the sly with the help of a friend of mine named António Augusto Afonso who is the owner of Star Oil, that heating oil company. We got together there, but she gave me no answers.

GLORIA: That's Sãozinha's brother?

JOSÉ: Exactly. She was throwing up and stuff, but such a thing never occurred to me. Not even to her. Three or four weeks after that trip, I come down again, on the sly, hitchhiking, to Figueira. I'm staying at the home of my aunt Irene, the one who had the store, and an aunt of my wife's comes by and says "Oh, this and that, you did such and such..." "Me?! Are you crazy?! What's going on?" I had... That day... She showed up there, at the house, it must have been about nine in the morning and I a ticket for the three o'clock train to go back home, to go up North. I said to that aunt of my wife, who has passed away already, God rest her soul, I said, "Look, Aunt... Maria do Céu... Look, Aunt Maria do Céu, I... That has nothing to do with me. Ask your mother-in-law who is your niece's boyfriend; it sure isn't me. I'm leaving on the three o'clock train to go North, so forget it." "Oh, but my sister-in-law..." "Who? You want me to go there, to your sister-in-law's house?" (Meaning my wife's mother.) "OK, I'll go."

I picked up my bike... Ah, and I said, “Go back, that I’ll be there in just a moment.” I picked up the bike and said “Eh, Auntie, Auntie Irene! Eh, Auntie Irene telephone...” My aunt also owned a taxi, she was part owner of a taxi and I said “Look, call Marinho and ask him if can sell my train ticket. (My aunt had already bought my ticket. So the young man, the man, came and bought... took my aunt’s ticket, that I had left... Because I was... I was making the scene, but had already decided that I would say because I knew that I was responsible, you know. Because I had, I still have to this day, complete trust in my wife. And I... He took the ticket and was able to sell it and gave the money to my aunt. Because my aunt was the one who had bought it.) ...And I went to the house. When I went in, she was there in the... ..in the kitchen, (It was in the basement.) around the little stove, cooking... The hours had gone by, and I said “Good morning!” and she turned toward me with that face... (Once she almost broke my wife’s arm because of me.)... And I went in. “Where is your daughter?” “Over there!” the woman says to me. “Look what you have done!” “I have done?! No. We have done!” It was exactly like that. If she were, if she were here she would confirm. Meanwhile, my mother-in-law comes in and says, “Now, you have to marry!” “Oh, I don’t run from my responsibilities!” I was twenty years old.

GLORIA: And you were still in school?

JOSÉ: No, I was nineteen. I’ll get to that. I was nineteen at the time; I turned twenty on December 20 and got married on December 23. My late father-in-law was working in Holland [at the time]. (An exceptional man! A man of paramount character! He cried. He was the only one who made my wife cry. —Only that soul [was able to do that]!) And I said to him “I will not run from my responsibility; there is no problem! But I have no money and I cannot pay for a wedding without money. We’ll go to city hall, we’ll go to the church, we’ll put the ring on the finger...” Just like that. I said right away “There is no problem. And I will live with your daughter. —In my father’s house; there’s a room there—I have space there.”

GLORIA: In Leça?

JOSÉ: No, there, in... My parents were living in Leça, but they had a house in...

GLORIA: They had a house in...?

JOSÉ: It now belongs to my sister. My sister remodeled it. She bought the house and kept it.

JOSÉ: We set the date for the wedding. We had a little party for forty, fifty people. The old woman was the one who paid for it. My mother-in-law was the one who paid because she wanted... She did not want her daughter to, you know...?

GLORIA: To look bad?

JOSÉ: Exactly. She did not want her be a single mother. That’s what the woman wanted. I understand that perfectly and I also understand, to a certain extent, her sour attitude toward me. Not that I was rude, but for other reasons. Meanwhile, my father-in-

law came from Holland, on vacation. It so happened that he got sick and never went back to Holland. He ended up dying a few years later.

GLORIA: He was fishing there, also?

JOSÉ: Yes, yes, he was. My mother-in-law was a fishmonger; she sold sardines around Coimbra, in the environs of Coimbra. Meanwhile we set up the day of the wedding. We married, and that's how it was. Fortunately, everything went well. Always. —I never had any fights with my in-laws. I never had the slightest problem that I would have to say, “No, I had a problem, I ran away... Nothing. Nothing at all.” When I went cod fishing for the first time, (It was immediately after. I married in 1967 and my first trip was in 1968.), my wife went to live with her mother so that she would not be living alone in my parents' home. Meanwhile, when I came back from fishing we stayed there... We remained living there until we came to the United States. We stayed there for good. She gave me the top floor to live, so that we could have our own independent living space. Often I would go get my father-in-law (I loved to talk with that man!) to come and have lunch with me. Other times he would make me go downstairs and bring my lunch. If he had not made his own lunch, he would not have to make it; he would share mine. Or I his. That's the way it was. I lived there happily until 1980 and I am happy now. Until 1980, when I came to the United States. But going back... I talk a lot, it's a good thing this is catching it.

GLORIA: That's good!

JOSÉ: No, I like to speak and it's because of that I am asked to participate in these things. I was one of the main founders of that club⁵ also. I also founded another club, the Clube Desportivo Cova-Gala. I was the one who founded it and it is still there today and they have a special consideration for me—I am honorary president and was the first president as well. [LOOKS AT WALL DISPLAY CONTAINING MEMORABILIA FROM SEVERAL SPORTS CLUBS] I don't have its scarf here. This is what I love. My land... This is my Figueira da Foz Club, the club where I played. And I am a Benfica fan. Anyway, I'm a Benfica fan.

But my mother-in-law had good reasons [to dislike me]. Why? I was still in school. I had never had a job. I never worked; I was in school. Meanwhile, when my uncle Tónio Borges came to the United States with his son... (His son was in school with me. Even though he was younger we were studying together. Another one of my cousins, Carlos Camarão, who now lives here and owns the Virginia Sands, also left to go to school in Caxias; he left the Escola Industrial [of Figueira da Foz, which we were all attending]. We were both in the same program, which we never finished. Two other friends—António Filipe André... (I don't know if you know him too. He is Mr. Carlos Vinagre's son-in-law.)

GLORIA: I might know him, but...

⁵ United Fishermen Club.

JOSÉ: I mean, I was the only one left from that group of four or five who all left at the same time. Some went to Caxias to train to become electricians, engineers, cooks, mariners and stayed behind, alone. On impulse... One day... I had this teacher named Carlos Quialheiro, who was a very good friend of mine because of soccer. We were even on a first-name basis even though I was only fifteen or sixteen.

GLORIA: What was his name?

JOSÉ: Carlos Quialheiro.

GLORIA: Quialheiro?

JOSÉ: Quialheiro. And he said, “Man, you can’t quit!” He played soccer with me. (I was always very talented for soccer; I always had... I played... When I was of junior age I played with the adult team.) “You have to...” “Hey, Carlos, I don’t feel like it. I don’t want to. I don’t want to.” And I ended up quitting. And my mother-in-law, knowing all that history, the poor woman thought, “What’s going to become of my daughter?” When I showed up at her door... Up to that date she didn’t even know that I wanted anything, you know?

I started playing official soccer, in official teams when I was, when I was... I played for Leixões, for Leça Futebol Clube. Played for Ginásio. I played for other teams until... When my wife got pregnant, so I was... I was 19; I was almost 20 and about to go into the service. My problem of having to go into the military service was not too serious if I were single because Leixões gave me a monthly salary. I was not a professional; I was semiprofessional. I even have that... I even have one from Ginásio (I don’t know if you have seen it.) on Facebook—I have something there about the Seleção Portuguesa de Futebol. I was semiprofessional, in Ginásio, at the time of... And I had a little money that would be enough for me, right, in the military. But I had a pregnant wife—a pregnant girlfriend—I had to get married. A son or daughter (I didn’t know which at the time.) was going to be born. Lucky for me it was a son. My wife would have preferred to have a daughter. Even today she prefers girls, girls, girls... And I am a little bit disappointed that I don’t have a grandson, but what can I do? Now I have accepted it.

The president of Ginásio was Mr. José Manuel Sottomayor (Also a very good friend of mine, who also owned two cod-fishing boats and a factory to dry and cure the fish—the Sociedade de Pesca Oceano, in Figueira da Foz—located in Morraceira, right after the bridge, the old bridge; it was right there at the end of the old bridge.) and one day he said to me (I was... I had a contract to go play officially to renew with Leixões... And Giná... At that time, we had... We the soccer players... The clubs owned us; they owned our card, the one we called “obligation” card and they were not very keen on “releasing” players, as we said at the time.), he said “No, you are not going. You are not going to Leixões.” “Mr. President, Mr. José Manuel, look sir, my girlfriend is pregnant; I’m going to be a father. How am I going to support...? With what they pay me in the military I will not be able to do it.” “You are not going to the military.” “I’m not going to the military? Should I go to jail, then?” “No. Don’t you want to go fishing? Don’t you want to go cod fishing?” At that time you could work on a cod-fishing boat in lieu of

serving on the military. It was six years. I said, “Go cod fishing? But I am not a fisherman!” And I was not. Here, yes, in various roles. And he said “Listen, you have almost completed the program from the vocational school, why don’t you get a license to be an engineer’s assistant?” “Ah, OK. That’s an idea!” “Come on, start things moving and let me know how it goes.” I went to Leça, talked with my parents and told them what was going on. My parents had... One of my late uncles, knew a gentleman who was a port pilot named... Reis. Reis, I think. They helped me with my application. The problem was I had no workshop experience. At the time, to get an assistant’s license, you needed to have three years of workshop experience and two as an officer. It added up to five years. Now, I had never worked, where would I get... Unless it was a falsified document. But since I was never... I was a bandit. Well, bandit is not exactly the right word. I was a troublemaker, a prankster—I stole a few chickens here and there... No, really, I was, madam. I don’t have a problem saying it because I think that all of us... It was even healthy; it was a kind of life that taught me a lot.

GLORIA: But the chickens were for partying with friends, right?

JOSÉ: Of course, of course! It was never to sell. Chickens, rabbits (Never to sell), fruit, you know. But never to sell. And all of sudden, I thought: “I have almost five years of the industrial school. Well, they want five years, and I have only four and a half, let’s say, it’s incomplete, but I’m going to try. I went to Escola Industrial in Figueira da Foz. I came down from Leça. I came down... I went to get my transcript and took it to the port authority office. The clerk there said, “Look, I don’t know if this will be sufficient, but it’s possible that with a little push it will go through.” Just like that. Back in those days, in the days of fascism, the Salazar days... And fortunately it went through. It passed. I got my assistant’s license. I got my assistant’s license and I came down and told him “Manel, I got my assistant’s license.” “OK, you don’t have to go to the service!” I went as a spare. I went as an extra crewmember in the engine room. And that’s how I started my life in the cod fishery there—my life as an engineer, there. I went on to become third, and then second [engineer]. And then I left the cod-fishing boat to come here. This happened four year before I actually came here. There were some problems at the consulate and I could not come. It was not my problem—problems with American Immigration. I worked for the same company on shore and then I went to work on the trawl fishery. I was promoted to first, and worked at the rank of engineer first class until I came to the United States. And that’s how it was, more or less. Go on and ask me questions because sometimes I get carried away.

GLORIA: So, you started working, your first real job was...?

JOSÉ: Engineer assistant on the cod-fishing boat Sottomayor.

GLORIA: Sottomayor.

JOSÉ: Belonging to Sociedade de Pesca Oceano, Figueira da Foz

GLORIA: What was the year?

JOSÉ: Actually, we are coming up to its anniversary, October 1967.

GLORIA: Tell me about that first trip.

30:00 MINUTE MARK

JOSÉ: It was excellent. First, one good thing that I always had—I never got seasick. I came on the cod-fishing boats and I never knew what it was to get motion sickness. And here, too, I never experienced motion sickness. Coincidence, maybe. It depends on one's organism. Ah, no, I lie! I'm lying. My first trip, from Figueira to Lisbon, I got sick on the boat. I remember clearly... I remember clearly that when I told my father, my late father, God rest his soul, "Oh, Dad, I got so sick!" I was in the engine room... But was because of the smell of paint, you know... The diesel engines... The boat... We were in the habit of painting the engine room all over. So the paint, the engine, that paint smell.... It was unbearable! Especially for those who were not used to it. All I know is that I got sick. I... My father said, "Aren't you going to Setúbal to get salt? I was there, chatting with my father, there, sitting at the table in his little hut. "Yes, we are. We are going on..." Such and such date. I can't remember now. "Well, then, I want to do this. You like to drink." (Like to drink? I always liked to drink. I used to like it a lot! I don't mind saying: When I was on shore I would get drunk almost every day. When I was on shore. When I was at sea I didn't. On the job, never. Never. Not on the cod-fishing boat; not anywhere else.) "You are going to do this: Next time you go, don't get drunk as you get on the boat, but as you start sailing, drink to the point where you are not exactly drunk, but almost." Now, I don't know if I got seasick while drunk or even if I was or was not drunk. One thing is certain—from that day onward I never got seasick again. It was a miracle remedy. Maybe it was all in my head... I don't know. Fortunately, I never got seasick again. And that's it. And the rest, afterward I was six months with that....

GLORIA: Forgive me for interrupting you. So you embarked in, in Figueira?

JOSÉ: Yes.

GLORIA: What kind of preparations did you have to do before you embarked?

JOSÉ: Look, mine, you know, an engineer's or an engineer's assistant's preparations are different from those of the fisherman proper. At that time it was a longlining boat, with each fisherman in his own little boat, you know. For me, the preparations were getting my wife to sew me a couple of coveralls, the bedclothes—sheets, blankets, an regular outfit for strolling around when I went ashore in St. John's and that was it. Those were the preparations.

GLORIA: You could not wash your clothes on board?

JOSÉ: Back then we could not. Later on, later on. (Because I spent the 25th of April...⁶ It was... The second boat to go on strike in St. John's Canada was the boat I was on.) Later on, yes, we had washing machines and we could wash our clothes. Unfortunately, thought, it was not for everybody. It was more for the higher... Even after April 25 it was

⁶ April 25, 1974 was the date of the popular uprising known as the Carnation Revolution that ended forty years of dictatorship in Portugal.

more for the class that we called the aft end class. The captain; the second-in-command; the pilot; the nurse; the first, second and third engineers had washing machines. The crew of the fore section, in part due to their own laziness... It's not that.... I have an enormous respect... I'm going to tell you a story, if not today some other day. I have an enormous respect for all fishermen. And especially after witnessing those two years of longlining, I became... If I already had a lot of respect for my father's occupation and for other longline fishermen from my village and elsewhere, when I watched [them] on those two trips (I only did two trips on longlining boats.) my respect for them became ten times greater. For me, the fisherman... The longline cod fisherman for me is... Is at the top of my admiration. The top. I'm straying from the story, but that's OK.

I enjoyed it. I made that trip with the goal of... It took nine days. We went straight to Greenland. On the day that we arrived in Greenland I received a telegram telling me that my son was born. You can see my eagerness, right?

GLORIA: I can imagine.

JOSÉ: I am a young man, a (I'm not ashamed to say) leftist, someone who had just gotten out of school, who could not stand the sight of Salazar or Tenreiro⁷ or their ilk, OK? I go [cod fishing] in I won't have to go Overseas [to fight in the African colonial war]. I go cod fishing because I need to make money for my son and my wife. My son is born. I begin counting the days. Still 180 something days to go before I will arrive in Figueira and be able to see my son... But fortunately, I was able to cope, with the support of my co-workers. One of them was a guy named José Belmiro, who unfortunately died in South Africa. And I value the fisherman so much that... I'm going to tell... I'm going to summarize a little story. I knew, by my calculations, that the boat had potable water to last two months, more or less and the captain decided to ration the water. Salazar and Tenreiro might not have been directly responsible for it, but maybe, in part, it was their fault. But the captains took advantage of the power they had and abused it.

I had a friend (Still alive, fortunately.) named Quim Camacho. One day he comes to me... My watch was from midnight to four in the morning. The boat was anchored because everyone was resting to go back to fishing in the little boats at daybreak. (In Greenland there is continuous daylight, but they rested three or four hours. We rested until dawn, until... It was daylight round the clock! I was able to see the midnight sunset, which is a spectacular sight. —Hellish! It was a veritable... I have never seen hell, but that, Madam...! I wish I still had those photographs. I left them behind, in Portugal, and they got lost. The red! —The red sea, the read sun! That red pouring through the porthole, the boat's window... Spectacular! An unforgettable sight! I feel sorry for those who are not able to see it. If you saw it, Madam, you would... You would go crazy! Oh, yeah!) One day he comes to me and says "Hey, Zé, man, do me a favor." "Hey, man, what do you want, Quim?" "Hey, man, I need some water. I ran out of water. I have an empty jug, there; I'll bring you the jug and you'll fill it with water for me." Because I had water—in the engine room we had all the water we wanted. I said, "Hey, man, don't get me in

⁷ António de Oliveira Salazar was Portugal's authoritarian, rightwing, prime minister from 1932 to 1968. Rear-Admiral Henrique Tenreiro was a member of the Portuguese Navy put in charge of Portuguese fisheries and merchant marine by Salazar. He was known as the "Boss of the Fisheries."

trouble. You know this is a big problem.” But my anti... anti-regime spirit. Knowing that [the rationing] was wrong, knowing that we had enough water, I said, “OK, man, go get the jug.” He brought the jug. (The captain was a very good friend of mine; he was a “ginasista”⁸—Captain Abreu da Silva.) I said, “Go ahead.” He brought it. Two days later, it was not just one jug; it was two jugs. Three or four days later it was not just three jugs; it was he and others. I said, “Man, I have to stop or I’ll be found out.” I was already found out. I was found out after the first jug, but since the captain was a friend of mine it let it go to see how far I would go because he knew, he was well aware of my views. He was also a leftist. We used to do subversive propaganda at the Ginásio Clube Figueirense, at the Ginásio’s headquarters. At times I had to jump through windows to run from the PIDE⁹ informants, and those people. And he called me to the office and said this to me: “Man, I can’t, I can’t. The First Officer (Who was a guy from Lisbon I barely knew) already knows the story; he has already filed a complaint against you. He wants to file a complaint with the Gil Eanes.” (That was the commander... the commander of the...) “You can’t get away with this. But I’m going to see what I can do.” And the poor man did what he had to do. All I know was that I was not taken to the Gil Eanes that day. When we got to St. John’s, here in Newfoundland, I went to talk with the captain of the Gil Eanes. A great man, Captain Mário Esteves, captain... (God rest his soul or preserve him if he is still alive.), an exceptional man who, as I later discovered, was also a leftist. Actually, I discovered at the time he spoke with me—after three days. And later on I had the pleasure of spending some time with him, having a few drinks with him, both in St. John’s and in Lisbon, Portugal, because I was always very active, I was always very...

GLORIA: Outgoing?

JOSÉ: Outgoing. Something that I keep deep in my heart was when that great commander named Mário Esteves said to me “Look, Zé Lima, I know that your son was born on May 7; he is only a little more than a month old. You want to see your son when you go back to Lisbon, don’t you?” “Of course, Commander.” “Then, don’t do this again. I understand your position.” When he said, “I understand your position” I said to myself “I’m home.” I figured “I’m at home. This person can only be... Even though he is the commander, a member of the regime, this guy can only be against the regime.” That’s what I figured and I was not wrong. At the end of that year... I was incarcerated, there, on the Gil Eanes for three days.

GLORIA: So, the Gil Eanes functioned as a hospital, but also as a prison...?

JOSÉ: Prison. It was like a traveling port authority. It functioned as everything. As everything. It supplied fuel, supplies, food, and so on.

Later on, in Portugal, in the restaurant Covil do Caçador of the Sociedade de Pesca Oceano, after I finished that trip... (I was a favorite employee of that company; I always

⁸ A member or a fan of the club Ginásio Clube Figueirense.

⁹ The Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado (International and State Defence Police) was a security service agency during the regime of António de Oliveira Salazar, known for prosecuting those who opposed the regime.

was. People would even tease me about it saying “Hey, man, your godparents...” and so on. Thank God. I belonged to the union. Later on, after the April 25th, I became a delegate of the driver’s union of Figueira da Foz and, at the same time, a representative of Sociedade de Pesca Oceano, everywhere. From this you can see the regard Mr. Carlos [UNINTELLIGIBLE] Cação had for me, right? And even the union; they know I did not engage in double-dealing. You would not give me 20 and I would go kill that one... Do you understand?) I had the pleasure of running into Captain Mário Esteves, at the Covil do Caçador...

GLORIA: In Figueira?

JOSÉ: In Figueira da Foz. Already after the April 25th Revolution. There I said to him “Commander, do you remember that story...?” “Yes! I recognized you immediately. I’m also one.” “Ah, I know, Commander. You know, when you said such and such sentence...?” “I said it so you would get the hint, since you had come directly from school. I had already looked up your...” He already knew... He had already investigated before he gave me... It didn’t even go on my record or anything. “I already knew who you were. It’s not common to find an engineer’s assistant with four years of industrial school.” It was rare back then, do you understand? So, he checked me out. “After that I knew who you were and that’s why I did what I did.” After that, you see, we became acquaintances, and that’s it.

GLORIA: It’s eleven o’clock. Do you want to...?

JOSÉ: A little bit more. Five more minutes.

GLORIA: You said that you received a telegram announcing the birth of your son. Where was that telegram received?

JOSÉ: We did not have a telegraph operator, but there were boats that had crewmembers that were telegraphists, who worked with Morse code, right? And there was a code for telegrams that were relatively cheap. For example, the number two meant, “A boy was born. Everything is well. STOP.” I don’t know if that was the number; I can’t remember. I can’t remember now.

GLORIA: I understand.

JOSÉ: The number four meant, “A relative died—you son died, your mother died, your father died. If it was the father was one number, if it was the mother another, if it was a child a different one. If it was a girl that had been born it was a different number. It did not take up a lot of time. It was not very difficult to figure out because they would receive that, see the number and all they had to do was look up the number on the code list. The telegraph operator would receive it, then he would call the captain of my ship over the radio and say “Hey, Abreu, we received a telegram for Zé Lima with such and such number.” He would then go there [to the code book], write [the message] on a sheet of paper and would deliver it—the errand boy or someone would deliver it to the captain.

GLORIA: So the telegram was received by another boat. Was it a Portuguese boat?

JOSÉ: Yes. It was the Saint Gabriel, if I'm not mistaken. I don't want to lie. I think it was the Saint Gabriel.

GLORIA: And then that boat...

JOSÉ: Via telephone...

GLORIA: Via telephone...

JOSÉ: Would call the boat where there were various...

GLORIA: So, those radio communications were only short distance or...?

JOSÉ: No, long distance. Long distance. They were short-wave radios, you know. We could even talk directly to Lisbon if need be.

GLORIA: So, at that time it was already...

JOSÉ: They could. I could not.

GLORIA: I understand, but there was already communication.

JOSÉ: Oh, yes! Yes. When I began working it was already possible. We already had maritime positioning devices, good radars... We had good facilities. The ones who did not have good facilities were the in the fore section—the fishermen—those did not, unfortunately.

GLORIA: They still used...

JOSÉ: No, after the April 25 Revolution, things were OK, but before that no. It was... Even all those things, communications... They were still, poor things... They were mistreated.

GLORIA: Going back to what I had asked you earlier, what kinds of preparations were necessary before you went to sea...?

JOSÉ: Clothing, essentially...

GLORIA: You would go for how many months?

JOSÉ: Six months.

GLORIA: Six months. So, you needed to take clothes, food...?

JOSÉ: No, no, no. The boat took care of the food. For us, it was essentially clothing. Essentially clothing. Clothing. No cigarettes, no liquor. The guys from the fore section, the fishermen, they liked to drink their glass of wine. They would bring a small barrel of 20-50 liters of wine. We, in the aft end, in my position, which was considered a privileged position. There was quite a bit of rivalry between prow and stern—fisherman

and engine. It was essentially clothes... Occasionally, the wives would prepare fried pieces of pork that they would place in tins, packed with lard. We used them to celebrate special occasions. I opened mine to celebrate the birth of my son. That was it. Everything else we got from the ship. Back then we could buy whiskey or brandy from the ship, relatively cheap.

GLORIA: But the boat itself had to carry certain supplies, right? Where did you get those supplies?

JOSÉ: Usually in Lisbon, in Ginjal. In Ginjal, at the Cooperativa dos Armadores de Navios de Pesca do Bacalhau.¹⁰

GLORIA: And you also took... You mentioned that you would go to Setúbal to get salt...

JOSÉ: Salt to cure the fish. To Setúbal, to Spain. I never went to Spain, only Setúbal. They also got it from Figueira. There was... You know that Figueira produces a lot of salt, right? And so does Aveiro. But their ports were not very deep. So it was riskier. Aveiro was not too bad...

GLORIA: And you had to take...? Did you need to take anything else? Like water, you could get that in Figueira...

J: We took everything. We would take cows cut in half...

GLORIA: Is that so?

JOSÉ: Yes.

GLORIA: Frozen or...? Back then did you already have...?

JOSÉ: Yes, frozen. We had freezers and refrigeration chambers. You know, back when my father was a longline cod fisherman, they even had small, muzzle-loading guns on board that they used to kill seagulls to use as bait. But when I went it was no longer like that. We already had freezers. They would take blocks of frozen squid and mackerel for bait. That's the bait the fishermen used. We also took barrels of beans, barrels of flour to make bread... I wish you could taste the bread they made back then! You would love it! Love it!

GLORIA: Why was it such good bread? Several people have told me...

JOSÉ: I don't know, Madam. I never saw such flavor... Never!

GLORIA: Could it be the flour?

JOSÉ: Maybe. The flour was like this [POINTS TO SHEET OF PAPER]—snowy white!

¹⁰ The cod fisheries boat owners cooperative functioned as a centralized purchasing agency that supplied the cod fishing fleet.

GLORIA: They referred to it as American flour, right?

JOSÉ: I don't think so, Madam. That must be... I think. Because I don't know... I'm not sure of what I'm about to say, you know. Because American flour... Why did we buy it there? Because we would arrive here in St. John's and get a lot of food supplies.

GLORIA: Is that so?

JOSÉ: Lots of it. Lots. The captains, first engineers, and cooks would get a certain percentage from the suppliers, you know. So, sometimes we did not need 50 barrels, we needed only 10, but they would get 50 even if they would get spoiled because it meant more money for the captain.

GLORIA: They gave a percentage to the captain?

JOSÉ: The sellers, the suppliers. And the engineer got it from the fuel, the diesel. And the cook also got a small percentage, smaller, but a percentage nevertheless.

GLORIA: So what did you get in St. John's.

JOSÉ: Anything that we needed; anything the boat needed.

GLORIA: Water...?

JOSÉ: Water, diesel, food... Everything.

GLORIA: Food...?

JOSÉ: All types of food needed; anything we needed at the time. When we changed to gillnets... (Later on we changed to gillnet, which were a different type of fishing modality I can talk about later. I also worked on the same boat with gillnets. Later the boat changed names too—from Sottomayor to Zé Cação. Sottomayor was the founder of the firm and then Zé Cação; the Cações were the ones that bought it.) ...Then we started buying nets also, and other gear we needed, so that we would not come from Portugal loaded and to save those ten percent, which were very useful to the captain; it was a lot of money.

JOSE: OK, Madam.

GLORIA: We stop here?

JOSE: We stop here for now. Don't forget where we were because I am very talkative, but I forget.

[SEVERAL ATTEMPTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO CONTINUE THE INTERVIEW, BUT, TO DATE MR. LIMA HAS NOT AGREED TO A DATE.]