



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: 06/13/2024

Name of Narrator: Francisco “Chiquinho” Almeida

Name of Interviewer: Eldric Reis Abreu

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This oral history was produced in 2024 as part of the *Casting a Wider Net Oral History Project* conducted by New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center.

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Background Information:

- **Name of person interviewed:** Francisco “Chiquinho” Almeida
- **Age:** 56
- **Gender:** Male
- **Occupation:** Scalloper, former cook, tugboat driver, truck driver, and factory worker
- **Ethnicity:** Cape Verdean

Interviewer: Eldric R Abreu

Translator: Eldric R Abreu

Observer(s): Laura Orleans

Transcriber: Eldric R. Abreu

Interview location: New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center

Date of interview: 06-13-2024

Language(s) the interview was conducted in: Cape Verdean Creole

Key Words: Cape Verde, Portugal, scallop, immigration, visa, green card, citizenship, regulations, open areas, closed areas, tugboat, cook, family, merchant ship, work ethic, crew, safety, weather

Abstract: In this interview, Francisco “Chiquinho” Almeida describes his journey from Cape Verde, to Portugal, to the United States and the many jobs he held before becoming a scalloper. He describes the role of language in the commercial fishing industry and how regulations have affected him and the commercial fishing industry at large.

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[00:00-05:00] Chiquinho describes the first few jobs he had when he immigrated from São Nicolau, Cape Verde to the United States. He made water tanks in Freetown, MA, worked at the Quaker Fabrics plant in Fall River, MA until it shut down and everyone was laid off, and then moved to New Orleans, LA where he worked on tugboats. He moved back to New Bedford, MA for better pay and weather and his friend helped him find a job as a cook on a series of dredgers. He describes working on the oldest ship in the United States.

[5:00-10:00] Chiquinho speaks about how he got first job on a scallop boat as a replacement for his Cape Verdean friend while the friend's wife was undergoing surgery. He speaks about the bond he formed with the brothers who owned the scallop boats he worked on and the way they appreciated his willingness to learn new skills. Chiquinho explains how he lost his job because he took time off work to travel to Portugal and grieve the passing of his mother and father in Cape Verde. When he returned, he briefly worked for a different scallop boat captain before returning to work for his original captain when there was an opening in his crew. Chiquinho describes taking additional time off of work when he was battling cancer.

[10:00-15:00] Chiquinho speaks with pride about his health, hard work ethic, and commitment to abstain from drinking, drugs, and partying. Chiquinho explains how the length of a scallop trip depends on whether an area is open or closed and explains how changes in regulations have lowered the number of pounds of scallops that can be collected in closed areas. Chiquinho explains that he has never felt the need to learn to speak English fluently because the commercial fishing industry is dominated by immigrants, many from Portuguese and Spanish speaking countries. Despite the heavy representation of immigrants in the commercial fishing industry, Chiquinho shares that he has met very few Cape Verdean scallopers.

[15:00-20:00] Chiquinho explains that many people are looking to leave the commercial fishing industry because it is no longer profitable. He describes how regulations have decreased the number of days people can go out scalloping and the areas where they can scallop, forcing scallopers to go further out into the ocean to scallop. He describes how the price of the resources needed to go on a scallop trip – fuel, ice etc. – has increased, while his catch and pay have decreased and how that has contributed to the higher price of scallops that consumers see. Chiquinho describes the number and role of each of the crew on a scallop trip and the hours and shifts they work.

[20:00-25:00] Chiquinho explains how profit is split between the boat owner, captain, and crew after a scallop trip and the special responsibilities of the captain and their first mate. He extolls the dangers of injury and death at sea, explains the safety precautions the crew take to protect themselves, and the best and worst seasons for scalloping.

[25:00-30:00] Chiquinho explains his motivation for scalloping, the joy of returning home to his family after a scallop trip, and the ways in which his crew have become a

second family. Chiquinho underscores the importance of doing something you love and explains that because he is passionate about scalloping, it makes it easier to bear the challenges associated with it.

[30:00-40:00] Chiquinho explains how scallop captains are typically multilingual and able to communicate in English with the Coast Guard in the event of an emergency, but the crew often aren't proficient in English. Chiquinho describes his previous job, working as a truck driver in Cape Verde and Portugal, and how the truck driving certification he earned in Portugal didn't translate to the U.S. when he immigrated. He explains how he tried to earn his truck driving license in the U.S. but dropped out because of the language barrier. Chiquinho explains his journey to becoming a U.S. citizen – visiting the U.S. on a tourist visa, falling in love, marrying, and having a child with a U.S. citizen, getting his green card and eventually his citizenship, and ultimately divorcing and happily co-parenting with his ex-wife. Chiquinho speaks with pride about being able to buy two homes in Cape Verde with the money he earned scalloping.

Full Transcript

[00:00-04:58] Introduction and First Question

Eldric Abreu: Let's begin. My name is Eldric Abreu. Today is the 13th of July 2024, and I am here with Francisco Almeida, also known as "Chiquinho." In this interview, I will begin by asking you some questions regarding your career journey, personal life, and family. Additionally, I'm interested in learning about your Cape Verdean culture and whether your cultural background has influenced your line of work. This interview is part of the New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center's "Casting a Wider Net" project. The audio recording and transcript from this interview will become part of the Center's archive and the NOAA VOICES archive, and may be used to develop future programs, publications, and exhibits. Since you have already mentioned your name, I will start by asking you about what you do for work.

Francisco "Chiquinho" Almeida: When I first started working in the marine industry, I always had a love and hope to work out on the sea. I came to America in 2001, then I got married and began working at a heat transfer products company in Freetown, where I made hot water tanks. After that, I started working at the Quaker Fabric plant in Fall River, but when they shut down, I was laid off. From there, I moved to New Orleans, Louisiana, and began working on tugboats. However, the heat in Louisiana was too much, and they weren't paying as well as they did up here, so I decided to move back. I was out for 28 days and had 14 days off after my first trip there; I never returned. When I came back to New Bedford searching for work on the waterfront, I had a Cape Verdean friend who used to work for the company where I was employed. We went to a restaurant known for the diverse fishermen in the community who would meet there for breakfast before leaving on their boats. We stopped by to gather some information. The restaurant was called La Vina (which is now currently Knuckleheads restaurant). One day, I was able to find a dredge boat named "Voyage," where I began as the cook. In that role, I would often get seasick and dizzy, but the captain of the boat liked me a lot

because I was a hard worker. I only went on one trip and then stayed on land for a little while. While I was on land, I met another Portuguese man who later became a great friend, and he arranged for me to work on a smaller boat named "Storm." The captain of that boat was named "Camos." The crew on the boat included the captain, Camos, a Hispanic man from Spain named Manuel, and myself. We went out fishing for a week, and when we returned, they were able to get me another job on another small boat named "Sunshine." I joined a group of three, making us a four-man crew. The owner of the boat knew that I was a hard worker, and I worked there for nine months. I had some Cape Verdean friends from my home island, São Nicolau, who spoke with the owner of a company called "Santa Maria Fishing Corp" that I had worked at. They owned two boats named "Santa Maria" and "Santa Isabelle," and the owners of these boats were brothers. The merchant ship, the Santa Maria, from New Bedford, Massachusetts, was built in 1854 and is the oldest ship in the United States, spanning more than 250 years of world history.

EA: Wow, that's interesting! My mother is from the city of Santa Maria on the Island of Sal in Cape Verde.

[05:00-10:10]

FCA: A Cape Verdean friend of mine told one of the brothers who owns the company that if there was an opportunity for work, to give me a call. One of the men called me and told me that he had an open spot on an American boat that was leaving out of Fairhaven. He brought me on since there was open space, and at the time, the maximum capacity was 1800 pounds, and they had a full crew. But he brought me on so I could help them and learn the ropes. We worked four days out at sea. While everybody else was sleeping, I would gather all the scallops together for the crew members to cook, since I didn't know how to do it yet. After I finished gathering all the scallops, I would try to cut them open to teach myself. The captain was impressed with me from the start.

EA: From the beginning, huh? He realized you were a hard worker.

FCA: Yeah, he saw that I had a desire to learn. That was in 2006, and for those four days of work, I worked hard like a servant, and he paid me \$4,000 for the trip.

EA: Wow, that is impressive!

FCA: He told me that he didn't have any more room in the crew for me to work, but now that I had experience scalloping on a boat, I should keep my clothes in the car and pass by the pier or dock when boats were leaving for their trips. He suggested that if the captains were looking for a crew member, I could get started. Later, my Cape Verdean friend, who worked for the same company, Santa Maria, decided to stay on land when he returned. He told his crew captain, Tony Sanchez, that I could replace him and take his spot. He mentioned that I also had experience as a cook on a boat because his wife was going through surgery. I filled my Cape Verdean friend's spot in the crew on the boat. Then I left with the new crew, and the captain and his brother ended up liking me as a worker. When I came back after our trip, my friend Gyne took back his role. From

then on, whenever they prepared to go out scalloping, they'd call me to help them and learn more skills, making me a complete scalloper.

EA: Were the scallop boats you were going out on bigger than the previous boats you worked on when you were out fishing?

FCA: Yes, all of the scallop boats were much bigger. I ended up staying with the Santa Maria company since they liked me as a worker. When my friend Gyne would go out on trips for another company in Fairhaven, they would call me to take his position when we went scalloping. After I had been working, they bought another boat, which they named "Lady Fatima," and I became a fixed crew member on that boat. Later, the company bought another boat named "Queen of Peace." Eventually, their father died, and each brother split the company in half, being in charge of two boats each. I continued to work with Tony Sanchez, the other brother, and his kids. I thank God for the opportunity to meet these brothers because everything I have today and the man I am today is in part due to the opportunities they gave me to work as a scalloper in their company.

Then, later in November 2019, I went on vacation to Portugal. I was also planning to get married there, but things did not go well. After that, my father became ill, and I left for Cape Verde. When I returned to America, my father died a week later, and then the week after that, my mother died. I immediately returned to Cape Verde. During this time, I had spent a lot of time away from work, and when I came back to New Bedford, I was informed that I had lost my position due to all the time I had taken off, which I understood, and we remained good friends.

Then I started working on a different boat named "Elizabeth Nicky" that was owned by some Portuguese men. The captain brought me out on a trip, and when we were returning, he called another captain and told him that I was a really good hard worker and recommended me to work on his crew. I began to work with that captain for the next year. Then my old captain, Tony Sanchez, called me and told me that he had an opening on a crew and asked if I would like my position back. I returned to work at the Santa Maria company again on the Lady Fatima boat. Later, I had to take some time off again due to health complications when I developed prostate cancer and needed surgery, so I had to take a year off of work.

[10:15-15:45]

FCA: After that, I contacted my friend Gyne again for work. We have always maintained a great friendship and mutual respect since we started working together. The owners of the Santa Maria Company and I also maintained a strong relationship, and they often called me for work when they were looking for an extra crew member to go out scalloping. Thankfully, I am doing well, and I have a lot of respect for those two brothers for everything they have helped me with. I thank God for that.

EA: Amen! Thank God for good people like that in the world. They respected you as a hard worker and appreciated that, assisting you with work. Stuff like that you cannot take for granted in life.

FCA: Yes, I agree. Especially when you are a person with a strong work ethic who is serious about life and doesn't use drugs, alcohol, or any negative substances. Being responsible and respectful at work is important. A good work ethic and serious personality will draw a lot of attention. When you demonstrate that you are educated and responsible, your employers will appreciate you as a worker and will want you to continue working for them.

EA: You make a good point. That is something I usually tell people my age, and they say I have an old-fashioned mindset. I tell them that's how I was raised. There's a mindset of hard workers and people who care about their lives.

FCA: I am 56 years old, and nobody believes I look this age. I look a lot younger, and that is because I don't drink alcohol, I don't use drugs, and I'm not someone who likes to go out partying. I prefer to go out to exercise, stay healthy, and live a calm life.

EA: You can definitely tell you've taken care of your health throughout your life. You look really young and active for your age.

EA: When you go out scalloping, how long are you usually out at sea?

FCA: It varies. Sometimes I will be out for 10 days, sometimes for 12 days, and sometimes just one week, depending on where we are going and whether it is a closed or open area. In open areas, we get what we can, whatever scallops are there. In closed, restricted areas, there are limits on the amount we can collect, which is currently 12,000 pounds per trip.

EA: Has the limit lowered?

FCA: Yes, it has. When I started, it was at 18,000 pounds, then it dropped to 15,000 pounds, and it's recently been at 14,000 pounds. It depends on government restrictions.

EA: Oh wow, that's interesting! I didn't know that. That's similar to some of the restrictions I've learned about at my job at New Bedford Ocean Cluster, a nonprofit focused on the marine industry. My role involves working with DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) community and outreach engagement efforts for underrepresented individuals and groups about opportunities in the new offshore industry. One difficulty I've realized for a lot of fishermen in the area who have experience on boats is language barriers. For many of the certifications and regulations, you must have a decent understanding of English. I have brought this up to my organization, emphasizing that we need to let developers know they should include ESL classes and workforce training to help the diverse residents of our community (like Cape Verdeans) who are interested in the OSW (Offshore Wind) industry and have experience on boats, but just need some training before they can earn the necessary certificates.

FCA: Yes, I agree. Our marine industry is more accessible as long as you have the correct work ethic. We can learn and work together. Normally, you have to take the tests in

English, and a lot of us Cape Verdeans don't know English that well. When we came over, we began working with Portuguese people and never really practiced or learned English since it wasn't necessary to work in factories or on the waterfront. Everybody has their own capacity regarding what they know and what they are willing to learn. For example, I never really needed to know fluent English because whenever I was going out on a boat, I knew what I needed to do and the work that needed to be done. I was working with a lot of Portuguese people. There have been times when I've had crew members adapt and learn some words, but never to the capacity where I needed to know it fluently.

EA: Yeah, historically, New Bedford's marine industry has been heavily populated with a diverse immigrant population of workers, like Cape Verdeans, Portuguese, and other Hispanic cultures.

FCA: Yeah, most of the time, you see immigrants doing this type of work.

EA: During your time working as a scalloper, have you worked with many Cape Verdean people?

FCA: Actually, no, not really. I've only worked with one Cape Verdean person. As far as I know, there have been three Cape Verdeans, including myself, who have worked here. One has retired, one is older than me, and that just leaves me. Mostly, I've worked with Portuguese and Spanish people.

EA: One thing I've heard from a lot of people during my work in the marine industry is that there are a lot of Hispanic people working in this industry.

FCA: Yeah, the majority of the people I have worked with have been Spanish or Portuguese. Not too many Cape Verdeans; as far as I know, there have only been three Cape Verdeans—one who retired, which leaves just me and the older man.

[16:10-19:59]

EA: You mentioned that the weight limit restrictions have changed over the years, and you told me that you have to go out further and are coming back with less supply. Can you tell me about some of these changes?

FCA: Yes, there have been some recent changes. The government has been cutting the number of days we can go out to fish and has also lowered the quantity of scallops that we are allowed to bring back. For example, in the open areas, we have to go out further because there is a lower supply, but now we have less time to be out in the water. In the closed areas, which have a larger supply, the limit on how much scallops we can collect has been reduced. This has affected us considerably, as we are unable to work as much as we used to.

EA: Have these changes been affecting you personally?

FCA: Yes, they're affecting how much I am earning at work and also the price of scallops. At one time, the price for scallops was cheaper, but there was still a large quantity available. Now, the quantity has decreased while the price has risen, negatively impacting me in two ways: I am earning less and paying more. These are reasons a lot of fishermen are trying to switch fields or pursue new careers, such as in the offshore wind industry. The commercial fishing field is becoming weaker, resulting in lower employment rates.

EA: These are the exact stories and sentiments that need to be shared with the community by those who are affected firsthand. This is actually one of the reasons my organization is focusing on the success of the New Bedford marine industry in all four of NBOC's pillar industries: offshore renewable energy, aquaculture, marine innovation and technology, and commercial fishing and processing!

FCA: Yes, the quality is lowering, which is affecting revenue in the industry and causing its overall value to decrease. The quantity we are bringing in is lower, and therefore the price has dropped, which reduces the total revenue generated from the industry. When you don't have the same access to supply to sell, it doesn't compensate for all the necessities needed for work, like gasoline, food, and ice—all of which are rising in price.

EA: It's a shame because New Bedford is known as the number one port for scalloping in the country.

FCA: Yes, we have the number one scallop industry in the country.

Laura: Actually, it's number one in the world!

EA: Well, look at that! New Bedford has the number one successful scallop business in the world! That's interesting. One of my organization's pillars is aquaculture. More fish farms are growing around the world, and it is exciting to think about how New Bedford's investment in aquaculture will lead to continued growth in our marine industry.

FCA: Yeah, when they start scallop farming and coral cultivation here in New Bedford, that will be amazing.

EA: When you go out on a scalloping trip, how many people does your boat crew usually have?

FCA: The crew consists of seven people: the captain, the captain's mate, and five other crew members. The captain's mate does a lot of the same work that the crew members do on the boat as well. Usually, the captain's mate will work with three other crew members, and one of them will typically help with splitting the shifts. For example, if we're working eight-hour shifts, one person will work for four hours while the other one rests, and then we will switch.

[20:00-25:00]

FCA: The captain does his work up in the cockpit, at the console, and on the deck, helping us cut open the scallops. Everyone has their own roles, and the work is split equally. The profits are split equally as well. The total profit made on each trip is divided 50-50 between the boat and the crew. Fifty percent of the money belongs to the boat to help cover costs and necessities, such as gas, ice, food, and any necessary repairs. The captain receives 10% of what the boat makes, and the remaining 50% of the profit is split evenly among all the crew members.

EA: That's interesting. Of course, the captains have a lot of responsibilities on the boat.

FCA: Yes, the captain holds a nice position, but they also have a lot of responsibilities. They spend a lot of time on the upper deck, ensuring that food is prepared for the crew, governing the boat, and maneuvering the vessel. The captain's mate works with sonar as well as other tasks on the boat. Everyone has multiple tasks and roles in the crew; it's all part of the contract with the owner and the captain.

EA: Can you tell me a little more about what type of tools you need when you are out scalloping?

FCA: It is all based around scallops; this job requires careful attention. Especially when we are at sea, and the waters are rough, sometimes the dredge net gets stuck, and the sea's currents can complicate things. Many people have gotten injured; some have fallen into the sea, and sadly, some have died. These are just a few reasons why safety is crucial in this job. The captain and the captain's mate stay up top to protect those on the lower deck since they have their work to do. We have our own responsibilities and must take precautions for our safety. It's essential to be cautious of ourselves, our work, and our environment to avoid putting our lives or anyone else's at risk.

EA: Is there a particular season that is better for scalloping?

FCA: Summer is the best time to go out; in the winter, nobody wants to be on those waters. Winter is much more complicated. The wind is worse, and the cold rain is awful at sea. When you're working in cold weather, you may get hit with ice or hail, and sometimes the waves crash over you, leaving you soaked and freezing. It's very unpleasant.

EA: Actually, there's a movie on Netflix based in New Bedford about scallopers. When they showed scenes of working in rough waters, I thought, "Well, this is definitely not a job for just anybody." It looks difficult and tough.

FCA: At times, we deal with weather conditions and temperatures similar to those in Alaska. It's not always that extreme, but in winter, it often is.

EA: Oh, that's interesting! Since I started my new job at NBOC, I've been learning more about vessel speed in knots, distances in nautical miles, and other interesting measurements related to the sea. It's been fascinating. I realize it may not interest everyone, but it's much easier to learn when you're genuinely interested in the subject.

FCA: Yes, it's not easy for everyone, but if you are interested in something, it makes it much easier because you enjoy it. For example, the more often you go out to sea, the more comfortable you become being on the water.

[25:00-29:50]

FCA: For example, we work hard on the boats, but when we get back to land and receive our pay the following week, it helps with our bills and supports our families. We get to relax with our loved ones, which becomes a comfortable routine that motivates us, knowing we can support those we care about.

EA: Spending all that time out on the water away from your family—do you find it difficult?

FCA: It's usually not that hard. The longest we are typically out at sea is about a week. We get excited to come back home, and sometimes we use that excitement to help us get through the week. Thinking about how nice it will be to relax and see our families helps [us] when we're feeling tired.

EA: Yeah, sometimes people might say, "Oh wow, you haven't talked to me in a week. You must not want to be friends anymore." I tell them that sometimes people are just busy. Imagine how hard it is for those working for two weeks at sea! It's not that they don't care about their families; it's because they are working hard to make sure they can support them.

FCA: Exactly! They are out there because they need to ensure they have the funds to support their families; everyone is looking for a sustainable way to do that, and we all find different career paths.

EA: Many people who work on boats say their crew members feel like family to them. Do you feel that way?

FCA: Yes, that's true. We are like family. We eat together, talk about everything, share stories, and spend plenty of time together, just like family members do.

EA: So when you're docked on land, do you keep in touch with your crewmates?

FCA: Yes, when we come back, we all go to our families, but we keep in touch. For example, right now, we're all out and free, but we let each other know when we'll meet up on Monday to ensure everyone is ready for Tuesday.

EA: What would you say is one of the hardest parts of your job?

FCA: I don't find it too difficult. It's something I enjoy doing, and I've always loved working at sea. Doing something I enjoy makes it easier, even on days when I'm really

tired and exhausted. I'm used to hard work and ready for it, but I enjoy being out on the water like I dreamed of.

EA: That's great to hear! I've realized that historically, many of the diverse workers in New Bedford's marine industry have been immigrants from islands or coastal areas. I think they tend to succeed because they are already accustomed to living and working near the water.

FCA: Yes, the most important thing is to enjoy what you do for work; then it becomes a normal part of life. I always recommend that people look for something they truly enjoy or are passionate about.

EA: Well, this has been a great story that you shared with us. Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to add about your story or your job?

FCA: No, I think I've said everything. It was a pleasure to share my story. Will you be translating this interview?

EA: The transcriptions will be in English, but we will also keep it in Cape Verdean Creole, and the audio recording will stay in Creole.

FCA: Yes, life at sea is risky because many have gone out and never returned. A lot of people have lost family members at sea; many have suffered serious injuries. But that's life. Such things happen everywhere. People can also fall at home and face serious injuries.

[31:00-41:00]

EA: A coworker was actually telling me his story about an injury on the boat. When I asked him why the crew speaks English, he explained that the captain and the captain's mate can both speak English and the same language as the crew. He told me a story about a captain who slipped, fell, and busted his head open. It was difficult for the Coast Guard to locate the boat because nobody on board spoke proper English and could share the longitude and latitude of where the vessel was located, so it took a lot longer. I told him, "Oh, well, you would think that a federal organization like that would have people who could translate," but in a serious situation like that, I see the importance of safety precautions and why communication is necessary.

FCA: Yeah, sometimes that's why it's difficult for immigrant crew members to learn English. Most of the time, the captains are multilingual and are the ones who speak English and communicate with the Coast Guard, so we just need to be able to communicate within our crew.

EA: How long have you been doing this job now?

FCA: Well, I started scalloping in 2006, so about 18 years.

EA: Did you fish back home in Cape Verde?

FCA: No, actually, I did not. When I was back home, I was a truck driver.

EA: Oh wow, that's different, but maybe similar in that you traveled distances.

EA: Which job did you enjoy more: working on the truck or on the boat?

FCA: Actually, they were both part of my dream. When I was a kid, I wanted to either drive big trucks or work out on the sea. When I first came to America, I went to school to drive box trucks. I stopped because of my limited English. So it was a great opportunity to drive trucks and work at sea, just like I dreamed of as a child.

Eldric: Oh, my dad used to be a truck delivery driver as well. One of my first jobs was working with box trucks and delivering furniture. I've told a lot of people that once you get comfortable with driving commercial trucks, driving a car feels like riding a bike.

FCA: Yeah, I agree. When I was in Cape Verde in 2004, I went to school in Portuguese to get my truck driving license since the language of instruction in Cape Verde is Portuguese. After that, I went to Portugal, where I drove ten-wheel commercial delivery trucks. I worked in the Azores Islands as a delivery truck driver, and then I went to Madeira Island doing the same. I had my Commercial Driver's License in Portugal, but when I came to America, it didn't translate over.

EA: Wow, so you have been to many different places?

FCA: Yes, before I came to America, I went to Portugal, then Madeira, then the Azores, then I went to Spain four times, and I went to Holland to see if I would want to stay there, and then I came to America.

EA: What brought you to New Bedford?

FCA: I had an aunt here, but first, I applied for a visa to go to Canada when I was in the Azores. To get a visa for Canada, I needed to go through the French Embassy and send them my information in 2001. At that time, I was living in Ponta Delgada, a municipality in São Miguel Island of the Azores; I was working there and had a house I was fixing up. I saved money in the bank, and when I went to apply for my French visa, I was not accepted right away because I didn't have a Portuguese passport, just a Portuguese residency. They said it would take 45 days to get my visa for France, and I would have to pay 175 pounds, which I didn't want to do, so I left.

I ended up asking where the U.S. embassy was, and they directed me to the right building. When I arrived, they asked what I needed. I told them I wanted to visit America for a vacation, and they gave me the documents to speak with the Cape Verdean embassy to renew my passport, which was necessary before they could approve my visa. Three days later, when my passport came in, I went back to the embassy in Portugal and

met the same lady again; she approved my visa and said they would give me six months to visit. I had to return afterward, and that was on June 26, 2001, but I wanted to stay.

When I arrived, I went to a nightclub named Bristol on Ashley Boulevard in New Bedford, and there I met an American. We started dating in November, and I moved in on January 19 of the following year. We got married, and by April 12, I had my green card. After that, we were together for a while and had a daughter, but things didn't work out in the long run, and we separated. I became a U.S. citizen, and we ended up getting a divorce, but we parted on good terms. Her family and I are still great friends, and I have so much respect for her today. I appreciate everything she did for me and how much she helped me. God blessed me when I came here.

EA: Well, that sounds like it was a great time in your life. Do you think it was easier to find a job here in America?

FCA: There are many more opportunities here. When I first came here, I worked hard and was able to make decent money. I was even able to buy two homes back in Cape Verde, something I would never have been able to do while living or working in Portugal. Thank the Lord for that opportunity.

EA: Do you have any family here, or anyone who works in a similar industry as you?

FCA: No, actually, the only family I have here is my daughter from Cape Verde and the two daughters I have here. Nobody else in my family works at sea or as a fisherman.

[41:00] End of Audio