NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: June 17, 2024

Name of Narrator: Colleen Pina-Garron

Name of Interviewer: Paula Robinson Deare

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Background Information:

- **Name of person interviewed:** Colleen Pina-Garron
- **Age:** 66
- **Gender:** Female
- **Occupation:** Retired Probation Officer/daughter of Longshoreman
- **Ethnicity:** Cape Verdean/African-American

Interviewer: Paula Robinson Deare

Translator: N/A

Observer(s): N/A

Transcriber: Paula Robinson Deare

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Abstract: Cape Verdean men have struggled for generations to work in professions guaranteeing enough income to provide for their families. They have gained a foothold on New Bedford's docks unloading and loading foreign ships, particularly because workers on those ships often don't have passports or papers that allow them to debark from the ship within the United States. Thus, longshoremen up and down the United States seaboards provide those service. Those longshoremen have come to be known to be part of the International Longshoremen's Union abbreviated as the ILA.

Colleen Pina-Garron, daughter of Henry Pina (father of eight children) a stevedore in New Bedford from the 1950's through 1970's, tells of her experience of her father's routine and work as he provided for his family and spouse. Henry Pina fought to provide himself, his peers and neighbors work unloading ships in New Bedford before many of the current safety protocols were put into place. Further, much of the storytelling here explains the family/work lifestyle, friendships and contributions of the longshoremen who worked the ports of New Bedford during this period.

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Paula: My name is Paula Robinson Deare, and I am interviewing Colleen Pina-Garron for the New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center, *Casting a Wider Net* project. So, Colleen, how would you describe growing up with your dad and the kind of work that he did?

Colleen: My dad was a man that they don't make anymore. He had eight children that he had to support, so he had many jobs, one being a stevedore on the waterfront. That was before he went to his regular job, which was construction, where he was a laborer because he was not allowed to be a carpenter. He was a proud member of the labor union for many, many years and did everything a carpenter did, but didn't get the pay. So, he learned a lot of skills. At one point, he was a bartender. He did odd jobs on the weekends. Whatever he needed to do to support his kids, that's what he did. He was a family man.

Paula: Eight children, where did you fall in the eight?

Colleen: Number six, there were two boys, my brother Larry and my brother Henry; I had two older sisters who have passed away, my oldest sister was Cynthia, my second sister was Loretta; we called her Lolly. My brother Henry was next in line, and then my

brother Larry. I have a sister, Linda, that's a little older than me, myself, and I have two younger sisters, Doreen and Gail.

Paula: So, what was it like? At the time that your dad was working on the docks, … Do you know how he prepared his day with having that many children? Did you have breakfast together?

Colleen: Absolutely had breakfast together. That was a given. When he was stevedoring, I never knew when he went because he left so early in the morning. Usually the ships came in very, very early. It was still dark. He'd come home, and we'd have breakfast. He'd get ready to go to his second job, and we'd go to school. He dressed in regular work clothes. He wore these overalls - *Madewell* was a big thing back in the day before it became a fashion line. It was work clothes. He wore the heavy-duty overalls. He always had work boots. He had a helmet. I'm sure that he was very proud of his helmet from Sullivan Foster, which was the construction company that he worked with for many years.

My dad had also been in the Navy. He was in the civilian conservation camp when he was a very young man. He learned a lot about construction, operating cranes and backhoes and that kind of stuff. Like I said, he did everything that a carpenter could do and then some and was hired on many private jobs on the weekends that he did. One that I remember that he really loved was John Bullard, the former mayor. He built a fence for John Bullard's grandmother. I remember that because it was near Christmas time. She paid him and then gave him a really nice tip. He was always grateful for that.

Paula: I'm going to take you back just a smidge. You said when your dad was stevedoring, he used to come home for breakfast and it was dark when he left. What time of the year? Was that year-round? Would that be summer or winter?

Colleen: Whenever there was a shape-up, he would go down to the docks. And shape-ups are, before they had telephones, the internet and all that, they would post a sign in the bars, the Cape Verdean bars on the bulletin boards. It would say, shape-up tomorrow, 5 a.m. or 4 a.m. or whatever. And people would show up. The men would show up at the docks because they really didn't hire women back then. The men would show up at the docks and the stevedores would be on the ship operating the cranes and the backhoes and everything to move cargo off of the ships that were coming in onto the dock, so that the longshoremen could then load them [ships] where they needed to go. Unload them or load them. Before the union, the stevedores were in charge of handing out those jobs to the men that came.

I know my dad was a stevedore, but I also know that Kevin Rose's grandfather was also a stevedore. I don't think there were many men in our community that were stevedores. Now there are, but there weren't back then.

They picked the most able-bodied and the hardest-working men. I learned a little bit about what a longshoreman was and where the term comes from. And it was, when boats came in, they would walk along the shore and ask if anybody wanted work. And

that's how the term longshoreman came up. I think my father became a stevedore because of his knowledge of heavy machinery because I think he was pretty well-respected in the community. People really looked up to him, same with Mr. Rose. But there was no playing around because those men were there to do a job. They were there to make some money to feed their babies, just like my dad was.

Paula: Having to work at 4 o'clock in the morning, 5 o'clock in the morning, based on what you called was a shape-up. A shape-up was a sign that had all the jobs that were available with the name of the ship coming in. Have you ever seen that?

Colleen: The ones I've seen just say, shape-up tomorrow and have the time that the ship's coming in. Sometimes they have the name of the ship, but most time it was just shape-up tomorrow. And there were always men that went to work the shape-ups, and not everybody got a job. I think that the stevedores were in charge of making sure they got the hardest-working people.

When my father would come home, my mother would have his lunch pail ready for him, his coffee and his breakfast. He would have his breakfast with us, and then he'd go on to work with his lunch pail and his coffee thermos and come home around 5 o'clock.

Paula: So breakfast at this point was about 7?

Colleen: Probably about 7 - 7.30 in the morning, because it was right before we went to school. In the beginning, when we lived in the Bay Village, the school was a neighborhood school. We went to school across the street, and we came home for lunch, too, until we started getting bussed to school. Yeah, we ate breakfast every morning. That was something that he made sure that he did with us.

Paula: Your dad, you have your father's ID, his stevedore ID. Did he wear that?

Colleen: He would have to. On the top of the ID, I guess that's your pass to the waterfront, because it was after World War II and the Korean War. The waterfront was always considered a target. We were on the coast, so most of the people there had to had kind of an agency that was overseeing the distribution of these licenses. On the top of my dad's ID, it says the Department of the Navy. That's who oversaw the stevedores at that time.

[5:00]

Paula: Was there a buzz or a family conversation about the possibilities of the unions that stirred excitement around your family conversations?

Colleen: Not really about the stevedores union, because I don't think that existed while my father was working. My father was a union man. He loved the union. He thought the union was the best thing. In fact, as we got older and we got our degrees and everything and went on to jobs working in offices and stuff, which is what my father used to always say, make sure you study. A book is less to carry than a pick and shovel,

because he didn't want us to have to work as hard as he did. As we got our degrees and we went on to "office jobs" he called them, he was quite proud of that, because we got vacation days and we got sick days and those were things that he didn't get. Even with the union, I don't ever remember my father taking a sick day - I don't ever. Even times that he had gone to his club meetings and had tied one on, his thing was, a hangover is not gonna to stop you from working. It should never stop you from working. So he'd get up and he'd drink eight glasses of water a day, and he'd go to work. He'd go to work.

Paula: Did your father ever take you down to the dock to show you where he worked?

Colleen: No.

Paula: But you have been down to the docks.

Colleen: I've been down to the docks on my own. I don't think that people who worked in the industry in any capacity during that time really wanted their kids to work in the industry. That wasn't someplace that they wanted us really to be. The docks were a dangerous place, too, you know, my dad was very, very protective. He had six girls and two boys. He was very protective of his girls. There was no way he was taking us to the waterfront. There was no way. As I got older and more curious, I'd walk down there. I wanted to know what was happening, but never was it anything that really interested me all that much. I'm sure just knowing him, that's not a place he would have wanted us to be. There were a lot of bars down there. There were a lot of fishermen down there, a lot of men - too protective of his girls to let us be around that.

[10:00]

Paula: You used the term "my community," but you haven't talked about the culture of the community that you come from or the place that you were living.

Colleen: At the time that my father was a stevedore, we were living in the Bay Village, which to us was the best place on the planet to grow up. All we had to do was go outside, and there were friends all over the place. We had our cousins and everybody that lived around us. The mailman lived in one apartment. The policeman lived a block up.

When I say the Bay Village, I mean the Bay Village community. It wasn't just the village. It was the surrounding area. There was Lála's store across the street from Monte's Park. It was having beauty pageants and bike decorating contests and three-day events, I used to call them, at all the clubs. It was giving out Christmas baskets to the poor, because we didn't realize that we were poor. But we were schooled to know that there were people who had less than us, too.

Paula: There were two questions. One is, can you describe for me, when you say the Bay Village, and I know it's a housing development, but it was also a larger village, as in it takes a village to raise a child. About how many blocks wide did that encompass as far as you can remember?

[15:00]

Colleen: I would say from Walnut Street south to Grinnell, that's probably about six to seven city blocks. But we also lived in

Paula: By?

Colleen: Probably by another seven or eight blocks surrounding. We had our church within walking distance. We had our own little grocery stores. Lála's, before that was located across from Monte's Park, was the place that most Cape Verdeans got all of their staples from, because we didn't have Stop & Shop to bring home *samp* for our *kachupa*. We didn't have the kind of yams [we needed].

It was a community where we were able to get [what we needed], we weren't a food desert. We were able to get fresh vegetables. We were able to get…Lála, the man that owned the store, he grew his own strawberries that he would later put out for people to buy.

We had Monte's Park, which gets a bad rap now, but was an amazing place to grow up and learn sports, and some of the greatest athletes in the world came out of Monte's Park. We had Our Lady of Assumption, which was our church. There was the Church of the Nazarene. There was a Jewish synagogue within walking distance, and anything you needed.

Paula: And the schools were there?

Colleen: The schools were there. I went to the Thomas Green School until the third grade, and then got bussed to the north end of the city to Lincoln School. But it was a community where you went to school and all of the teachers knew your brothers and sisters before you.

Paula: Because they were also from the community?

Colleen: Because they were also from the community. Some of them weren't, though. It wasn't, you know, it was a place that they sent teachers that were retiring, or they sent teachers that were brand new, or they sent teachers that just weren't that good. But there were some good teachers there. Mrs. Downey, I'll never forget her, my kindergarten teacher. We made butter in her class, and I will never forget that. Taking clarinet lessons at the band club from a very famous Cape Verdean musician, you know.

They had traditions that happened right outside of our window during New Year's. We'd have Cape Verdean traditional ceremonies like Cantares, which is bringing in the new year. And there'd be several Cape Verdean musicians all playing instruments.

And I remember being very excited as a little girl. My bedroom was on the second floor, and they'd come and play under your window. All Cape Verdean music, which we used to call Geechee music. They'd play until you gave them something to eat and some grog or a shot or something. And they always had a captain who was like the designated driver. My dad was a captain all the time. They didn't drink because they had to get rid

of the people that got too *pashkagag*, too drunk, and they would make sure that they got home safely. And then other people would join. But it was an amazing thing, and it taught me about a culture that I wouldn't have known about. I'm second generation. My parents are first generation. So they spoke the language. They kept a lot of the traditions, especially my dad, alive in my family, and so did the community.

[20:00]

Paula: I just want you to take me through a work week. Okay. So your dad would leave early in the morning, say four or five before it got light out. He would go to the docks with his badge, bring on other men to make sure that they got work in the community. And these men were . . . - Did you know who some of them were that worked together?

Colleen: Oh yeah! Everybody knew everybody in the community. And being a young person, you knew all the elders because they were like in charge of you too.

Paula: So you knew the gentleman that worked with your dad?

Colleen: Yes.

Paula: Do you know about how many that he would [work with]?

Colleen: They had them from different clubs because each club had their own set of men that would come because the *shape-up* notice would be put in all the clubs: the band club, the United Social Club, or the old Howland Street Club, and the Vets. So they [the men] were all around his [Henry] age group. And that generation of men and women did a lot to preserve Cape Verdean history in the city, but they were hard workers.

Paula: So you've given me a photo with a group of men.

Colleen: That was next generation.

Paula: That was next generation.

Colleen: Yeah, that was next generation.

Paula: So I'm just trying to get an idea about how many men that your father put to work on a regular basis.

Colleen: I think they [ships] brought more cargo in before the dikes came in. And I think that there were probably a lot more men that got hired. So I'd say probably 30 or 40, as opposed to now where the hurricane dikes are here and they can't accept the large cargo ships that they used to be able to accept.

And I know in speaking to Kevin Rose, the head of the Longshoremen's Union, that that's their biggest problem right now is getting work. And that surprised me because it was different.

Paula: Yeah, he said about 16 men now. So about half the men are employed now than were employed during your father's time.

Colleen: Yeah, and that would depend on what was coming in. You know, sometimes they probably wouldn't have more than 10 men. Sometimes more than 30 men because they needed to get this cargo unloaded. There might be another ship coming in the next day so they had to get the ship out of there.

Paula: But generally speaking, about 30 men from the community, not necessarily Bay Village specifically, but many of them fathers and dads.

Colleen: Most of them were from the Bay Village community because at the time most Cape Verdeans lived in one area of the city and that was in the south central area.

Paula: What were Saturdays like?

Colleen: Saturdays, my father liked to get things done around the house. But if he could go bartend at his club, he was one of the founding members of the United Social Club, the old Highland Street Club. And he was very proud of that and put a lot of work into that.

He might be replacing a roof, which he did more than once. He might be doing an extra job. But that was the day that my dad used to take us for rides.

And we'd go on mystery rides either to the beach and he would take out, he always carried a pocket knife and he would cut periwinkles, we called them piniwinkles, periwinkles off the rocks on the beach and we'd be so grossed out. But he'd take them out with his knife and he'd eat the periwinkle. Or we'd take, he would call them mystery trips.

And we knew where we were going. We were going to Onset to visit my great aunt and her daughter to wash her dishes after we pumped the water.

Paula: And then what kind of a place was, who was your great aunt?

Colleen: Her name was Mary, I believe, because we called her Auntie Titia. And that basically means Auntie, Auntie.

Paula: And she was to your dad?

Colleen: That was my father's aunt. That was his only aunt. Although with my research, I think there may have been another one that went back to Cape Verde, but that was his only aunt and he adored her.

[25:00]

Paula: Your dad's mom?

Colleen: This is my dad's father's mother - I mean sister [aunt], I'm sorry. And he adored her. She lived in the original home that my great-grandmother and great

grandfather Ludwina and Eugenio Pina bought when they came to this country in probably the early 1900s.

Paula: And do you know how they came and where they came from?

Colleen: They [Ludwina and Eugenio Pina] came from Brava and they brought their ... I think there was seven sons and their daughter, although I think there was another daughter. They came together and they were young. My great grandfather passed away shortly after they came. Ludwina was a force to be reckoned with from everybody that I've talked to about her. She bought land at St. Patrick's Cemetery when they first opened. So I know there's a whole Pina plot there and a lot of family history. But they owned an old house. I believe the name of the road was Pina Road because it was unpaved. Back in the day in Onset, they used to call where Cape Verdeans lived *Jungle Town or Africaville*. And so you had to go down this really dirt road. They had no indoor plumbing. That's the first outhouse I ever saw too, which kind of fascinated me. And like I said, she had a pump where you had to go and pump the water and heat it up on the stove before you did the dishes. And that house remained in the family for a very long time until my great-aunt's daughter, Mary, passed away. And then I don't know what happened to it after that.

Paula: But you know that the family cemetery is there.

Colleen: Yes. And a lot of the family is buried there, including a cousin. And I want to say she died about 20 years ago, but she got buried there because there was land there for her to be buried there.

Paula: And your uncles, your father had six brothers?

Colleen: No, my father only had two brothers. The uncles that came over, there were like seven of them, his uncles. And he adored his uncles and his aunt.

Paula: Oh they were his uncles.

Colleen: Yeah. They were all very, very close. In fact, his [dad's] name isn't officially Henry, that's what he went by, or Hank. They called him on his job, or *Jick*, which is *Jack*, which his family called him. But everybody else called him Harry. And he was named after one of his uncles. And I believe his name was Henrique. So that was his real name. He just didn't use it.

Paula: Okay. So back to New Bedford. You talked about the band club and some of the other clubs, but it's hard without seeing, to put a picture on the role that they played, they're sort of along the perimeter of the community you talk about. And your father worked part-time after he came from the docks and then spent the day doing construction. Then he would spend evenings working also with this club, which provided community activities for the young people?

Colleen: Well, yeah, they did. But their primary thing was they had music on Sunday afternoons. I just wanted to clarify something. One thing my dad did was make sure he was home at night with his kids.

[30:00]

Paula: I'm just get a whole picture of your dad's day. So in the morning, he might, on a standard, he would spend two to three hours at the docks at a shape-up, making sure 30 or so men got work, including himself. And they would unload whatever ship has come in from whatever exotic place it may have come from. And then he'd come home to have breakfast with the children, which your mom had prepared. And we'll talk more about your mom in a few. And then he'd see you off to school for the day, and then he would go off to a second job.

Colleen: His primary job.

Paula: His primary job in construction. Primary because that was reliable work when the ships weren't able to...

Colleen: And the ships weren't in every day. It wasn't every day.

Paula: And then in the evening, he would go work at one of the local community clubs.

Colleen: No. He'd come home.

Paula: Oh, he'd come home in the evening.

Colleen: He'd come home in the evening. After work. When he worked on projects, extra projects, when he worked at his club, it usually was on the weekends - It was usually on the weekends. My daddy was home every night after work. And when he came home, his supper was ready. And we were waiting for him. Because he had a lunch pail that whoever got to him first got whatever leftovers in the lunch pail. [laughter] And he would have change in his pockets, but he didn't like pennies because he always said that they put- *He'd call them brown boys* - and he always said they made holes in his pockets. So I would wait for all of my sisters to run to my dad and get whatever was left over in the pail. I wasn't interested in that. I got the brown boys and he always made sure he had that for me. Once in a while I get a banana, but mostly the brown boys.

And then he would come home. My mother would have supper waiting. He'd go upstairs and take a shower because my dad worked with all kinds of materials. And I remember

him working with asbestos and coming home covered, looking like a ghost. We made fun of it at the time. So he'd take his shower and the table was already set waiting for him.

And he'd come downstairs and he'd read his newspaper for a little while. And turn on Walter Cronkite. My dad was a news hound! And we couldn't understand it at the time before cable. Imagine that, that he would watch every single newscast that he could get back in the day.

But yeah, he'd be home at night. And then my mother would say, okay, dinner's ready or supper's ready. And my father would have to sit down first and she would bring him his plate unless he'd said "feed the kids first."

And that's part of the culture. And then when his news was done, he'd go to bed early. He was early to bed, early to rise.

[35:00]

Paula: And so that was the typical work week. And so then on the weekends, you talked about the band club at one point had a band where kids would learn to play instruments.

Colleen: The band club was a place that, yeah, they were musicians that hung around, very famous musicians too. And on the weekends they would give music lessons and music was really important to my father. It was so important, he didn't make my sisters play an instrument, but he made me play one. And so when I wanted to choose which instrument to play, I wanted to play the trumpet. And he said, no, no, that's not a lady like instrument. I was so angry. He wanted me to play the flute. And I said, I'm not playing the flute, even though that was my second choice. I ended up playing the clarinet, which he was real happy about because his friend Eddie Pinto taught clarinet at the band club. So every Saturday morning I'd go with other Cape Verdean kids and take music lessons at the band club. That was part of the band club. That was part of it.

Then on the weekends sometimes he had hobbies, which he also included me in. He used to like to raise birds. And at one point he had a contract with Patnaude's Aquarium and he raised all of their finches and parakeets. And I don't like birds. I don't like birds to this day, but he used to make me take the eggs out of the nest because apparently the mother birds could sometimes crush the eggs - and I put them under a light. He wouldn't do it because he was afraid that his hands were so big that he would crush the eggs. And he'd say, put the glove on, put the glove on, but those birds, when you tried to take the egg away from them, were not happy. And so I don't like birds to this day - but he did that. He was a gardener. He was an incredible gardener. And [he worked on] anything around the house that needed to be done if he wasn't at the club.

Paula: So I want to just take you back to the clubs a little bit. So there were several clubs that were along the outskirts of the community and the clubs were based culturally?

Colleen: Kind of, and they weren't on the outskirts. They were in the middle of the community. For example, across from the Bay Village, from the beginning of the Bay Village at Walnut Street, even prior to that, there was the Crystal Cafe. That was for more newer immigrants. And then there was a place called the Sociedad, and the Sociedad's main purpose was to supply goods for people on Cape Verde. So they would have all of these barrels that they would send back to Cape Verde with stuff to support Cape Verdean people. And then you come a little further down on Acushnet Avenue and you had the Bomb Shelter, which was a great place. It was a great place until I was in college, and was originally a bomb shelter in a man's house. You go a little further up the avenue.

Paula: And that was a cultural?

Colleen: Yeah, those are all Cape Verdean clubs.

Paula: And they were all representing different islands?

Colleen: Some of them, yeah, were more leaning towards the island that they came from. But the majority of people that came from Cape Verde here were from Brava. Although you'd have Ja Fog from Fogo, Sao Vincent. But most of the Cape Verdeans that came here came from Brava. As you continue down the avenue across from the Bay Village was the Band Club. And then later there was the *Biska* Club, which is an offshoot, but the whole community was Cape Verdean.

Paula: Now the Biska Club, is that where the card game that they played?

Colleen: Right, Biska is a card game. And that's how it started out. A lot of the clubs started out as places for men to go and play cards.

Paula: And men from specific islands spoke the patois or the language of the island.

Colleen: Kriolu, yes. And my dad and my mother spoke it fluently and used it to keep things from us so I don't really speak.

Paula: And so your mom was also involved in these community activities, these village activities to not only support the men, but to provide activities for the growth and the well-roundedness of the children.

Colleen: Yeah, my mother was a Spitfire, she organized the first women's auxiliary of the United Social Club or the Highland Street Club. And she was the president for 35 years. And what the auxiliary did, because they wouldn't vote another president in, she tried to quit. In fact, I have her gavel upstairs. They were like the philanthropic arm of the club, of the United Social Club. And every club had a women's auxiliary.

Paula: So the United Social Club, where your mom was...

Colleen: And my dad, yeah.

Paula: And your dad, okay, so what kinds of activities did they do?

Colleen: They had Christmas parties. Every Christmas we would sit on crates with boards across them and watch Woody Woodpecker and we'd get a bag of hard candy. I don't like that either. Ribbon candy and an orange and an apple and cookies and everything. All the orange soda that you wanted, they'd have that. They would have, my mother, and she took me on this when I was really little. That's how I found out I was poor. At Christmastime, they would arrange Christmas baskets and deliver them. None of them drove, my mother never drove in all of the years.

[40:00]

Paula: So how did you get the Christmas baskets to the families?

Colleen: She [mom] had a little red wagon. And we put the baskets there. I mean, they would assemble them at the club. And they already had people who were designated. And it was all in one area. So we'd walk with the little red wagon and drop off the baskets. And it was the first time I ever saw kids that didn't have anything. And it had an impact on me.

Paula: What kind of things were in the baskets

Colleen: The thing I remember most was, I remember one time we went and …

Pauline: Was it like turkey or ham?

Colleen: Yeah, that kind of stuff. But we went to this house and they were eating boiled macaroni. That's all they had. And we went into the house and there were candy canes in the baskets and the kids went nuts. I remember I was little and I was thinking, I don't even like candy canes.

Paula: So they also did fundraisers, your mom?

Colleen: Yes.

Paula: And the ladies in the neighborhood?

Colleen: They did scholarships. They did book scholarships, which were even more helpful once they found out that the universities were taking our money and subtracting it from our total package. So they changed them to book scholarships. These were really smart women who didn't have a lot of book education, but were so [resourceful].

Paula: So when you say the universities were taking your money, you mean you were getting scholarships. And as long as it was named scholarship, the university could take the money without giving it to the [awardee]?.

Colleen: Right. They would deduct it from the scholarship package. And they weren't huge scholarships, but they really helped. They really helped with the stuff that you needed. And I think even after that, they started making the checks out directly to us. Get what you want before you go to school. And they were very, very helpful.

But they had dinners for the homeless. Every Sunday, there was live music at the United Social Club. And that was the time that my dad would go. They'd have their meetings in the morning. And then at about three o'clock until seven, the live bands would play. My dad would take a microphone. And I have recordings of him putting a microphone on the stage to record these bands. And I have those recordings.

Paula: You knew the families that worked with your dad on the docks. Did you know the children and the mothers of those families that also worked on the docks? Were they part of the groups that participated in the activities?

Colleen: Anybody that was Cape Verdean and grew up in that neighborhood knew everybody that worked at the docks. All of the women that worked in the fish houses. All of the *lumpers* that would bring us fish. My uncle used to always come with a box of fish. And I could hear my mother yelling at him that it better be scaled because she wasn't scaling any fish. It was hard work, and a lot of people from our community had no choice but to do this work.

[45:00]

Paula: When you say everybody, you say your father worked with about 30 men. Did you know specifically those families?

Colleen: Yes. Yes. Because if they were your next door neighbor, you went to Girl Scouts with them or Boy Scouts. Or you went to church with them. Or as you got older, you knew people because you went to the clubs and everything. And everybody had to know everybody because everybody in that neighborhood was responsible for everybody's kids. There was none of that, don't talk to my kid like that. Don't, you know, whatever. If you did something wrong before you even got home, someone knew about it. And so you had to know everybody in the neighborhood because eyes were all over you. But we grew up together. Our parents socialized together. It was the same people, you know. Al Rosario, I remember him. I remember Mr. Alves who used to, I think his name was Jolie Alves, who used to run the Longshoremen's Union. Robert Alves, his son. It was generational, you know. My brothers didn't work on - well one of my brothers did work on the docks.

My brother Larry worked as a stevedore, I mean as a longshoreman. And he would answer anytime they had a shape up. But you know, my other brother didn't follow my father there, wasn't worth it. He was working full time and making good money. But if you look at the families that worked in industry, they had other family members that worked in that industry too, you know. And they did really, really hard jobs.

Paula: So as you grew up, and you're seeing these 30 or so families come together, plus the extended families that were working and others in the community up until you go on to high school, even though you're bused. Was your dad still working as a longshoreman through your high school years?

Colleen: No. My dad was - my dad had me at an older age. I think my dad was 41 or 42 when he had me. So when I went to high school, he was kind of finishing up his career in construction. And he had fallen off of a roof and it really shook him. And so he was starting to get a little afraid to climb ladders and stuff. So while I was in high school, he retired. And I think he was in his 60s when he retired.

Paula: And was that around the time he also retired from the longshoreman?

Colleen: No, I think that happened a lot sooner than that. Yeah, I think as he got older, the only job that he really had was his club when he'd go down and bartend when they needed. He even stopped doing roofs and stuff like that. You know, he was concentrating more on his hobbies, his projects that he had going on because he always had something going on.

Paula: And the majority of the family had gotten older now. Did you see this pattern among the other men in the community as they aged?

Colleen: Yes, yes. And a lot of, I think that - there was the same message from the dads and the moms. This is not something we want you to have to do, working in a fish house, because everything was, for women, was done by hand. Women had the filleting and the scaling job before machinery came out. And I know in my senior year in high school, there was no way I was staying because the job market was so terrible. And my options were working in a factory or a fish house. And that is something that I was not brought up to do. There's no shame in it, but I think they recognized everything that came along with jobs like that.

Paula: They put in the labor so you wouldn't have to.

Colleen: Yeah.

Paula: So what were some - did you see some of the injuries with others, arthritis or other injuries with the men and the women as you were growing older?

Colleen: Lots of people, especially the women in the community, had like severe arthritis from working with wet fish in cold water. Many of them had a carpal tunnel from working that fish knife. You know, I can't even imagine that working in a job under those conditions couldn't contribute to many, many illnesses that these people, these women especially had in those industries.

Paula: Pounding on your body's constant repetition. So, and the same thing with the men as they age with the heavy lifting.

Colleen: Yeah, my dad stayed in pretty good shape, but he paid for all those years of construction and all years of working, you know, on the boat and everything else. He paid for that. He didn't have arthritis. Like I said, he worked with asbestos and he ended up having lung cancer and eventually that's what killed him. So yeah, a lot. And in the whole fishing industry, that's not somebody you saw. That's not something you saw old people getting into because older people, that was a young person's job. You

know, I'm not so sure that if my father had not been a stevedore operating the equipment instead of unloading all of those ships, that he would have lasted that long in that job because he did that all day long as his job, you know. But he did what he had to do - he did what he had to do.

Paula: You were the second generation of Cape Verdeans that came in [the United States]. And so as a second generation person you settled in New Bedford in the Bay Village community, which you've described. And so that second generation from families that worked the docks as longshoremen and women who worked for the fish houses, they [first generation] basically set the economic foundation for their community to begin to buy houses.

Colleen: Yeah. My dad, not so much. My dad was always afraid because he worked in construction. He got laid off in the winter-time and he was always afraid of carrying a mortgage, even though he's the best person I ever knew with money besides my brother. But he lived to see all of his children purchase homes and got to inspect each and every single one of them, you know. And I know that made him proud - I know that made him proud. And each of his kids are college educated and I know that made him proud.

I think that whole first generation of Cape Verdeans, that was an incredible group of people. And they wanted more for their kids. Education was like key. You know, you didn't have a choice. You did your homework, you went to school, that was your job, you know. And you know, at the time, if you wanted to leave after high school, that was okay, but you had to get your high school diploma. My dad lived to see his kids go to college and I'm sure that was beyond his wildest dreams. Right now, he has my nephew who is an Air Force Academy graduate, just retired as a lieutenant colonel. He has a great granddaughter who is an attorney for HUD. He has a granddaughter who is an architect, one of the few women, black women architects. He was always proud of me being a probation officer. Uh, you know, my sister has been a guidance counselor. My other sister was a daycare provider. My daughter and my son - my daughter is an actress and a writer and a comedian.

Paula: She's a television writer who's had programs on PBS.

Colleen: Yeah, she's a good, she's a good kid. And my son is a teacher, he has taught autistic kids. He's finding his calling in that. He is also a talented musician who has, his band has opened for Arrested Development in Newport. He's, he's, um, he's an incredible, incredible guitar player. His friends call him Jimi Hendrix.

Paula: And so all of this, you basically could put on the pinhead and the attributes of your father's work.

Colleen: My father and my mother, but my mother really didn't work full-time until we were totally in school. My dad was a great provider. He was a great provider and even Christmas, I mean, he was very, very, he, he was very, um, guarded about his feelings. He was very guarded, but he, he always emphasized the importance of family and how that is the most important thing.

And [jokingly], I think I would have killed myself if I had eight kids. [laughter] Um, but he did it with grace - he was a handsome, generous, honest man. And I hope I'm still making him proud.

Paula: It's excellent. And we are just about an hour. Excellent!

[48:19] End of Audio