

# “Having Our Say”

Voices from the Cape Verdean Community

Butch’s Grandmother was one of the first people in town with a television-



“I remember watching the Joe Louis fights... the screen was about that big and you used to put a magnifying glass on it to blow it up”

– Bernardino “Butch” Silva

Bernardino “Butch” Silva  
October 23, 2010

Interview with Bernardino “Butch” Silva  
Conducted October 23, 2010  
By Ann Marie Lopes

## *Beginning of File*

ANN MARIE LOPES - The interviewer is Ann Marie Lopes, and it is Saturday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, and I am here interviewing --

BERNARDINO SILVA - Butch Silva.

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- and --

BERNARDINO SILVA - My Christian name is Bernadino Silva.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And your date of birth?

BERNARDINO SILVA - My date of birth is June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1932.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Now, you told me that your grandfather was a whaling captain.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Right, my grandfather.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK, and...

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - His name was Captain Valentina Rosa.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - OK.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - He is listed in the archives of the Whaling Museum. I'm sure I've seen the scroll at one time where he had some of the trips that he had made, but I never did go back, and I'm not sure if I ever was at the library or if it was at the Whaling Museum that I, that this history of my grandfather's log on one of his trips.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Did he sail out of Cape Verde or did he sail out of New Bedford?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Well, he sailed out of Cape Verde, then he came to New Bedford.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - OK. What island?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Sao Nicolau. No, I, I'm thinking of my father. My grandfather came from the island of Maio, and he learned to be -- he was a deckhand and -- you were talking about women earlier -- and a woman taught him how to shoot the stars.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - What's shoot the stars?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - That's the way they used to find where they were the --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - To navigate.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Navigate.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, wow.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - And that's where, you know, from the ability for him to be a good seaman, I guess that's how he ended up being a captain and then owning his own boat.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, do you know the name of the boat? ]

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I... No. My memory's not too good. Maria Bark I think was the name of it, but I'm not sure, but it's listed in the archives. And the ship went down off of New Zealand somewhere.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Mm-hmm. Did he die then?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh yeah, all hands were lost. The only thing they found was the name of the ship.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, OK.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, so at that time, too, I probably would have been -- I would have been a rich boy today probably because he owned two houses on Water Street.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, really?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, so...

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Do you remember the address?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, no, I don't remember the address, and that happened... When that happened my mother and aunt became orphans and ended up in St. Mary's Home, and it was my godmother, Barbara Lopes, that went and took my mother and my aunt out of there.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - What happened to their mother?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Whose?

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Well, your grand- --

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - My grandparents, I never knew any of my grandparents.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - OK.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - My grandfather's wife died, and she's buried at St. John's Cemetery. Her name was Anna Maria Livramento Lopes. No, no, it's... Well, it's Rosa, you know, after my grandfather, you know, she married my grandfather, so...

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Well, do you know what year he came over?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Years are hard to remember.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So this is your mother's father we're talking about.

BERNARDINO SILVA - My mother's father, yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK, and so he...

BERNARDINO SILVA - As a matter of fact, there's a picture of him right over there if you want to take a picture later on.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, sure.

BERNARDINO SILVA - A picture of him and his wife.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, that's nice.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So it's too bad your mother ended up going to St. Mary's Home.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah, yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - How old was she, do you know?

BERNARDINO SILVA - I'm not sure. She had to be less than 15 because that's when she got married to my father.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Fifteen.

BERNARDINO SILVA - At 15.

ANN MARIE LOPES - They marry young.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah, back then, yeah, yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So when your grandfather came over, did he come over by himself?

BERNARDINO SILVA - I don't know. The father, the history of my grandfather I really don't know. We don't know that much.

ANN MARIE LOPES - You can sit back if you want.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah. We don't know. I don't know that much, because one of the things, unfortunately, the history, that part of it wasn't passed down. You know, there wasn't that much discussion with either my mother or my father about, you know, their travels.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Did you know your grandparents, your grandfather?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Not at all.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I knew no grandparents on either my mother or father's side. I had no aunts and no uncles in this country, but the family that I'm related to is, you know, the Ramoses. My grandmother was a Ramos.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Your mother's mother?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - My -- yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - OK, was a Ramos.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Where did she come -- what island did she come from?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I'm not sure. Probably -- I'm not sure. Must have been Sao Nicolau, yeah, Sao Nicolau, right. That's where my father came from, too, Sao Nicolau, so... But, you know, the father -- the history of anybody on, you know, relatives other than... You know, I got lots of cousins and stuff in New Bedford, but far as uncles and aunts on both sides, my mother and my father's side. My father, none of, none of his family came to this country.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Really?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - So he was the first one from his family to come over?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I believe so.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - From what island?

BERNARDINO SILVA - Sao Nicolau.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. So how old was he when he came over?

BERNARDINO SILVA - I'm not sure, but he came here, I believe... As a matter of fact, I got his -- I found these not too long ago. This is my father's passport from when he came out of St. Vincent, and it says, I believe the date is dated 1918.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, yeah.

BERNARDINO SILVA - So I'm not sure when he came, but I do have some documents that I have to have interpolated, you know, guys have somebody read to me about when.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Right, because this is in Portuguese.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - You said he was -- it looks like he was 26.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah, he was a young man. As a matter of fact, this is my father's record of him when he was in the service.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Ah, OK, World War I?

BERNARDINO SILVA - No, in Cape Verde.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, the -- he was in the service --

BERNARDINO SILVA - Military, yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, wow.

BERNARDINO SILVA - He was not only in the military but he was also, from what I understand -- the woman that I married, her father knew my father in Cape Verde and he said he remembered he used to be so proud when he saw my father in his white uniform walking, you know, when he was a policeman there.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Did he ever tell you stories about being a policeman?

BERNARDINO SILVA - No, my father never talked. You know, he never shared with us anything about Cape Verde.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Really?

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - I wonder, I wonder why that was.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Well, (laughter) I think my father left Cape Verde because he had a child there, and I didn't find out that we had a brother there until I was, well, 16, and it was funny the way my sister told me, and she said, "Hey, Butch, we got to buy your brother a cow." I said, "What are you talking about?" Then she told me that, that my father told her that we had a brother in Cape Verde, and at that time, you know, I guess I was in, I was in Voke at the time, and we chipped in (laughter) to send, you know, to send money to him so he could buy a cow, so...

ANN MARIE LOPES - So how many brothers and sisters did your father have?

BERNARDINO SILVA - I don't know.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK, they --

BERNARDINO SILVA - I don't, I don't know. From what I understand, somewhere along the line somebody said maybe nine brothers and sisters, but because of the fact that we never went there I really don't know, and...

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. This is great to have.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah. I'm going to somehow...

ANN MARIE LOPES - You need to preserve it.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah, I'm going to put it in a what-you-call -- document it, and I don't know if they're, you know, that would be interesting to you, you know, in terms of what your research is.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, absolutely.

BERNARDINO SILVA - But here's a picture that I found that my father had in his, in his stuff, and --

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, it's all --

BERNARDINO SILVA - -- you could see -- it's all in, all in Portuguese -- you can see how tall that man is, and... (laughter)

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's your father?

BERNARDINO SILVA - No, that's, that's one of my father's uncles.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK.

BERNARDINO SILVA - One of my father's brothers.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Wow.

BERNARDINO SILVA - In Cabo Verde.

ANN MARIE LOPES - They, they're not smiling.

BERNARDINO SILVA - No.

ANN MARIE LOPES - (laughter)

BERNARDINO SILVA - And this one is a picture of -- that would be one of my father's brother's daughter, because in the back here, as you can see, in Portuguese it says he sent this to him, and it's call him Tio.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Right.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Tio means uncle.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yep.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - It's dated 2/1964.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah. That one is dated, right.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Mm-hmm.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - And here's another one of another relative, I believe, that sent, she sent this to my father from the Republic of Uruguay, so --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Who is she?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - -- somewhere along the line --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - She was traveling.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, that's... Yeah. Somewhere along the lines somebody mentioned that we had one of my father's brothers landed on one of the islands, and I'm not sure which one it was, so that might've been the island, you know, that he might've been in, but again, you know, far as the history I really don't have.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Is this right? It says 18<sup>th</sup> of June, 1733?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Wow.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Mm-hmm. That's original. This is --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - How can that be? That's extremely old.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh, no, the -- on the card it says that?

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Yeah, down here.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Maybe that's when the card was issued, when they probably made them. That's a postcard.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Yeah.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - And that's probably the company that made it.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - OK, so this isn't actually someone you know?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, I don't know. I'm assuming that that was one, that would be one of my first cousins, because I guess back then it was relatively easy to, you know --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Turn, to turn yourself into a postcard.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah. (laughter)

ANN MARIE LOPES - What else do you have there?

BERNARDINO SILVA - These are also some pictures of, of treasures of my father's, but this is --

ANN MARIE LOPES - Is that your father?

BERNARDINO SILVA - No, I don't think so. I believe that's probably one of his brothers, too.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, it says his friend, his friend Jose Manuel.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah. As you can see, this is, this is the, the record keeping process that they had when my father was in the service. See, the date's over there. I don't know -- I got to get it to see if that says what age he was or when he was born.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Well, it says -- yeah, it does. It says he was born February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1891.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah, OK, yeah. That sounds about right. Oh, do you read a little bit of Portuguese?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Little bit.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And then it says in...

BERNARDINO SILVA - Sao Nicolau.

ANN MARIE LOPES - I don't know what it says, but it definitely says Cape Verde. I can't read it.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah, right.

ANN MARIE LOPES - It's the son of, and then he's got his --

BERNARDINO SILVA - Antonio DiMassio.

ANN MARIE LOPES - DiMassio Jose Silve.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Right.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And -- oh, it does, it says her name. She's got a long name --

BERNARDINO SILVA - Who?

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- doLivramento. This mother?

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah. Livramento, (laughter) Livramento.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Maria doLivramento Ramos.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And it tells where lived, and yeah, on the island of Sao Nicolau.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Mm-hmm.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Let's see what this part was... I don't know the beginning of it, but this is great.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And...

BERNARDINO SILVA - And as you can see, each -- if you turn this, this is embossed with --

ANN MARIE LOPES - Official.

BERNARDINO SILVA - -- official.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah.

BERNARDINO SILVA - I guess this was his record, like we got -- in this country we have, when we get discharged we have what they call a DD214 that has the history of our service connection, and I'm assuming that's what this is, because each page is stamped with an official stamp. Of course, this is all in Portuguese. But this guy's supposed to sit down with me and ex-, you know, and...

ANN MARIE LOPES - Who would fill this out? Would your father -- would this be your father's writing?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, it was, there was a lieutenant. His -- one guy read it real quick for him. There's a lieutenant's name in there someplace that probably did that. Somewhere in -- I don't know if it's on that page or the next page -- it mentions this lieutenant.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - That might be that part of it that I can't read.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - This is great.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, I found that by accident. I was cleaning out my garage, and I was getting ready to throw this stuff away. That was in this box, and I said, "Let me look, and I found that stuff there."

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - And it was a treasure.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - OK. So do you know how your mother and father met?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, I can tell you that, too. As a matter of fact, I can show you their marriage certificate. I found this one day when I was looking in the Bible.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Uh huh. That's your family Bible.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, information. My mother's... I believe this is their marriage certificate.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Yep. Oh, so they married here in New Bedford.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yep.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - And it says August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Wait a minute, yeah, that over there, that should have the information on my father, on his birth and everything, right?

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Um, not, not necessarily on his birth. The group -- oh, wow --

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, no, this is my mother's certificate of birth.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Well, this one says that your father was 32 and your mother was 15  
--

BERNARDINO SILVA - Right.

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- when they got married.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Right.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And it was his first marriage, they said, for both of them.

BERNARDINO SILVA - See, here's the, the proof of my mother's there. I had said to you  
my, my mother's -- she's cap-, she's Valentina Rosa. This is my mother's birth  
certificate. It says Ana.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Anita.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah, Livramento, and then was on there on her gravestone. My  
brother found it, my brother Dennis found her grave in St. John's Cemetery, so we  
put a stone there.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And it was an unmarked grave?

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - In which cemetery? The one over --

BERNARDINO SILVA - St. John.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, OK.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Right in the area of where that little chapel is. It's right in that  
same row when you come in.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's great that he --

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - -- found it. So she was born in 1907, and, let's see, it says place of  
birth -- she was born here.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah. Yeah, my mother was born here.

ANN MARIE LOPES - OK. So how did they meet? Do you know?

BERNARDINO SILVA - No, I have no idea.

ANN MARIE LOPES - When your father came here, what did, what kind of work did he do?

BERNARDINO SILVA - I don't, I really don't know, but my father was a barber, he was, he was a musician.

ANN MARIE LOPES - What did he play? What instrument?

BERNARDINO SILVA - It was a, it was a violin. He played violin, and of course he played all the other instruments, too, but his main instrument was the violin, and... Yeah, he was a part of the old Cape Verdean -- (laughter) I don't know if you ever heard of them, it had to do with the Ultramarine Band Club. I'm trying to think, what was this, the name.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Are you talking about the Beneficent?

BERNARDINO SILVA - No, you're talking about Sociedad.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah. It's different.

BERNARDINO SILVA - No, there's a different... Sociedad -- you know about the Sociedad?

ANN MARIE LOPES - No, tell me.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Sociedad, from what I understand, was where everybody that came here went. I guess it was some kind of insurance club, and the building, this -- you know where it is, right?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Where it was.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Where it was... Well, technically --

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yes.

BERNARDINO SILVA - -- when Reggie Cruz did that building they signed a document where they said there would always be a space for the community to meet there, and that they made -- where they got their office, that space -- and I know you remember Valentina.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah.

BERNARDINO SILVA - And that space was like the hall there when you go in there, and that space is supposed to be available to the community whenever they want to use it, because that was part of his package, I guess when he bought the property and fixed that place up as an apartment building.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And that was part of the old building?

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah. It is the old building.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So it's still there.

BERNARDINO SILVA - That is the old building!

ANN MARIE LOPES - I need to go see that.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - It's still there.

BERNARDINO SILVA - It's right -- yeah, it's still there. But it's nowhere near what it was back then. As a matter of fact --

ANN MARIE LOPES - It was an incredible building.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Oh, yeah. They had a dancehall there. I... (laughter) I was in high school at the time, and it was New Years, and my mother said, "You're going to be my date tonight." (laughter) and I was her date for her dance at the Sociedad. They call it Sociedad.

ANN MARIE LOPES - They had the Festa Bonita -- wasn't it Miss Festa Bonita at some point? That was a while ago.

BERNARDINO SILVA - It was very festive, because it, you know, the men dressed formally, the women, they all had gowns and stuff, so it was very formal, I really don't remember, per se -- you know, after I looked at the picture I remembered. (laughter)

ANN MARIE LOPES - And so your father belonged to this club -- you said it was like the Ultramarine Band Club?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Well, he was a member of the Band Club. I don't know if he ever was an officer there, but I remember when... See, Band Club -- I don't know if in your lifetime if you, if you knew it -- there was a third floor there where the women used to do the cooking, and they used to have -- that's where they did all the cooking and they sold their meals up in, up there, so... And that's also where the men used to go play their cards, so that was their haven.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, OK.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - 'Cause I remember one time I went there and I sort of knocked at the door, (laughter) and somebody came down and said, "What do you want?" in Cabo Verde said, in Cabo Verde said, (Crioul), so I said to him, "I come to look for my father. Is he here?" He says, (laughter) said, "No." (phone ringing)

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - But you were saying you went to see, to find your father and the guy said no, he wasn't there.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - (laughter) That was it. But I knew, we knew, we knew he was there. And I lived right next to there. My house was right on the other side, on Purchase Street. My house was the back side of Band Club, or the front side, whichever way you want to call it. 396 was the address at the time.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - It was the -- the Morse Twist Drill was still there --

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yep.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - -- at the time?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I remember Morse Twist Drill as a kid. Yep, we lived there... I'm trying to remember when my mother... We left New Bedford -- that's when my mother and father got their divorce, and my mother brought us to Connecticut, so my brother and I -- my sister was already there -- my brother and I, she, you know, got custody and we went up to Connecticut and stayed, you know, with my mother, and I stayed there until -- we stayed there until I was in the third or fourth grade. Might have -- no, the fifth, fifth grade, and then I came back to New Bedford. The family came, we came back to New Bedford in 1944. I'll never forget that date because that was the end of the --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - The war.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - -- the war.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - So let's go back to your mom for a second. She was in St., St. Mary's Home?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - How -- and she was there until she was 15 and she got married.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I don't know when she came out of there, to be honest with you, but I'm sure she came out of there prior to the time she got married --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - OK.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - -- because, like I said, that was my godmother that went there and rescued her and my aunt. And, (laughter) and it's funny -- she ended up working there after she retired. You know, I don't know if you remember, it was, there was nuns there.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Yeah.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - So she ended up working there, and that was her life then. That's when she did a lot of stuff, like when the ships used to come in from Cabo Verde, she was the first one down there. (laughter)

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Tell me about that. When the ships came in, did everybody go down there?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh, yes.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - That, it was a big thing?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - The... I'm trying to -- I can't, I really can't remember the names of the ships, but the Ernestina. I remember when that came in, and a couple of other ships that came in, but I can't remember their names.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - But everyone would go down there and greet them?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh, yeah, when the ships... The Ernestine, you know, out in -- I don't know if anyone shared this story -- was quarantined. When they came it was quarantined for I don't know how many days, but they weren't allowed to come in. I don't know how many days it was, because according to listening to people, you know, that the average trip was 30 days or in that area or less. Every time I go aboard that ship I say, "How the heck would the people live on there?" (laughter) And I, and I was in the Navy, and I thought we were, didn't have any space, but they had to be strong people. They had to be, to come across that ocean under the conditions that they must've gone through. And being in the Navy, I said, I don't know if I could operate on a ship that size.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Have you ever been on a submarine?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I've been aboard submarines, but I was the next closest to that. I was on the, I was the Destroyer, Destroyer escort. We used to call it we're submarines on top of the water. But --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - (laughter) So you know about tiny!

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh, yeah. Those spaces... Well, we had the foot locker to put all our clothes, foot locker, maybe about that size of what you see right there. That's where all our clothes went. We didn't have the luxury of hanging up our clothes and stuff, and that's how we learned to press our clothes when we slept, you know.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - You put them down and --

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Put them, put them on the bed --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - And then you slept on top of...

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Right. But, you know, we learned -- and that's one of the things that we learned being in the Navy on how to prepare our clothes, wrap them and put them in our duffel bag, because we put quite a few things in there. All our belongings went in that duffel bag, and you learned how to roll... As a matter of fact, I taught my grandchildren how to take and roll your clothes.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - So they don't wrinkle.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - So they don't wrinkle, and at the same time they take less space. So in comparing my world cruise and stuff -- and I made a world cruise, you know, and I often think when I go aboard the Ernestina, I says, boy, them people had to be strong, had to be strong to make that trip, you know, to this country. And, of course, that relates to the whaling, you know. (laughter) Them guys went out on them boats and the trips -- I don't know if anybody shared with you -- if they were out less than a year, that was a plus.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - So at least a year they were gone.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - At least. You know, it was no easy life.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - So if they, if they were out whaling, how did the people here survive? Because you're out there, you -- I mean, you're not getting... They can't send money home.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Well, I'd have to say that th- they were resourceful, (laughter) because there's no other way we can say it as that. They lived -- you know, I still remember New Bedford before the Bay Village and all that and all the houses there up and down. See, the Cape Verdean community started at School Street and ended probably I would say around Rivet somewhere, and if they didn't own they -- it was all Cape Verdeans, all the houses in this area, and when they did build Bay Village, when they knocked down all the houses and stuff, we used to play at Monte's Park, now known as Monte's Park.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - What was it, what was it called --

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - But that was originally, that was where New Bedford Vokeational was.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - That's what I've been told.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - It burned down there.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Hmm.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - It burned down there and then it became a park and, and we used to play there. That's where our main focus was in this neighborhood, in the park wall, you know, and, and the girls weren't allowed to walk down there. I don't know if anybody told you that.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, yeah, oh, yeah.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - But, "No, you can't go by the park! No, no, no going to the park." As a matter of fact, even the boys were limited to where you could go back then. We lived right there, like I said, next to the Band Club, and our area to go was that square where St. Mary's School was, now apartment buildings. That's where St., that where the school was.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - On Wing Street.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah. And our place where we could go (laughter) was within that block, unless you was escorted. And this is not only in my case and a lot of other guys... Like I was saying, growing up it was, you know, like the girls and the boys, we weren't allowed to stray too far, and then as we got older and we started hanging out down in the park and stuff, and the girls would -- "Can't go there! You can't -- don't go by there!" So they had to detour. Instead of going up Acushnet Avenue -- but a lot of the girls cheated; (laughter) they would go up Purchase Street. "Oh no, you can't go by there!" But, you know, people -- they talk about today of not having... You know, I remember growing up that what we had to go through in terms, you know, like you had asked, mentioned to me how

did they get along. I think more than ever back then they lived as a community, and the stores then you could go down, and there was a store right on the corner opposite Band Club, and there was one on Holland Street that was run by the Jewish people. It was one -- Pildis, we used to call it, Mello's Market, and Mello's Market was Portuguese, and Pildis was Jewish, and they spoke Portuguese and Cape Verdean plainer than probably you and I, because for years if it hadn't been for those corner stores where like you paid weekly and you'd pay for last week's food, then you'd start your ticket all over again. It's similar to, I guess, when we see the movies and people see movies now back in the cowboys' time when, you know, the store, general store where they went and bartered whatever way they could, they got their goods, but my father and mother ...of course then it was back in the textile days, and my father worked at Firestone. You know, I remember Firestone about this time, especially this time of the year. When Christmas came around Firestone used to give a big party at State Theater. It was State Theater then. Now it's Zeiterion. And we'd go there and they showed movies and stuff over there, and then at the end, after they finished, the same thing every year: Christmas candy, the box of Christmas candy -- I don't know, the one where they used to have those little cook-, what you call it, cookies, crackers in it -- again, I can't think of the name of it, but it was a little square box you got, and the boys got that and the girls got jump ropes.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, I think I'd rather get the candy!

BERNARDINO SILVA - (laughter) You know, it was altogether different than what it is today, you know.

ANN MARIE LOPES - How many siblings did you have?

BERNARDINO SILVA - There was five of us. One of my brothers had died in Portchester. As a matter of fact, he was named after my grandfather, Valentino, but there was actually five of us.

ANN MARIE LOPES - And where were you in the group?

BERNARDINO SILVA - I'm the *cordere*.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Ah, me, too.

BERNARDINO SILVA - The *cordere* is the baby --

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yep.

BERNARDINO SILVA - -- so I'm the only living. All my direct family is -- I'm the last Mohican. I guess I take a lot after my mother, you know, in terms of like you just said a minute ago about the fact that I'm involved, but -- and I think I got that by

the way she treated people and stuff, and that's one trait that I get from my mother, and the other one, my stewardness, you know, service-wise is from my father, absolutely, and I understand that somewhere in my father's side -- and if you can see his picture -- I'll show it to you afterwards over there -- my father was very fair, very fair. One of his grandmothers, from what I understand, was German.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Really?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - The islands, after I learned later on in life, there were Arabic, French, Italians -- anybody that sailed the seas -- and, of course, Portuguese. Our dances that we do, our country dance is called in French. I remember we used to rehearse down at the old what we call the Verdean Hall. That's where everybody went to the dances every Saturday.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - The Verdean Hall, that's the one in the South End.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - On what street?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - It's gone now. It's been gone. Route 18 took that. It's right on the corner of -- well, I really, I'm trying to think, but it was in the area where Route 18 is now. One of these streets over here was at the end, and I really can't remember the name of that street.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Was it Howland?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, Howland is where the Howland Street Club was.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, that would make sense. (laughter)

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, and it was further south.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - OK.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - The Verdean Hall. It'll come to me. It might have been around Rivet Street someplace, where Rivet Street is now.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Yeah, Potomska.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Potomska, yeah. I have to recapture what I was talking about.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - I'm sorry, I took you away from what you were saying.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah...

ANN MARIE LOPES - You were talking about your siblings.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah, and, you know, I remember the times, you know, especially one Thanksgiving -- and back then you know, when meat was on the table (laughter) that was a big plus, but we were fortunate. My godmother, she had farms, so we never went without.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Did your godmother have houses where she put up boarders?

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah.

BERNARDINO SILVA - She -- yeah, her house, she was, she -- that's what, that's what she had.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah.

BERNARDINO SILVA - She fed boarders. A matter of fact, I used to take lunches to a man that worked in, in the old coal company down there off the bridge, off the Fairhaven Bridge. There was a coal company somewhere in there, and take the hot lunch or supper to them. You know, they not only took the lunches and then at night, you know, those guys, people came in as boarders, and back in them days we had to wait, you know, after, until after they ate and then the kids ate.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Because her name has come up.

BERNARDINO SILVA - My godmother?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Lopes?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah, her name came -- we called her Barbara Kilda.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yes. Can you spell the last name for me?

BERNARDINO SILVA - No, I can't. How to, just, you know --

ANN MARIE LOPES - I'll do it phonetically.

BERNARDINO SILVA - -- in Portuguese... Yeah. I'd have to tell you to do it phonetically.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's fine. That's what I did.

BERNARDINO SILVA - And she was a very strong woman, and normally when you want to identify the family it's usually the father's name, but in her case it was the house of, you know, Nha Barbara Kilda. It wasn't the house of Nho Antone. That was her husband. Because she was very smart, you know, in terms of business-wise and that, and it was because of her they bought that house, you know, through the feeding and boarding system that she had. She was a very smart person, you know. (laughter)

ANN MARIE LOPES - Did they have any children? Just out of curiosity.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Oh, yeah, the big family! Lopes? Oh, yeah! There were a set of twins. You probably -- you know Kenny Offley? Well, anyhow, he was a cop. Barbara -- yeah it was...

ANN MARIE LOPES - So are you related to Joseph Silva?

BERNARDINO SILVA - Joe Silva?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah.

BERNARDINO SILVA - No.

ANN MARIE LOPES - SOS?

BERNARDINO SILVA - SOS?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah, that's what they called him at --

BERNARDINO SILVA - The cop, the retired fireman, you're talking about?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah.

BERNARDINO SILVA - No, we're not related, but my brother was married to his sister.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, OK.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - His sister that died, Joanna. My brother Dennis, but they split up years...

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Let's go back.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Because, you know, these stories come out and they lead to something else.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, they pop into my head.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - No, that -- my head, too. That's how, that's how my mind works, too. So you're a kid. What are you doing? I know you said that you went, you brought lunches. Did you go to school and get out of school at lunchtime, bring the lunch down to the coal place, and then go back to school?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, it was after school, so it must have been supertime that when I did run the food to the... It wasn't during school time because back then, you know, we went to school. I went to T. A. Greene. You'd come home for lunch, and then go back to school for the afternoon session, so that's why when you said when did I bring the food, it's that it'd have to have been in the afternoon to go down to the coal plant and bring the food to the guy down there.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Did your mother work while you were in school?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh, my mother always worked. My mother always worked.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Well, outside of the home?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - What did she do?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I really don't remember what she done when we were kids, but when we went to Connecticut and stuff she worked in the cleaners, you know, place where they did laundry and that kind of stuff, but she always worked. She always worked.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Now, you said you were a little kid when your parents divorced?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, I was about four years old. I remember them asking, asking if, "Who do you want to go live with?", so I said my mother. Yeah, and the funny

part about it is that even way back then from the time that my mother and my father got divorced there was still some form of respect to them, you know, because neither one of them ever shared what happened. My mother used to always say -- you know, and we used to come in town when we was, later on in life when we lived in Connecticut -- "How's your father?" (laughter) Or my father'd say, "How's your mother?" So there was a sense of respect.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Well, there was a big age difference.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh yeah, absolutely.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Did either one remarry?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, no, neither one did, no.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - So when you went to Connecticut, who did you live with?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - My mother.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Right, but --

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - My mother brought us there to live with her.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - But did she --

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - She's the one that took care of us, you know, was working.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - But did she have family there, or she just...? How did you end up in Connecticut?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, I don't know how she decided to go to Norwalk -- it was in Norwalk, Connecticut -- why she decided there, but there was maybe a couple of men that she knew there. That's why she went to Connecticut. She ended up like working and ended up the same thing of having a couple of different guys that came there to eat where, you know, that was income for her, and one claimed to be, claimed to be, said he was our uncle, but for some reason -- and I hate to say this -- I never liked the man, because he was like a kind of person that makes you want to discipline... He didn't know how to talk to young people, and we used to call him Blackjack or whatever his name was, because the fact that he was one of them *badius*. You know what a *badius* is?

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - No.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - That's the ones that they say are bad in the Old Country. Man, he'd cut you in a minute, so... (laughter)

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, OK!

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - But anyhow, it was something that we just didn't care for the man. We just -- there was no click.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - So then you moved back to New Bedford?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Then we came back to New Bedford. It was '44, '45.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - OK. And how old are you?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Then I was in fifth grade.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - OK, so we're talking 1944. Were you here for the hurricane of '38?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yes.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - You were in New Bedford?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yes, I was.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Do you remember it all?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yes, I do.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, tell me about it!

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, matter of fact the water came all the way up to Purchase Street. We ended up -- we lived on Purchase Street -- we ended up going to my aunt's house in the West End.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Because the water was that high.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - The water was that high, 1938. Of course, them dikes and stuff we got there now is a godsend because every time the hurricane season came, you know, we was worried back then, so...

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - It devastated the community, didn't it?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Mm-hmm, oh yeah, certainly did.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - And then when it went away did people go back?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh yeah, we came back to our houses. These houses were well built. Whatever they did, they knew what they was doing, and a lot of houses down there on South Front Street, a lot of them have been renovated so many times you couldn't tell that there was - what they call them houses that they mark, the city marks --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - The historic houses?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - -- and you get that plaque -- historical, yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Historical?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - A lot of them down here, because as a matter of fact, Washington Square area got a grant where you could fix up your house and stuff, and we missed it by two houses, (laughter) two or three houses! I miss it because I tried to get a grant to get some work done here but they ran out of money anyhow. Yeah, but my childhood, like I say, is -- we had fun.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Where did you live when you were 11?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I was here.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - In this house?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, not this house. At that time -- let me see -- I must have been right up the street, what you call the school, Donaghy School. Then I went to Roosevelt. By the time I got to Roosevelt I was -- I can date that one pretty good because I'd left Roosevelt to go to Voke., and I left in the eighth grade rather than going to the ninth, so I was, I think, seven - yeah - it was -- two years -- I was 17 by the time I got to, you know, let Roosevelt to go to Voke., and then I played ball there.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Did -- so you said you had fun?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, I really do, because, you know, when we were growing up with the girls we used to play, I learned how to play jacks --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, yeah.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - -- hopscotch, jump rope, because that was our entertainment, (laughter) you know. There was no television back... The television -- I forget what year it came in -- my godmother was one of the first people to have a television, so I remember watching Joe Louis fights when they, you know, the screen was about that big and you used to put a magnifying glass on it to blow it up. That's where we went to see the fights, and prior to that you would sit around the radio listening to the fights, but that's when it was Howdy Doody days and all that. There wasn't that many stations, that's for sure! You knew your neighbors. That's the way I can say it to you. Like if I went from here, or the girls went from here to uptown, how many houses you would pass, so by the time you got home your parents knew where you were. They, you know, they passed the word down over the fence, and it wasn't that -- you know, until the phone -- there wasn't that many people that had phones then either, 'cause I remember living on Purchase Street we definitely didn't have no phone. I don't even remember what year phones came in, but anyhow, my sister -- we used to cheat -- my father worked Firestone 2-10, so every once in a while she'd cheat, you know, and we'd go to the State Theater, and back then, you know how the movies ran -- you'd go, you'd see the movie for once, and then it would stop, have a break, the same movie would show again, so if it was a good movie we'd stay there, but a couple of times we'd be staying there, we stayed there too late, (laughter) and we ran all the way from State Theater to get home to beat my father, my father home! And hide the dishes! (laughter) When I say it was good days, I think the families in the sense because of the -- when I say lifestyle, there wasn't that many people that were... We were poor, there's no question about it. We were poor, but we survived. You know, the fact that every -- it seemed like -- you know, there was never a day you didn't have a meal. No matter where you went, somebody's house, it's the first thing you do. "Come on, sit down, eat!" So our parents were well -- they said, "When you go there, tell them you're not hungry!" (laughter) But if it was something we liked we'd say, "Oh, yeah!" But...

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - But it was hard to turn people down!

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah. Well, you know, the outlook as far as I would say -- people were more friendly, people-orientated, if I can put it that way, is that were more willing to share what little they had than... Like today, you can live in the building and don't even know your neighbors, but back then it wasn't so. Like I was saying, if you did something wrong by the time you got home somebody'd be waiting for you. (laughter) What were you doing? And my father was very, very strict, you know, but he gave -- you had three chances before you got the beating. (laughter) And I was the one that got all the beating, because I always got caught!

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - But you're the baby! You're supposed to be spoiled, right?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - (laughter) No, I can remember my father, the routine when he came -- call you around the round table, you know, the old fashioned tables? The round ones. We used to call it the "round table". When you got called to that you knew you was in trouble, and his routine was he'd call you in the room and said,

"Senta. Sit down over there," and he'd go, and then the first thing he would do, sit you down, he'd sit down, then he'd go into the closet and get the strap, (laughter) 'cause he work in the mill. You know, that leather that they had, the pulleys that they used this leather from is that --

ANN MARIE LOPES - I didn't know that.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Oh, yeah. They had to strap the cat with nine tails.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah.

BERNARDINO SILVA - You ever hear of the cat o' nine tails?

ANN MARIE LOPES - I've seen it.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Plus they had -- the other thing was some families had the *pometoria*. That was a stick with a whole in the middle, and that's some families used. My father preferred the strap, so he'd get it and roll it out on the table, say -- and he's still talking, telling you -- he'd go through the whole history of what you did this time, what you did that time, what you did time, break it all down. As he's doing it, you know, first he, you know, roll out the strap, he tell you one thing. After he roll out the strap -- and my father used to roll his own cigarettes, Bugle, so... (laughter) And then he'd get the paper, and start making the cigarette," you know, and he's still talking, he ain't stopped yet. And, you know, and "Here you are," and he's stiffenSing already! (laughter) So you would say, "Please," in your mind you'd say, "Come on, give me a beating so I can go on!" (laughter) So... And he'd go through all what you'd done until he got to the point after he rolled the cigarette, then he would take and... Once he lit the cigarette you know it was coming! (laughter)

ANN MARIE LOPES - That was the sign. That was the signal.

BERNARDINO SILVA - That was the sign. And then he's hitting you with the strap, and then he would say, if you start crying he would say "*Nun pin!*" That means, "Don't make a sound." And you'd say, in your mind you'd say, "What's the matter with this man? He's beating me (laughter) and he's telling me don't cry!" And it's ironic because I remember my sister saying that is probably why it was very difficult, and it gave us the strength in the sense that we tolerated a lot and it took a lot to disturb us to the point where we'd get upset and cry and carry on. To heck with that! You did it. You got to pay. The thing is, you made the mistake now, you got to pay. There was nothing for free. (laughter)

ANN MARIE LOPES - So this is before your parents were divorced, then.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Oh, yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - When you came back, did you see your father?

BERNARDINO SILVA - Oh, yeah. When we used to come to New Bedford?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Oh, yeah, we lived... My father lived on South Front Street at the time my mother lived on Howland Street area, which is, wasn't that far.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Right, it's definitely walking distance.

BERNARDINO SILVA - So, as far as -- they communicated, I'm sure, even when we were in Connecticut. We used to come and spend the summers here, stay with my father, because I remember that's when I first got my first couple of jobs, selling newspapers, shining shoes, work all summer. Every time I came in my father would, you know, "Where's the money?" Turn it in, give me my spending money. The summer ended, he sit down with me with the book, "Here's your money now. You know, this is for you to buy your clothes," you know, whatever. But he was a good record keeper! (laughter)

ANN MARIE LOPES - Right down to the penny.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Right down to the penny!

ANN MARIE LOPES - Right down.

BERNARDINO SILVA - That was his way.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Mm-hmm.

BERNARDINO SILVA - That was his way, and that's it. He was very frugal -- what's that word?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Frugal.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Frugal, and he didn't play when it came down. Here's the rules. You broke the rules. That's it. After you get to that point, there was no more copping pleas.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Did your father own his house?

BERNARDINO SILVA - No, no.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Everybody --

BERNARDINO SILVA - My father never owned a house. None of us -- and my mother didn't own a house. Finally, my brother bought this house -- God rest his soul -- for my mother.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So your mother lived here.

BERNARDINO SILVA - My mother lived here, yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So this house has been in your family for a while.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah. I forgot how many years, but this was after I got married and stuff and moved to Connecticut, you know. It was during that time that my brother bought the house for my mother.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Well, you know where the historic district is now, up where the cobblestones are.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Did you ever spend any time up there?

BERNARDINO SILVA - You know something? When we were growing up and stuff most of us never even went into the Whaling Museum and stuff, but the question you just asked is yeah, because that's where all the grocery stores were or grocery markets were on Union Street. So yes, we had a lot of occasions to go up that way to get the fresh, you know -- everything was... Back then, you've got to remember that everything was bought mostly on a daily basis because there was no refrigerators, so most of the cooking and stuff was done on a daily basis, and whatever carried over was the next day's meal, and then the icebox came in in the summertime, you know. The refrigerator was put outside, and some people had boxes in the windows that in the wintertime you could put it, and milk was delivered to the houses, and that's the old fashioned milk, you know, and if you let it stay there too long when it got cold the cream would push the top off, so... And the bottles, (laughter) I remember, they used to bring the bottled milk, and it was the same milk, you know, the same bottle they sold to the stores, so we found out that you could get a nickel on the bottle, so drink the milk quick and go get the nickel! (laughter) But those are the little things we did. It was, more or less -- whatever we'd done was out of necessity. You know, I think one of the unsaid rules is you didn't steal from friends. And I'm not going to say we didn't go uptown every once in a while and try to snatch something, you know... It was because we didn't have. I'd have to put it that way. You know, it wasn't malicious. There was something you liked, you know, we used to walk by the stores -- they used to have the fruit outside, you know, you go back real quick. I remember one

time, as a matter of fact, I was playing CYO baseball, so we was playing on, down there on Ashley Park -- it's still there -- no, no, not Ashley Park, the one down there by Rivet Street.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Ben Rose field now?

BERNARDINO SILVA - No, no, no, it's down this side of... Know where Mount Carmel Church is?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah.

BERNARDINO SILVA - That field down there, that park down there.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, OK.

BERNARDINO SILVA - So --

ANN MARIE LOPES - Oh, yeah, OK, I know what you're talking about.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah. We'd go by and there was this guy, had a market. (laughter) He had watermelons, so I'll never forget, it was Walter Livramento and he says -- we went by we scouted as we went places. Says, "Hey, the guy got watermelons out," so (laughter) I remember where it was two guys on bikes, and one -- we snatched two watermelons and took off and went up to the park and had a ball! And back then the trains used to come in with the watermelons.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Trains went to where?

BERNARDINO SILVA - Down there, down where Union Street is, and where the Nantucket Boat used to come in. When the trains came in with produce and stuff like that, we'd go down there and borrow a few. Well, and we also went down that area, down around there to pick coal, just like you saw in the movies.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Pick coal.

BERNARDINO SILVA - -- where they'd go along the train tracks and pick up coal. You did that right down there. Fish, we'd go down -- back then you could go down the docks, and if it wasn't the main catch they would put it on the side and they'd let you take it. I remember having my little tin wagon and going through Bay Village selling fish we got from down the wharf, yeah, yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's very smart.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah. Oh, we had to be creative in order to have money. Matter of fact, when the Nantucket boat used to come in over here I carried -- it was myself and Walter Livramento -- trying to think what actor it was. It wasn't Mickey Rooney. Who was the other, Edward G. Robinson? The other little guy. And he came in on the train! So Walter and I went over there and says, "Can we carry your bag?" And so he had this big guy that was his bodyguard, I guess, and the guy said, "Let the kids carry it." Back then we're trying to beat the guys, the regular porters, you know, but they let us, you know, every once in a while. So I remember carrying -- Walter carried one bag, I carried the other, we went as far as the gangway. It was Edward G. Robinson, or was it Mickey Rooney? It was one of those three guys anyways that had a house in Nantucket, and so when we got to the gangways, told the guy, "Pay the kids," (laughter) so the guy... Back then I think he gave us each a buck, and that was big money!

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Yeah.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - That was big money. We used to swim down there too, you know, which wasn't -- that was taboo. We used to swim to the -- when the Nantucket used to pull out, go out and, you know, do just like you see in the movies where they threw money in the water.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Mm-hmm. People threw money in the water

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Mm-hmm, yeah, just like you see in the islands. They still -- you don't see it as much now like you used to before, but even in the islands, but that's what you did.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Did you belong to Our Lady of the Assumption Church?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I was baptized there. I was an altar boy there.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - OK.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - As a matter of fact, Father Edmond kept on telling people I was going to be his first Cape Verdean priest! (laughter)

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - And what did you think about that?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, I was a dancer and I was at that point in my life with looking at the girls and stuff, so I said... But I stayed close to the church, you know, in terms of being an altar server, all the way up until high school, until I went to Voke., 'cause you had to be an altar boy then, and God forgive me for saying this, but that was the part I used to like being the altar boy, when somebody died you got to go to school late, (laughter) 'cause it was automatic. You know, we served, and we'd just go to school and tell them that we had to serve Mass that day.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Did you do any of the other activities? Was there basketball teams?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh, yeah. CYO, I played for years. We had basketball, and that's where the school down there's got the name from, Alfred J. Gomes, Lawyer Gomes. He's the one -- he bought me my first glove. I was a first baseman, and back then they came out what they call a trapper's mitt, and he bought the glove for me, but Lawyer Gomes told me -- I think that glove cost \$13, and he said, "You got to pay me 50 cents a week." I paid for that glove. I had that glove until my son started playing Little League ball. First day I let him take it to the park was the last day I saw that glove.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, that's too bad.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Somebody stole it. But yeah, Lawyer Gomes did a lot for us. He's the one that bought the uniforms -- the baseball uniform, the basketball uniforms. You remember how far back that he started doing that, but you know, we participated in sports ever since, and it goes way back to your father's time as a Second World War veterans that played CYO ball, because -- I don't know if anybody ever shared this with you -- CYO games used to be on Union Street on the Firestone building, which is -- don't you know that hole that's over there?

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Yeah. That's the Firestone building?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - And it used to be on the third floor on -- I think it was the third floor -- where the basketball court was. You could imagine what size the court was, but the place would be packed, and it gets back to the fact that we didn't have that much opportunity for recreation other than for it wasn't for that thing with the basketball. And I went through the CYO stuff, and then by the time I got to Roosevelt, you know, I mean, played at Roosevelt. My first real good pair of sneakers when I tried out for Voke. and made the team, I cracked the varsity in football and basketball on the... I did four sports my first year, but...

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - That's a lot of sports.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, but I had to give it up to go to work. Yeah, it was tough, so... But I was only eligible to play two years because of my age. What had happened, like I shared with you earlier, that I moved to Connecticut. They put me back -- when I came back to Massachusetts they put me back, so I lost two years in moving from one state to the other, so by the time I got to Voke. I was only able to play two years sports there, so... But my last two years, went to school all day, and that's when I started working in [Aerovox?]. Left, went school, left from there. I think we used to get out at 3:00, but I got out -- because I had a job, those of us that had a job they would leave us out a half hour earlier to catch our shift, which was 3:00 to 10:00.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - How long did you work at Aerovox?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh, jeez, I don't... Two years? My two years that I, you know, I was in my last two years when I was at Voke., yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - So when you were old enough to date --

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Mm-hmm.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - -- what did you do on your dates? Well, first of all, how did you meet, how did you meet the women that you dated?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Verdean Hall. Well, actually most of us dated the girls right there from church, but believe it or not, during the time I was playing ball I had no time.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Yeah, you were busy.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - But I remember, when I did started dating my *compad* Toi Cruz and I were dating, you know - Al Hautman, you know him?

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Mm-hmm.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - His mother went to the house -- well, she knew us, our families and stuff. She said to us, looked at both of us and said, "Look, you can come see my daughters when the sun is up. By the time the sun goes down you better be the hell out of here!" (laughter)

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - (laughter) Well, she wasn't strict, she was...

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh, she -- well, she was straight up, but she was first generation, but she was modern back then.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Mm-hmm. Well, she was just taking care of her daughter.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah!

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - I can understand that.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah. And then the city used to sponsor a "Nationality Week" every year at New Bedford High School, so we as Cape Verdeans always had a group that went up and performed at the high school, so that's why I learned how to do the *mazurka*, the contra dance, and we had four dances, four different dances that we'd do, and each year we did one, one of the four. That's when I found out that our country dance, the calls are in French, 'cause I was there one day

when I was -- you know, for some reason or another -- was paying attention to the calls, because prior to that was Dominican. (phone rings)

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - So you said the calls were in French, 'cause you were paying attention.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, and I go up and ask this man, "That's not Cape Verdean or Port-, you know or Portuguese!" He says, "No." He says, "The calls are in French." So that's when you start to think about it, the influence of the different nationalities that the Cape Verdeans are associated with is that a lot of languages.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Right. Well, a lot of people went to the island.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - That's right. Because of the proximity. Back then, when you had those ships they had to stop at different islands, you know, after they left the coast of West Africa -- and, see, a lot of people don't want to admit this -- that's where we came from, you know, as a result of the slave trade and all that. That's how we came, Cape Verdeans! We got so good at the dancing that every year they put us on last, you know, to put on our presentation. So I would say "How come these people always make us last?" And they finally told us, "The reason why we call you people 'til last, you have the best presentations," which was true. You know, the Portuguese, the Italians, the French, back then like Mount Carmel had a group, the people from the North End had a group, you know, from their churches, and other city participants for that week showed up. Oh yeah, I remember that day. I remember rehearsing at Verdean hall. I'd like to -- you know, and I've asked a lot of people if anybody got any of the music that was made back then, 'cause Lawyer Gomes kept a good record. He took pictures, he recorded, but I don't have any of the music that my father and them played back then, and I know that he recorded that stuff, yeah, but I don't know who ended up with it. Somebody's got that stuff somewhere. At one time I thought Joli Gonzalves had it, which -- he had some stuff. I don't know if his niece has got, what she's got left. 'Cause I remember when he had his, he had the little place right up the street here where that church is over there. That's where he'd start, try to do his museum. No, it's over here, that building. You're right, though, he did --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - He had something down there.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - -- in that building down there, that hall down there for a while, but he ended up trying to get a museum going down there where that church is, and I remember helping his niece move the stuff out of there after he died. I don't know if she's got any tapes or anything, but I understand that what's his name, the photographer -- I said artist or photographer --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, Barboza.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Barboza has some of, had a lot of that stuff.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, really?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - From what I heard. I can't really say that I've seen it or anything like that, but I heard that he had some of that stuff, but...

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - So you meet these women at the Verdean Hall. Where do you take them on dates?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh, you take them on dates, are you kidding? (laughter) The way it was, Verdean Hall set up, the girls would be sitting on either end of the hall with their parents, and all the guys, we'd be like on the other end, you know, and when the music started you see the (claps) everybody heading over, (laughter) and you go and ask the girl, "Can I have this dance?" And she would look at her parents. If they gave an OK then you was OK. Actually, you know, I'm trying to think -- you asked me the question probably when I started dating and stuff. Really, I must have been 17, 18 before I thought I was dating -- let's put it that way -- but...

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - What do you mean, you "thought" you were dating?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Around, you know... (laughter) When, you know, you thought you had a friend but you found out later they were fooling around with somebody else, (laughter) that kind...

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, I see.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - See, my whole thing, even that -- like I used to walk the girls home from choir rehearsals and stuff, and I was more like the big brother, and those that I did like, they went by -- (laughter).

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Were you in the choir?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh, yeah. We also did the music week thing. We did the first composed, Joli composed it, in the area of opera kind of thing, as close as we could get to it. The name of the song was (Crioul), "Waters Keep Quiet," and we sang it at New Bedford High School. Oh, we had a hell of a choir.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - That's what I've heard. Minnie Senna was talking about it.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh yeah, Minnie, oh yeah. We probably had the best Catholic choir in the area. We had young voices, and that was, again, the days of Father Edmond and Father John. Actually, Lordy Hautman played organ, and that was part of our recreation. See, the girls got to come out (laughter) and we got to see the girls. There was a building that was a store and after the church bought it and we made into like a recreational center. We'd go there on Sundays --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - After church.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - -- yeah, and at night, too, we'd go see movies and stuff, and Nha Juliana, which was Toi Cruz's mother -- I don't know if anybody mentioned her name to you -- she was our champion. Everything we done was great with her. You know, she came to our basketball games and everything. She'd buy French fries and popcorn and we'd have a nice time in that little building. Dances were like -- back then it was a buck, and anything other than that was, you know, you had to make sure you saved your money. (laughter)

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Did you go the movies other than the State?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah. I got thrown out of Olympia Theater. (laughter)

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Why?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I was playing ball, then I used to have trouble -- catching cramps, so I always made sure I sat on the end someplace, but this particular day I happened to be in the middle of the row, and I tried to get out and the doggone stupid people wouldn't let me out and I started making a scene, so they put me out. (laughter)

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - They got you out, though, the people moved, right?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, we used to skip into the like when they had the movies at the State theater, somebody would go in, open the side door, and we'd sneak in and watch the movies. (laughter)

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Did you ever go to Charlie Wong's?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Are you kidding me?! (laughter) Did I ever go to Charlie... The biggest thing is that that's around the time I worked in the shoeshine parlor or prior to that I had my own little boxes that I would go to Charlie -- you know, you'd make a few pennies here and there and you go up there, chow mein sandwich, plain chow mein sandwich, and they were beautiful, 10, 15 cents, 20 cents. So that's the first place we'd go, and there was Charlie Wong's and then there was another place on -- I'm trying to think of the name of the street. But anyhow, they had a place that -- it might have been Union Street. I'm not sure, or either the next street up. There was a place downstairs from there that sold shoes and things. That's where everybody went. And upstairs -- I can't remember the name of the building. Matter of fact, they were in existence for years.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - William Street?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, William Street.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - The shoe place Self Service?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, upstairs. And the Wongs -- no, Charlie Wong's was over there, and this other one was -- I can't remember, you know. But all of us favored Charlie Wong's.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - So downtown had a lot of stuff down there going on.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh, yeah. Lorraine's... Well, you had the stores and everything right there. You didn't have to go -- you know, there was no big, other than where you went to the factories to buy stuff in Fall River and here, you know, the stores were right there. They had all kind of -- Cherry's and all the stores, the big stores that were up there, and that's where everybody traded went to. The guys that sold suits, uh, Silverstein's had a store uptown, and that's where we traded, you know, because they gave you a, you know, you could get a tab. It was different time, and I think that's why probably most people in our time and stuff have more of an appreciation of having, you know -- people, they talk about what they have and what they don't have, they've never been without, so they really don't know what they're talking about.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - So how'd you meet your wife?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Connecticut.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - What were you --

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - -- what were you doing in Connecticut? Were you living there?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Back then? No, well, that was after I came out of the service and stuff.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - OK.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, I met her before -- no, after I came out of the service. I was probably about -- I was 24, 25 then when I met her, and started dating --

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - And you ended up --

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - -- got married... As a matter of fact, I was going to Wentworth in Boston, and she became pregnant so we got married.

ANN MARIE LOPES - You were going to Wentworth? Are you an engineer?

BERNARDINO SILVA - No. Back then it was only a two year... You got certificates, but three years ago, four years ago they called us in to get awarded the, what you call it, degree, Associates degrees.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's nice.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah. I got my papers right here someplace, yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - That's really nice.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So how many kids do you have?

BERNARDINO SILVA - Eleven. I only have one son living. My other son died going on two years now, maybe three, in Connecticut. I got grandchildren, of course, great-grandchildren.

ANN MARIE LOPES - How long were you in Connecticut?

BERNARDINO SILVA - Forty years before I came back to New Bedford.

ANN MARIE LOPES - Really?

BERNARDINO SILVA - You know, during the time I got married and stuff.

ANN MARIE LOPES - So why'd you come back?

BERNARDINO SILVA - Why'd I come back to New Bedford?

ANN MARIE LOPES - Yeah, why?

BERNARDINO SILVA - The house, of course. I retired. When I retired I came back. Of course, after I got married, after I had my last job up there in Connecticut I decided to come back to New Bedford.

ANN MARIE LOPES - There's something about New Bedford that pulls people back.

BERNARDINO SILVA - Yeah, (laughter) and then, too, I guess, it was my connection, too, with the Vets and stuff and that there's still a lot of people around that I knew,

(laughter) including your father and stuff, and, you know, that used to hang out at the Vets, and it was a place, you know, hangout, you know. You saw people that you knew, and I sort of missed that in Connecticut, that familiarity of being able to go... But I always knew people -- it wasn't that, it was just that little extra that I missed. That was the main reason why I came back to New Bedford. Yeah, but I can't complain. I've had a good life. I've experienced a hell of a lot, traveled around the world in Connecticut in the middle of the riots in the '60s.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, wow.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I marched with Jesse Jackson. I missed Martin Luther King's speech. I was supposed to go on our church bus and stuff, but some lady wanted to go and I gave up my seat to her, and I was glad I did because man, that trip, you had to go and come back, and that day was extremely hot when he made that speech, and I remember watching it on television. I said, "Boy, I'm glad I didn't go!" (laughter)

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - And there were a lot of people there.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Oh, yeah!

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - There was a lot of people there.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Yeah, yeah, oh, yeah. That was some scene.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - What was it like, the Civil Rights?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Well, let me put it to you... And a lot of people -- well, we're still squawking about discrimination. I faced it firsthand, and when I was in the Navy, stationed down South... I was stationed in Norfolk, and I'll never forget the first day when I had made my first stripes. Then you had, each ship had to provide so many men to go out in what they call shore patrols, which is military police. We were sailor police. We'd go down to Norfolk, and the orientation was the police station, so the captain comes out and he explains to us what our duties is. He says, "OK, here's the line. When you guys are doing your shore patrol duty, no whites go on that side, no blacks allowed on this side," and we patrolled that street. The name of the street was Church Street. I'll never forget that, and it was like cobblestones (laughter) kind of idea. When I walked them street I counted those. I didn't go, I didn't do that many tours on that... Like I said, the police chief said, "If anybody is out of their area, you put them on a bus and tell them to get out of there." And it was so funny, the first person (laughter) I saw was an Asian! (laughter)

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, so...

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - So I looked at the guy, said, "What are we going to tell this guy?" (laughter) But anyhow, the day I got discharged the ban was still on, and I mean that discrimination -- the guys I rode back with were all white, you know, came back in the car, and they said, "Silva, you want us to bring you back something?" I said, "Look, all I want to do is get the hell out of here." I'll never forget. And then when I got back I found out it was -- at least down there you knew where you were at, you know what I mean? And I swore I'd never go back down South. For years I didn't go back past Jersey, until when I got married we went down to Washington because a friend of ours was down there. I had some pretty interesting...

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Tell me about the military for just a second, because I've heard interesting things about the military.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Mm-hmm.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - When you got into the military, how did that work? You were drafted?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - You --

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - I was supposed to have been drafted. I was AWOL in the Army the first day because I was in the Navy Reserve.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, OK.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - And when they sent me my papers I was a senior at Voke., and I probably could've gotten deferred if I wanted to but I said, "What the hell, I'll go do my time," so I spoke to the principal -- it was Mr. Macintosh -- about... Hey, they called me in and they said, "You should have come to me earlier, you know, we could have got you..." He said, "As far as I'm concerned, you know," I had -- he said, "You got, if you got enough credits, your history looks good," he says, "it all depends on this one teacher," and he taught where we had our math and drafting and all that kind of stuff, and "related building" we called it. He said, "You got to go see him." I said, "Oh, jeez." This guy was tough, and I said, "I don't..." In the back of my head I said, "I don't think this guy likes me." But anyhow, he was good teacher but he was tough, so I went to him. I said, "Mr. Mac told me to come and check with you to find out what you felt about me. I got to go in the service. If I got enough, accomplished enough in your class for me to be awarded my diploma." He said, "You know, Silva, the one thing I liked about you is the fact that you mind your own business when you came into my classroom. I said you wasn't one of my brightest students but you was a student." So he said, "Don't even worry about it." He says, "You will get your diploma." So that was around Christmastime. I'll never forget, it was around the holidays. And I was in Bainbridge, Maryland (laughter) when I should've reported, because even the guys that reported, that reported that

day -- I don't know if you know this, we called him Wheaties, (inaudible). Well, him and a couple other guys I was supposed said, "We worried, you know, we was wondering where the hell you were!" (laughter) And by the time they were in it I was already in going through boot camp, so that was the end of that. But the experiences I had in the service, the "Don't go here and don't go there and don't ride here," them signs were still up, even on the base, you know, there was segregation. I lived during that time when the -- was it Eisenhower? I forgot what president it was at the time that said there will be no more discrimination on the bases. After I got out of the service, that's when they did that, after I got out of the service. I was already working, and matter of fact I was married, and I was at a special training thing at University of Connecticut, and I'll never forget the day that the speech was made, and there was a couple of foreigner guys, says, "You guys don't know what a great country you've got here." They says, "The little bit of problems you got is nothing." They says, "You got a good president in there." But I was going to train as a union representative, so I'll never forget that day. I said -- this was at University of Connecticut. Yeah, I've been exposed to a lot of stuff. I was the first black electrician hired in the state in mental health. This was during the time that we were, when they came out with the cutouts and, you know, what they called that, the what you call it program -- minorities, you know, had to be put into the jobs and that kind of thing. So (laughter) this guy came to me, because we both were added when they were trying to get that stuff passed, and he come to me, says -- over there they're calling me Bernie. So he said, "Bernie?" I said, "What?" He says, "Look, there's a job opening in Bridgeport Mental Health. I want you to apply for it." You know, I was doing electrical work. "Man, they can't pay me." He says, "Look, I'll show you on paper where you're going to be better off when you take into account the amount of money that you're going to not have to pay for health services, vacation time and everything." He says, "You'll be making more money taking this job than what you're making without the headaches of trying to contract jobs and that kind of thing." So I took the job. The difference right away, you know, I could see it, in terms of money to work with. I forgot how many years I was there and then he comes back to me, says, "Bernie?" I said, "What do you want now, Joe?" (laughter) He said, "I want you to apply for another job. You'll be the first black electrician in corrections." I said, "Joe, I don't know." He says, "Hey, man, the difference in pay salary is like \$3,000 just to start." So I said, "Hey, I can't miss." So anyways, I applied for it and I got it, and I went, you know, through the training just like the regular correction officers and became -- I was the first black electrician in corrections. But I had a sweet job. This guy and I, we were a team. He was a plumber, I was an electrician, and we traveled to many of the small facilities in the state that didn't have electrician or plumbers, so we worked in tandem where we'd go there, and some of them they were so far by the time we got there we only stayed there a couple hours. I remember this one that was someplace upstate, almost close to the New York line, and, you know, we had to go there and then come back, so we spent more time on the road than really doing any work, but it was a sweet job, but until he screwed up. He cracked up two of the trucks, so they finally told him, "You guys got to go inside," (laughter) so I ended up in a facility in a town called Cheshire. I still had it good, you know, I worked days and I didn't have to work weekends, you know. I mean, I was an electrician there, but I think at the time that... Between the two jobs -- that one I think I was there seven years, which I should have stayed, retired from that, but I

got smart. Here comes the same guy after that job, (laughter) to take a job in the community. This was to be a manager of the maintenance group in the facility where the Winchester rifle is made, and it was the supervisor of maintenance. Again, money-wise, and it looked good and stuff, but I took that job, left the state where I was comfortable and stuff, and didn't last a year. They got rid of me.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Why?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Because they wanted somebody else to have the job. See, the reason why I got the job in the first place, in order for them to get this contract.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Oh, I understand that.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - One of those.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Yep.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - They had to show a minority, so they did it long enough, then maybe a little bit past a year they try to find ways to get rid of me, so they got me on a technicality where I was allowed -- I was on salary, of course, and I sat in with all the meetings with all the, you know, all the supervisors and the bosses and stuff, and my job was to train minorities that, you know, had problems in the community, to do the work we had to do. And it was working good. I had worked a deal where I was still officiating basketball with my boss then. I said, "Look, I put in a lot of overtime and stuff, and some days I might have to leave a half hour early, and I just want to clear it with you," he said, "OK, no problem, because, you know, you do a lot more than you're getting paid for." And then when he left, in comes someone else, and these guys I had were messing with drugs and stuff, and when I found out I told them, "Look, you guys better smarten up, because in order for us to stay here and keep the door open for other people we got to work together," so they went up there, told lies on me, and this fact of, "Well, we got a record showing here that you was..." I said, "First of all, that was a understanding I had with the other people that were here, that all the time I put in here was truly never recorded, and I allowed -- that was like comp time, which I never took, other than that half hour." So they got rid of me. Then that's when I went back to contracting, doing my electrical contracting.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - I thank you for your time.

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - Sure, sure.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - Is there anything that I didn't ask you about that you want to talk about?

**BERNARDINO SILVA** - No, no, you pretty well covered it.

**ANN MARIE LOPES** - People need to spend hours doing this, because, I mean, an hour is... I only touch the surface.

***End of File***