

**EI - 1493**

**FULL NAME: CLARA SERPA  
BIRTHDATE: FEBRUARY 19, 1954  
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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE  
RECORDING ENGINEER:  
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**RESIDENCES:  
USA: MA, SUMMERVILLE**

**ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: CLARA WAS BORN IN THE U. S. TO AN IMMIGRANT FAMILY.**

LEVINE: Okay. Today is January the 12, the year 2009. I am here in Summerville, Massachusetts with Clara Serpa who is part of the Serpa Family. The mother-mother, father, and seven children came from the Azores, and two children, including Clara were born here in the United States. The family -- most of the family came in 1952. And this is Janet Levine, the oral historian for the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Okay, if you would start by saying your name, your birthdate, and where you were born.

CLARA: Clara Serpa. February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1954 and I was born in Cambridge, Mass.

LEVINE: Ok, and um (clears throat) since you have no memory -- have you ever been to the Azores? Did you ever visit?

CLARA: Yes in 1985. We all went back for a reunion.

LEVINE: Wow.

CLARA: It was my parents' 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, so we all went back.

LEVINE: Wow. Um why don't you ahh since you don't have like direct memories of before coming here. Um why don't you talk about the-the kind of – the family legend? Like, [pause] you were saying earlier your mother was born here and then.

CLARA: My mother was born in Fall River, Mass and she left when she was 15 and a half, I think, almost 16 for the Azores because the depression had happened here. So she left in 1929. And she wanted to stay here and finish school. But her brothers who were married at the time with their families -- she thought she could stay here with them. But that didn't work out. Her mother wanted her to go back with her so she did. And she had never been to the Azores.

LEVINE: Well, why the Azores?

CLARA: Because that's where her mother and father were from. And they were from that same island that my father was from. So they went back in 1929. And she was heartbroken, because she wanted to finish school here. She wanted to become a secretary. Back then that was the big thing.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: So she went back then and she thought she was going back for a visit. And turns out -- didn't happen. And she wanted to get a job there, and the consulate wanted to hire her because she was the only person that spoke English besides the consulate. And they were too far away from the city and her mother said, "No."

So she went and got educated there. And but because she was not a Portuguese citizen, she couldn't teach. So she did have some tutoring and things like that in Portuguese in reading and writing and she later became fluent in it. But she didn't work outside the home in the Azores. So she went from being it -- not that Fall River is a big city but a one hundred thousand people. In relative terms, it was a big city next to where she ended up going which was a town of four thousand people and there was no running electricity until the late sixties.

LEVINE: Now.

CLARA: Or maybe even later.

LEVINE: When she went to the Azores, did her mother and father go with her?

CLARA: Um her mother went. I think her father may have gone, too. If he -- if he either had an accident or died shortly there -- thereafter. I forget if he died here or if he died there, but she went back with her mother. And her brothers stayed here in Fall River, Mass. And she always thought she could come back. And that was the whole thing is that she thought well I could always come back because I am an American citizen. But because she was a minor, -- women in those days did not travel, so when she met my father, she thought that after she got married she could come back right away. (laugh) That later -- she later told us that part of the story after my father died.

LEVINE: In other words [ Superimposed]

CLARA: She always thoughts she could come right back immediately. But my father didn't want to come back then. And they were afraid because of the depression. So my mother wanted to be sure that we could earn a living and

my mother could have come back at any time, but my father was a very proud man and he wanted to be sure that he could support the family. So he came first. The year 1951 and he came with low preference on immigration because her brother had us send for him which is low priority it's a brother in-law. But if she had chosen to come with the kids she could have come anytime. But he wanted to be sure. So he came first and then things very depressed in Fall River -- and then he almost went back he said he you know a lot of hardship had a hard time finding work. And then he knew people here in Cambridge. And he moved up from Fall River to Cambridge with two other he knew two other men and they shared an apartment with the lady that owns the who used to own a grocery store. And then they lived with them for awhile. And he saved enough money got an apartment saved some used furniture and then later sent for my mother. And my mother and the kids went by boat by ship to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Why did -- Why was Fall River the place where. . .

CLARA: Because that where a lot of Portuguese were and he had cousins there.

LEVINE: I see.

CLARA: And then they never intended to come here. My mother had never been to Boston. So she knew what Fall River was like and everything and figured it would be similar enough. But she wasn't familiar with this area. But after my father knew there was no work there she adapted here. So this was very different for her even in today's terms Boston is considered big city next to Fall River people which is kind of a mill town. So they lived in Cambridge for four years and then they saved money to buy this house. And the story about how they found this house is somebody they knew who lived a few streets down saw a sign for sale here. And said this would be a nice house for you. It's nice and big with all these floors. (laughs) And they came to

look at it. And of course they loved it. It was so big. And it this - there was somebody renting downstairs and so that we ended up growing up on the second and third floor. That's where we lived. My parents later moved down here like – four or five years ago because they couldn't maneuver the stairs and when had to renovate this to get them here. My mother's you know upset she later adapted to it but that's how they got the house. And a so they - this the only house they – this is the major house they spent all their time in other than that apartment the first four years.

LEVINE: Wow. [Superimposed]

CLARA: So their whole life was you know here.

LEVINE: Well did your mother know that your father was planning to come here?

CLARA: Uhhh.

LEVINE: I mean -- or was he planning to come here?

CLARA: No he -- he -- he got land-- he got land to farm and he – they had enough to live on. But my mother always knew that she would never be able educate all her children there. And she always knew from having gone to high school here – she always wanted to come here. That if they were gonna come here that they had to get an education. And the only way to do that – see at the time in Portugal there was a – dictatorship. And in 1974 the government changed to socialist government, which was actually better than what it was. And now it is under the European Union things are better than ever, but back then it was very repressive. They had like secret service after people. It was - it was like a cold war kind of thing and she was always afraid there. That during World War II, if the allies did not win she was told that she would be separated from her children. Because their island is out in the middle of the

Atlantic and everything was painted grey during World War II she remembers this. And she was told that if they did not win she would have to go to one place and the kids another because they were Portuguese citizens and she wasn't.

LEVINE: Oh.

CLARA: So she tells these stories about what happened during World War II was that living outside of the United States and then when she came to Ellis Island one of the stories that she used to tell is that she thought she forgot her English after twenty-two years because she had nobody to talk too. When she went to Ellis Island she had all the baggage there (Laughs). And the man was asking her about the bags and she said what was in the bags – something about your bags – and she said you already checked them. And she was like surprised the words just came out.

LEVINE: That they came out. [Superimposed]

CLARA: And then the kids were asking about hot dogs in Coney Island and she remembered hot dogs from having lived here. And she said you are not going to like it. They wanted hot dogs -- wanted hot dogs. So she said alright – alright but you not going to like this with the mustard. And they came to later like it years later. She brought them hot dogs (Laughs). They tasted it and they ate the bread and threw away the rest. They didn't like it all because they weren't used to it. They didn't like that.

So she said little by little she was amazed that she was able to understand the customs agent. That – that was like she really didn't think she would remember English but she later spoke fluent English. And was able to read and write. Read the paper. Kept current with everything. And it all came back and then some. My mother followed the debates religiously even when

eighteen candidates you know. She was very alert. So you know she would tell that story and you know that she came through Ellis Island as a U. S. citizen (Laughs). And wasn't sure if she remembered English. But she did. So she said I am glad I said that because he didn't open up the bags. But Miriam will tell you a story of what happened to her which is interesting when it's her turn.

LEVINE: Well, now your mother was born and grew up in Fall River and because there - I mean - because there was a big Portuguese community there. And, so that's why she was familiar with it, and that's why your father went there when he first came here because.

CLARA: Yes, he had cousins there. I mean or maybe they came later. But people knew people so they tended to go where they kind of knew somebody. But it was a big depression even then and there was no work. And so he said he almost wanted to come back and he said he cried many times and he was – like a big hardship. And then he decided, I don't know how he hooked up with these people who were in Cambridge, but he decided to come here, which is a big deal to just pick up, again, across the country. I mean going out or place - a bigger city where you don't really know anything. And they were one of the first -- there was three other men and him -- there were no other Portuguese here.

LEVINE: Oh.

Clara: There were so few people. So there was no population that knew them. And so he stayed with them. Those first few families probably sent for so many more that became later thousands. You know what I mean (Laughs)? And they sent the people.

LEVINE: So then was there a Portuguese community here when you were growing up? [Superimposed]

CLARE: Yeah. Not - Not a big one but there was sum because there was a Portuguese church here. But not like there is now. But back then it was small and everybody kind of knew everybody.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well - what do you remember about the - the Portuguese ways or attitudes or just (Pause).

CLARE: In what way?

LEVINE: Uh - What kind of customs did - did your mother or your father keep?

CLARE: This is kind of funny. When my mother made our lunches going to school. The other kids had cold cuts you know? Or they had fluff or they had peanut butter. Andrea is the only one in the family that eats peanut butter. Nobody else can stand it. But my mother would make like she'd make like pot roast or she'd make chicken or she'd make something like stew or something and she'd use to give us stew sandwiches (Laughs). Even more on like Portuguese bread which is like Italian bread. And be that meat in there with the gravy and all and be like with smoke good and everything. Well she would give us the Portuguese sauce which was homemade on that crusty bread. Now we die for that. But going to school we'd - we'd go to school with these pot roasts sandwiches or you know stuff like this and you know -- I know in the later years Herb used to say, "Mom I want a sandwich like other people with the fluff and the peanut butter with the white bread. My mother said, "he eat that once never ate it again. You know?"

And so we later became accustomed to eating cold cuts or tuna. No we never really cold cuts that much. But we ate tuna fish a lot or egg salad

sandwiches things that are more American. But for a long time, you know Andrea makes a joke of my mother would take the chicken apart for the most chicken make us not chicken salad the way other people would be .You need to look close to make sure there was no little bone in there (Laughs). That was fun. You know (Laughs)? To tell you the truth they were actually quite good lunches but you know things like that they didn't know about. You know? I mean in the later years they brought slice bread and things like that but in those early years that's what you took to school.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: You know? That's the kind of funny things about and then meals were like a big event. And a special on Sunday, would be a big roast chicken. My mother would make soup ahead of time. And there would be like tons of food, tons of things. The other thing that certain words like the "ladle" we didn't even know. We would joke we didn't know till like eighteen or twenty what the - what the word ladle. We use to call it the [cusha] like the thing to scoop. We never even knew. My mother spoke English fluently but certain things. We didn't even use the word ladle. Andrea says, "I was eighteen until I knew what a ladle was." You know? Some stuff was like that. You know? You never used the word. So, yeah, I would say that was a big thing. My mother made our clothes well that was out of necessity and you know hand – me downs a few times. Always made the big thinking we were going grow into them.

Um. In some of these pictures are kind of funny if I can find one. Um Andrea and I are wearing the same dress like a custom - this one. Ok? And I am wearing the dress in a different picture. This was curtains. And although it doesn't look big there in one of the pictures it is big. The flowers were like this ok (Laughs)? We were really tiny. So we in these drapes and the flowers on the dress were really big from the material (Laughs). My

mother we made everything -- and she made these dolls. This was actually -- these are Portuguese dolls with seven skirts one year for Christmas. Made us each one. Even her got a doll.

LEVINE: Awww...

CLARA: And -- but I would say -- you know the clothes were one of those things -- you know? Going to the church was another thing. You know? Like holidays they would serve liquor, not like an American home, you would never give kids -- they weren't really kids. But if you were like fourteen or fifteen or something they would give a little shot of something. Nobody really drank very much because there was nothing mysterious about it -- you know? People say can I have a little of -- you know? Its not's like you have that one shot or you have some wine as you get older. And it wasn't like a big mystery. Like you were old enough to drink whatever. That's probably why none of us really -- (undistinguishable) got a big charge out of it because it was always there.

LEVINE: Oh...

CLARA: My father drank wine every day. We had it if we wanted it. Not as kids, but if you were a teenager. If you wanted it -- it was there. But because I guess it was available nobody thought it was any great thing.

LEVINE: Uh. (Superimposed)

CLARA: I mean later we come to like it a lot. But you know? That would be one of the things(Pause). You know -- people have but like bad -- back in Portugal like back in the Azores -- people when they meet each other they had to be introduced through somebody or someone knew of you -- kind of thing. But some mystery they met. I mean this is how my mother and

father met. And that's how people met. My parents never understood the dating concept until much later. And they never liked it. They never liked it -- bringing somebody in and having them evaluated. What's that guy going do? When you say you were going go out. They'd say "you have food at home". When you go for dinner -- you have food at home. Things like that (Laughing). That was very Portuguese. That was very Azores -- Old World very Old World. That caused a lot of strife, but the younger ones and even for Margaret or Theresa or whatever. Because -- Mary came older and she met her husband who lived down the street and (Aralley) married somebody from over there -- who she kind of knew and they married later. The others went to school here, dated here, whatever and they -- and my mother wasn't old enough to date here when she lived here. So she didn't understand this. So coming here everything was like - - you know afraid of what they hear goes on and things like that.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well that would be different. (Superimposed)

CLARA: So. Yeah. Yeah (Superimposed)

LEVINE: So they were introduced - right? That -- I mean they -- it wasn't like an arranged wedding? That it -- they were...

CLARA: No. No. No -- they were -- they really weren't introduced but my father saw my mother. This is how he says it, "I saw your mother and I knew. And I went to her father and I said that I wanted to know - get - I wanted to marry her".

LEVINE: (Laughs)

CLARA: You know what I m (Laughs)? They kind of look and (flare) or whatever. And then you know? And then they would make sure that family thought it

was okay. That -- that person was interested. But they never went out. They never went out on a date. They kind of saw each other at a feast or church or whatever. That's how they met.

LEVINE: Wow.

CLARA: And I guess my mother lucked out that he was very good to her and cared about her or whatever. And I guess they married -- they married almost seventy years. So you know -- and -- but that was very old world. But -- my mother didn't know differently because she left so young from here.

LEVINE: Right.

CLARA: But my mother never really fit in over there. Because she was educated here. So she always felt like out of place there.

LEVINE: So she always wanted to come back.

CLARA: Always. Yeah.

LEVINE: How about your father? How did he adjust to being here?

CLARA: In the beginning, he worked very hard. He worked two jobs. He was always happy to work. He had a good attitude. He always -- he loved this country. He's very proud to be U.S. citizen. You know he watched the news. He loved -- he loved it here. He liked his homeland but he'd always say this country has all these opportunities. And he's very proud of the fact that so many of us went to college. Margaret and I have master's degree. And Margaret has got a few anyway. But other than Miriam and Arially, Theresa did take some training beyond that, but the others all went to college.

LEVINE: Um uh.

CLARA: And Miriam and Ariley did not, unfortunately because they worked in factories. And -- you know? But you'd never have mathematically this many number of people as well educated in any family. So -- so when they had their fiftieth wedding anniversary my brother Herb gave them -- my niece made this is out of calligraphy, diplomas from the University of Life.

LEVINE: Aw.

CLARA: Master's degrees. Because he said no matter how -- no matter how many degrees we have they are both smarter than all of us together (Laughs). So you know that was like very nice gave them masters' degrees from the University of Life.

LEVINE: Great.

CLARA: People liked that. So my father was very proud of the fact he got his citizenship. You know It was very hard for him to study for it and pass. And he voted all the time. And he'd watch the politicians and whatever. And stayed -- you know? So that's you know for him he did adjust here. He loved going to the store. He loved going to the market. He loved going to the hay market and buying all the produce -- and seeing people. He was very extraverted. So even though yeah I mean he - he mixed with everybody. Everybody come like he was an informal mayor sort of speak. Everybody knew him from the neighborhood. You know?

My mother was quieter. My mother was inside more. My mother did work too, but their personalities were different. He was just a big extravert.

LEVINE: Uh. Yeah.

CLARA: You know?

LEVINE: Well what was it like – like being a part of a family that -- that had immigrated? Did you have any – did that – did that affect you in anyway?

CLARA: Well people didn't know who Portuguese were. That was the first thing around here. Where if it was Fall River they would have known. Because back then there weren't that many people here. So they didn't really understand where -- who they were. They'd say - you know - well you look Italian. Well - I'd say - you could pass as Italian. I'd say well I m not Italian, not that there is anything wrong with that, but I am not. So you know -- the food is different. It's not the same culture in anyway. Nothing they could've never. The Italians we all know - Italian food, Italian people, but the things is people didn't understand who they were at all. Over the years that changed because you know basically because Portuguese owned a lot of small business, they became home owners, they fixed up the places. And you know lot - lot like other ethnic groups were you know they know they gouged a neighborhood when everything was fixed up.

LEVINE: Uh huh

CLARA: That's just - you know – a lot of ethnic groups were like that, the Jews were like that. You know the Italians were like that, the Portuguese, and others. They just – they became kind of rooted in the community.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: So, but no I mean you know I did well in school. My sisters they – everybody did pretty well in school. We all did. It was just different. I guess more of the transition of wanting to do certain things that your friends did and it was like a struggle sometimes to do them because you know your mother didn't understand what that was. Even my mother didn't. As much as my mother knew English as well as she did. This - this was not her experience because she left so young. You know what I mean? She didn't – she wasn't...

LEVINE: She was fifteen or something like that?

CLARA: Yeah. Fifteen and a half. Yeah.

LEVINE: So - it - I suppose when you were younger she sort of understood but then as you got in teenage years.

CLAR: Yeah. As you got older. Yeah. And older she didn't. (Superimposed) But she always knew that education was important. So did my father. Not that they ever were with all the help with college boards and pick schools and all that. But they didn't. But inherently, I think the best was always there to do well in school. And whatever you do is okay but – you know – and I think because the early ones went like Herb it kind of was you know the fact he did others did. You know? In Summerville, the dropout rate was like fifty percent at the time. So when you think about it, this community is very working class and this is kind of you know exceptional that we would even not only finish school but go on.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: But sometimes that happens in the family when one does the rest follow the lead. So when I was going to school there was no question that I

would go, it's a matter of what I wanted to do. I remember telling my mother when I was fifteen, "I want to be a dietician or a hairdresser". That's what I wanted to be (Laughs). I wish I had been the hairdresser and own shop. But the reason I liked that is that I was - I was always thin but I always like - I always thought the health food idea was good. Too bad I didn't run with that, because I was way ahead of my time. And - but I didn't pursue it. I didn't have the science background to be able to pursue that. But you know she wasn't one to know about careers but she knew you know the importance of study and do whatever. And we all did that so she never had worry about us doing homework or whatever.

LEVINE: What was she like as a mother? Like her personality...

CLARA: (Superimposed) She always did things like yet to make the best of it. She'd always tell us not to worry. She was always saying, "Don't worry. Don't worry. Make the best of it.". She would say things like it will be alright. She was reassuring. What else would she oh well when you wanted to go in the park, which used to be a park across the street before the school was there. She would make you crochet first. Hated that. When we were like fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, I don't want to crochet I want to go play ball (Laughs). But my brothers of course could go play ball. But we used to play ball and jump rope for hours outside and ride the bikes for hours. You know unlike other kids today. We were not allowed to watch TV much. You know? My mother - we'd watch sometimes some of the stories she used to call soap operas. But she would tell us to go out and play. It's - it's funny she must of just we all did that. Where's other kids today, you know sitting there in front of the TV-computer I mean there were no computers there. So from that end. She was protective. I mean I think she - she did the best of what she knew considering what her realm of experience was. She got more modern as she got older and more mellow. Andrea has the line, "this is not the woman who raised me"

(Laughs). Cause my mother was like tough when we were like teenagers but she mellowed out and you could almost you know talk to her about anything. Like when my – my nephew who is twenty - six. The girlfriend had a baby. Right here (lower voice). My mother said - no – my - Alex was my mother's little pet because my mother took care of him. He's now twenty – six okay that's him there. This was well a picture of my mother this is his baby. This is Alex's girlfriend's baby. And in the last picture my mother (mumbling undistinguishable) with him with the baby. My mother said when she was told that the girlfriend they're engaged that she was having a baby. This is the baby. And this is the baby now. My mother said they married? And so we said they – their engaged. My mother didn't say anything else. If that had been one of us you kidding all hell would broken loose. But my mother knew your – you don't want to force somebody -- want make sure everything you know going to work out. But that was like, that's never happened in our family. But...

LEVINE: Why do you think she mellowed?

CLARA: I think she read a lot. I think she watched Oprah (Laughs). I think she – she watched all these shows. She used to read all the time. Listen to the radio. And I think with age and things I think she got more of a perspective. She was quite modern actually pretty modern for her age. She was less conservative in some ways than my oldest two sisters in some ways.

LEVINE: You mean later?

CLARA: Yeah. Yeah. Cause we'd talk about like -- what candidate do you want? She used to like Hilary but Hilary voted for the war. So she didn't want Hilary anymore. She wanted Obama when he was not even a front runner when there was one--eighteen of them. She said I think he's good. I think

he has lot of good ideas a lot of energy. She picked him out way (emphasized) like way over a year ago that he would be a good man. Now, that's kind of unusual for a mother pick out somebody less experienced, whose African –American, not well known at the time. But my mother thought I liked – I liked the way he is. And I -- and we most of us are Obama supporters except a few. But my mother actually is somebody you could talk to her about these changes at work, and takeovers, and layoffs, and whatever. And she understood them because she kept current with things. But early on she didn't have time for all that. Plus when we were growing up she was growing through the change of life. She was a crab. I mean my mother had me at forty and Andrea at forty – three (Laughs). So back when we were little kids we'd come home for lunch and my mother would be in a witchy mood (Laughs). No. Not realizing that at the time, for awhile she was in a bad mood, but she had a house full of kids.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: And

LEVINE: Did she – did they have so many children because of religion -- I mean was it like religion that

CLARA: I don't think -- I don't think they knew better. You know what I mean? I just don't think they knew better. You know? And you just - you just have whatever God gives you type of thing. You know you don't question anything. And you know now that my older sisters you know have had their kids they say (undistinguishable mumbles and laughs) I wouldn't like a house full of all these kids. I would have lost my mind with all of them - how many -- given how many she had plus she lost four. How hard that

must have been. And the last one she had lost my father wasn't there. He had died after my father left.

LEVINE: Oh.

CLARA: Andre the one whose between me and Louie. So my mother had lost him and my father was in the United States when he died. He died right after he was born.

LEVINE: So did -- so that one died in the Azores and

CLARA: They all did. They all did.(Superimposed)

LEVINE: They all did. They all did. (Superimposed)

CLARA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: So my mother lost twins who were six weeks and a girl who was three years old named Theresa. They called her little Theresa. You know the thing. And then through this Theresa was named after her which she never liked that idea but that's the way they did it then. And so my mother went from losing four children and then coming here with seven. And she was thirty nine years old. Came here with seven kids and then had two more. And Mary will tell you the story how they found out I was born. Let Mary tell you the story (Laughs). Cause that's -- I was a big secret because I was in the hospital for four months.

LEVINE: Oh.

CLARA: And so you know and they were embarrassed to tell the others that I was born. So they found out when they were on the bus.

LEVINE: Wow.

CLARA: So you know they said, "Do you want to see your sister?". And they said, "What sister?" And that's how they went to see that I was born. My mother was always wear these house coats I was only born two pounds. So they didn't know I existed. They didn't know I was (undistinguishable) nobody knew my mother was having me. And same thing with Andrea. They found out she was gone one - one thanksgiving they figured that somebody brought a turkey from work they brought it home. My mother wasn't there. Where's mom? Where's mom? Where's ma? And she was gone and she had Andrea that day. And so my brother-in-law had to break the news to them that they had another sister (Laughs). That's how they knew. But you know it was not those things were not talked about.

LEVINE: They weren't discussed. (Superimposed) Yeah.

CLARA: No. It wasn't talked about. Plus in my case they didn't think I was going to make it. So you know it was like that just the way that was so.

LEVINE: Yeah. So were they – so were they both very strict than as far as dating and everything?

CLARA: Yeah (Superimposed). Yeah. But my father worked two jobs. He wasn't around a lot. And they didn't really understand the concept of going out, having a good time, going out and meeting somebody, and going out. They didn't understand that. You know - I - we use - it's like miracle that somebody's going show up at the door.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you think that like affected some of you?

CLARA: Oh yeah. It did because it was fights and arguments and you know? And battles with my parents and you know? And all that kind of thing. In time they – they -- you know accepted things but early on it was not with my brothers but the others.

LEVINE: Yeah. So they treated the brothers differently.

CLARA: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: Can you say anything about their privileges or their responsibility.

CLARA: Well they get to go to games and out and whatever. And it was not questioned. I mean they were still strict with them but not to the same level. But given their realm of experience, they didn't – they didn't have any other context to judge anything. You know what I mean? They didn't know. And plus the Portuguese priest would say things in church that would you know discourage it too.

LEVINE: Oh.

CLARA: So you know? They didn't know. I mean they came they lived in a town of four thousand people where everybody knew each other. To a bigger city you know? That's how it was it was like you know years later they mellowed up. It's still labeled like you know into the screening you know and all this other stuff. The things that my father would say (Laughs). So it's like you know you were encouraged to bring people here. Because if – if you – if someone was go through the ( ) it better be somebody you were quite interested in. Because forget it you weren't going to bring just anybody through that. So that would be -- that would be the adjustment

more than anything there. And then some things like people didn't like my mother didn't – I think my mother knew about the girl scouts, because I was a girl scout and I was allowed to go camping. And I did go away camping because I always liked that. That – that was a very American thing, but my mother may have remembered that I don't know. But when I wanted to go I get to go. You know -- I was I don't know like about thirteen – fourteen I don't know fifteen something like that. But that's typical U.S. thing. I think I was the only one that went cause the others I don't think they were interested but I – I got to go. So you know (Laughs). It was like when you think how you had to sell all those cookies I don't think my mother ever understood that about that (Laughs). And you know sell girl scout cookies and all those things. You know? But I'm trying to think what other things.

LEVINE: But she must of remembered things from here.

CLARA: Some things. I think that might have been one that she did remember.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: You know? Maybe she wasn't one, but she may have known people that were that kind of thing.

LEVINE: Do you think she was unhappy when she first went to the Azores?

CLARA: Oh she hated it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: She went from you know a town where she'd go to the movies on Saturdays. And you know and not that she had this great life but she got

to do things. Even as a kid to a remote area where she didn't know anybody. She never been there. And people didn't really accept her.

LEVINE: And did her mother and father speak Portuguese?

CLARA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did they speak English as well?

CLARA: Um I don't know how much English they knew. But the things when she went back there she didn't grow up experiences with anybody there because she wasn't in school with them. So when she went there she had nothing in common. Most of them had already finished school because they only went to elementary school those days. So she had the tutor and then when they found out that she couldn't teach anyway because she was a US citizen. Her mother said, "it's like throwing money to the ocean". So she felt bad she couldn't get educated either I mean beyond that. She did have some but you know so-so on two counts she got kind of like cheated.

LEVINE: Yeah. But then she – she hitched her wagon to your father who she felt was going to come here.

CLARA: Yeah. And then she thought after she got married I said to him do-when did you think you were gonna come here? She said she thought the next day (laughing). She said that – she said that – six months ago – that she thought that she could come here right then – you know? But then of course, my grandmother offered my father land and he didn't want to come here. So she was very upset. So my father was farming that extra land and she was heartbroken -- you know -- that he didn't want to come right then. And then later they did come. But then he – she set motion for

my uncle to call for my mother – my father. Because my father did not want her coming with the kids until he could be sure he could earn a living.

LEVINE: Did your father ever talk about those years -- one year that he was here?

CLARA: Yeah. Said he starved here. He suffered and he starved. It was awful. He almost went back. He said I cried a lot here.

LEVINE: Because he couldn't get work?

CLARA: He was cutting grass in a country club. My uncle's country club ironically. Couldn't get work anywhere and then that's when he decided to come here to Summer – Cambridge.

LEVINE: And what was in Cambridge?

CLARA: Those few people that he knew and he got a job in Cambridge. And that's – we stayed for like a year or so and then my mother came. So he saved money, got an apartment, it's amazing that he did this. And got furniture -- got used furniture. Got everything setup. And then she came through New York and he went with her two brothers to New York City pick them up at Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Oh.

CLARA: Which is amazing when you think of it in those days. No highways. They were on secondary roads. And things like that so -- you know -- he just -- in a way for us growing up it was better that we were not in Fall River because there wasn't as much opportunity there and it's a mill town. So being up it here it was actually better for us.

LEVINE: Do you think your father – he knew your mother wanted to be here but did – did he have his own reasons too?

CLARA: Well the way he used to say they had enough to eat they had the farm land. But they knew that they'd never get educated here and my father had so many girls and back in those days the girls had to have dowries.

LEVINE: Oh. Yeah.

CLARA: So that the other thing is he didn't have people to work the land -- you know. At that time Louie was very young and the end of a food chain there and he only had Herb. He had all those daughters. So he decided to come (Laughing).

LEVINE: Yeah. That's for funny that it -- I mean for a man to have all those daughters (Laughing).

CLARA: Yeah. And So my brother in-law Lyell, Andrea's husband, said he's still waiting for the goat and the chickens and the cow he is suppose to get. And he said that at Christmas time kiddingly (Laughing).

LEVINE: You mean as a dowry?

CLARA: He was kidding (Laughing). Andrea's husband he said he was waiting for the goat, and the chicken and the cow (Laughing).

LEVINE: Wow -- Wow (Laughing). Well it sounds like you have very close knit family.

CLARA: Yeah. I mean – you know it was closer back then and you know. It's just the things we use to do -- you know. We use to a -- on Sundays --

whenever we visit my relatives in Rhode Island my mother would make a roasted chicken dinner and all of the roasted potatoes and everything that went with it in a big covered thing. Wrapped up in a table cloth and we would stop at a rest area and eat (Laughing). In fact there is probably a picture here with one us doing that -- we 'd bring folding chairs and everything. And sat there. Now they call it tailgate parties. But -- we actually would do that cause -- cause we couldn't go out to eat.

LEVINE: Right.

CLARA: But -- it's one of the pictures here. Its kind of funny. And -- in one of the rest areas. That's what we use to do. And -- we used to love it because it had a grill there and everything. But a lot of times we brought the food already made. Now people do that but back then -- Oh here. That's one of the rest areas off the highway (Laughing). A grill -- brought chairs -- you know -- brought our own food -- brought a whole table cloth. You know what I mean have a nice dinner outside (Laughing). Cause we didn't know the places really where to go. Years later we did but -- you know it's -- you know -- people would do that and have little picnics. And sometimes go to the state parks to do that too. But a lot of times those areas they would have these places where you could go and we thought that was the biggest thing.

LEVINE: Yeah. Were you ever treated badly because -- or anyone in the family because you had come from somewhere else and you weren't American?

CLARA: Well I came from here so I won't say I did -- cause -- you know -- I mean I was born here so I never really felt that. No, I don't know if the others did but -- I don't know -- I can't say I did.

LEVINE: Did you speak Portuguese in-at home?

CLARA: They did at times and sometimes especially if they didn't want us to know what was going on. Other times you know there was the era of television and people used English -- you know. So -- so you know -- it was kind of a combination. So -- the older ones had left and gotten married and -- you know -- then when -- when I grew up really Miriam and Arielle weren't here they had already left. They had gotten married -- so it was just really Herb and then Herb went away to school. And then it was just Theresa and then all the others, and Louie went away to school so when I grew up there was only a brief period of time when everybody was here. Cause -- I am seventeen years younger than Arielle. Andrea is twenty years younger than Arielle. So Andrea was in the crib and I was like three and I slept between Miriam and Arielle in bed (Laughing). You know what I mean (Laughing). So really there wasn't a big period of time when we were all together -- you know what I mean. So we always say -- Miriam always saying, "I could be your mother. I could be your mother." And whenever I went anywhere sometimes even recently it was a couple of years ago people would say, "Oh your mother is in the lobby waiting for you". And it wasn't my mother cause my mother was home in a wheel chair. But you know -- people often thought she was my mother or Andrea's mother. That happened a lot you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah.

CLARA: So -- Andrea and I aren't that much older than their kids. So in some ways Miriam and Arielle treat us like their daughters in some ways. You know what I mean? It's like as oppose to sisters.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well it's a different generation almost.

CLARA: There's a whole generation between them and Andrea and I. And even Louie when he was alive he was -- it was sort of like Louie on -- the middle ones were kind of like baby boomers and then the others -- no - Miriam, Arielle, and kind of Theresa to a point were the older group. You know Miriam and Arielle were more old school. You know -- so you kind of always respected that -- you know. That even though they were your sisters they're like -- you know really like my mother.

LEVINE: Uh huh. Yeah. Wow. (Pause) Let's see. How about -- changes did -- well you did say your mother mellowed out a lot.

CLARA: Yeah.

LEVINE: She got less strict...

CLARA: She was more with it and she kept up on things. And plus people were always in and out of here so that was like stimulation too for even her and my father so they got -- you know more aware of things.

LEVINE: Well did -- How did they socialize? Did they socialize?

CLARA: Um. They went to like -- you know festivals and events and church things or whatever but a lot of times it was with people they knew like growing up they'd go to somebody's house to visit. But a lot of times people came here cause it was so many people. So a lot of people would stop in and visit back in those early years.

LEVINE: You mean would they be Portuguese or not necessarily?

CLARA: Mostly (Superimposed). Mostly. But like one of the neighbors that was biracial back in Cambridge my moth - my father never saw a black man

before Oliver and the person who – who taught my father about the Charles River and hay market was Oliver. And Oliver took my father to the hay market to buy produce cheaper. And then Oliver took us to the beach and took us different places like the Charles River which we would never have known that Arthur Fiedler was there. So for years, he took his little car so he would take us with him and his kids. And his wife was white and he was black. And so they would come and visit us. Oliver and Maria we'd call them. And Maria would tell stories to my mother how when she wanted to apply for mortgage for her house she had to go alone. So you know we never really were - that's how we learned about racism and all these things. But Oliver and Marie use to would visit a lot and – you know from Cambridge they'd come here quite often. And then my mother had other friends that visited that she knew most of them were Portuguese but that was kind of an unusual American couple that would visit. You know? But they knew – they knew my family back in Cambridge. And – so when you think about it that – you know to think that we got exposed to Arthur Fiedler because of Oliver. And he was a janitor at MIT. And -- he had been there for many years. His son is a doctor. And one time Margaret was at a meeting for some school thing and -- some administrators conference or something and she – somebody said they were so and so Yearwood and she goes are you Oliver's son (Laughing)? You know -- from many years later and it was just weird cause to say you grew up next to each other in Cambridge but that's – that was like a big deal. And I remember my nephew Steve say, "How come your black?" to Oliver. And my mother said, "Don't say that". And he goes no it's okay and he said, "Young man Jesus made me black." But I mean it's like things that we never would have got exposed too. You know so? My father never saw a black person in the Azores. So he had – you know – he knew that they existed but he never seen any. Because it's kind of very Mediterranean but it was homogenous kind of population. It wasn't until he was here. But -- he was a good friend to our family. You know – many – I remember

them coming a lot that – that was one of – they – they were mostly Portuguese people. My mother had a few friends in the neighborhood here who came over – you know – that she knew. Mostly couple old women. My father always knew people that he knew from over they'd come. Portuguese people usually.

LEVINE: How about other ethnic groups? People who came from somewhere else were they around at all?

CLARA: Not really. Other than the Murphy family here that we were friendly with and the Fabianos were Italian they were two doors down. But that's because of school we knew them. And other families around here we kind of knew them. But that's because we went school with them and we went to their house or they came here kind of a thing. But they were mostly the neighborhood, kids we played with.

LEVINE: Were these immigrant families? Or were they – people who...

CLARA: No. The Fabianos were probably it another generation removed. And the others -- not really, mostly Portuguese, but not all. Kind of mixed -- you know in the years later it's just people you know from school and from the city kind of a thing. I remember when my brother Louie went to Cornell and one – one time he came home with – I forget what the vacation was all the sudden we were eating broccoli. We didn't even know – that broccoli existed. You know what I mean? Never ate broccoli. We ate kale and other kinds of greens but never were exposed to broccoli. You know what I mean? Just certain things that you know just never had. You know kind of funny.

LEVINE: He learned about it at Cornell?

CLARA: Yes. Somebody there must have had broccoli -- I don't know whatever it was and all of the sudden he -- you know. There were some other things like that that happened. We had pizza growing up. We never really had pizza growing up until my brothers were in school, high school and then we made pizza at home. You would buy dough at the bakery and make it. We had our sauce and we put our sauce -- Portuguese sausage on it and whatever. My parents -- my father liked pizza. My mother never liked it my mother didn't like Italian food that much. My father liked it but you know we weren't exposed to spaghetti. Yeah, no. Over the decades later yeah. Because you see it or whatever. But certain things we weren't. So mostly Portuguese food sometimes some American food. But sometimes it was a Portuguese flare. I mean that's just the food we were use too. And then -- you know -- over the years your eating everything from other-other countries.

LEVINE: Right.

CLARA: You know? So -- so the food was a big thing.

LEVINE: Yeah. Was it -- do you think there any -- you know if you were to say -- Portuguese people are some certain ways? Are they any like probably over generalizations but that you would say about -- Portuguese people as far as personality as far as attributes or what's considered important?

CLARA: I'd say family orientated. They're -- if you come into their house they'd be insulted if you didn't have anything to eat or drink. They'd want -- you know -- eat something, eat this. They think -- that you know how come your not going to have anything. That -- that's a big thing to them. That if your there you have to have something. And you know -- otherwise its like you know -- come on come on -- you know? Where is when they say come by they really mean it. When others will say, "oh you'll have to stop

by". Yeah. They – they – they might mean it when they say it but they really want you to give them advance notice and unless it's a close a friend it's just one of those polite things people say. But they actually do mean it. So you know – and they'll extend their home to you and whatever. So – it is different you know from – from that end. Like if somebody -- I remember people we hardly knew would come in and they'd be eating at the table or they'd be -- you know – my father-they would catch -- they would know of somebody and not really know my father but they knew of somebody mutual they'd be in here having a glass of wine with them. You know what I mean -- so that kind of a thing (Laughing). We took in people we didn't even know. That needed some place to stay or somebody to translate or whatever. But somebody knew of somebody who was in a bad way or needed help, whatever. One lady stayed for five months with her two kids. She was a widow.

LEVINE: And she was from the Azores?

CLARA: Yeah. And her husband had a lot of debts and committed suicide. And she came here with thirty – five dollars in her pocketbook. And we took them in and they stayed here for that long a period of time. The daughter went to college here. The son became a plumber. We didn't know that. Last – was about forty years ago right before my father died we had a big problem with the cellar with pipes – with leaky pipes. Nobody would come. We called ten plumbers nobody showed up. We called one company they finally came but we didn't realize it was his company. And he saw the name and the address and he showed up on a Sunday and he said it was twenty years ago to the day that I entered the United States and I came to this house. And I was here for five months.

LEVINE: Wow.

CLARA: And it was the fourteen year old kid that came here with his sister and mother. And he even he said if you ever go back there any time you need a place stay and whatever. And he and his sister were really upset when my mother and father both died. And they brought all the kids over and wanted my father to see them. And also this other stuff. And when the woman would see my mother in church she'd say to everybody, "if it wasn't for this lady I wouldn't be here. This lady did a lot for me or whatever." One of the few people who gave my mother that acknowledgement. But in her daughters said, my kids understand what your parents did for me. Nobody ever did for any of us. But like that was so unusual. Got her a job. Got her place to live. The lady brought a house later. Her kids became educated. They did very well for themselves. And -- they were here -- I mean I was fourteen when they came or fifteen or something. No I was a little bit older than him cause he was bouncing the ball and I was having (undistinguishable) (Laughing). random kid. But the son and the daughter and the mother to-to fit them in that apartment we already had a lot of kids.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: To be here five months is a lot. So it was a lot – it was a lot of stories of people like this who came through. They were the ones that were here the longest.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

CLARA: But my mother did that a lot with people. She was like the Jane Adams of her day.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

CLARA: Kind of unsung not acknowledged. But when she died there was tons – there was hundreds of people at her wake same thing with my father.

LEVINE; Really? Oh were they a lot of Portuguese people?

CLARA: Yeah. People who you would never expected all came by. My father had – oh it was a huge funeral and you know it went through five cities. And my father always would say I want a big funeral and if a lot of people don't come to get up out of the casket and yell at them all (Laughing). But no – but that was like to show their respect (Laughing Undistinguishable) of the Godfather. But my father got a lot of people of jobs that he didn't even know. You know knew of somebody.

LEVINE: You mean people who were just coming and needed?

CLARA: Or somebody - mutual friend knew somebody that needed this and he would – either sponsor them, get them jobs. My mother would -- for that lady that came with her two kids she filled out a H-1-B Visa for her and said she was her maid. My mother never had a maid. But would just say that so she could get a job here, so she could come here. Things like that that my mother did for people. And -- you know just kind of quietly did these things. Translated for people. Went to Mass General. Went to all over. They didn't have translators. Went by bus with them. Did all these things. So my mother did that for her-her whole life I remember that like that level of service. And my father you know wasn't a social worker but he'd got apartments, jobs and would go and vouch for people and everything. The funny story is my Uncle when he came with five kids, my father's brother, nobody would rent to them. So my mother didn't want them to go to Cambridge because it wouldn't be a good influence in the East Cambridge. So she found an apartment down the street. And the landlord didn't want kids. And she got the landlord into taking the kids.

They said, "How many kids?". She said, "Three.". And he said well,-- so when she told my Aunt, my Aunt says, "What you going -- what am I going to do with the other two?". (Laughing) So my mother said. My cousin just realized this story when my mother died. My mother said, "Tell them that those are the cousins that are visiting". (Laughing) So they're perfect kids. They're very clean. Their good kids. This and -- do you know my -- my -- those children never even knew that. That my mother had told them about - to tell them the other cousins are visiting (Laughing). So they stayed there for years until they were able to buy a house.

LEVINE: Wow.

CLARA: But my mother is very inventive.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: Like this.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: Cause she did stuff like this.

LEVINE: Wow.

CLARA: All the time.

LEVINE: Wow.

CLARA: For people and -- cause she -- you know -- she knew how it really was.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: Yeah.

LEVINE: What was wrong with East Cambridge? What was it that ...

CLARA: It was – you know – it was not the best influence for a lot of immigrants to be there. And -- you know -- I mean kind of not- not so much gang well kind of but it just wasn't a good influence.

LEVINE: Like crime? And stuff?

CLARA: Yeah. And not that the schools weren't as good. It just wasn't as good of an influence and – you know – a lot of the young kids would get in trouble and things like that and so thought that this area would be a better area. And you know -- so the relatives tended to stay around here in this general neighborhood. And that's what they did.

LEVINE: So did you have a large extended family here?

CLARA: Yeah. My father had – when I was fourteen my uncle started to come. when I was fourteen, fifteen, sixteen my father's brothers, my Uncle Francis came. My Uncle Joe later came. My -- Their families. My Uncle Manny later came. My uncle Herb came from Canada. He was in Canada. So my father had four brothers that came with their families. And they all lived around here except my Uncle Herb lived here at first and then moved out to Arlington. But the rest were all around here.

LEVINE: And how about your mother's side?

CLARA: They stayed in Rhode Island.

(Pause)

LEVINE: Wow. – Wow is there anything else – we just coming on an hour here – is there anything else -- relevant to -- being in immigrant – growing up in an immigrant family even though you were born here – that-I don't know that is part of what you think about when you – when you think about your life – and your –your particular circumstances?

CLARA: I guess -- I think we are all survivors. All of us. You know – pretty resilient. I mean you'll probably notice when you talk to everybody that everybody is pretty much – you know -- strong in that way because that they saw a lot and my father worked. That everybody is pretty hard working and -- you know -- kind of entrepreneurial and kind of think around inside the box and find your way around whatever. Get that from my mother. You know – always find a way, always figure something out. My father was very up beat, very -- you know -- charismatic. My father you couldn't say no to him. Everybody even the people – when he worked -- he worked two jobs. Second job was in the supermarket. People till this day remember him and he hadn't worked there in – well he – he retired from there when he was sixty –five. And even years later when he would go over there everybody knew Andre. You know? It's just. So when we see how hard they worked and what they went through its sort of like in grained as like you know if they could do this at their age and come here with nothing. There's nothing you really can't do. You know what I mean – maybe it's inherent or kind of like that survivor thing where – where other people may not have had that exposure to know. You know what I mean you don't wanna – you know everybody's hardworking because they saw how hard he worked. And everybody was – you know – everybody pretty much has that trend. (pause) I would – I would say that yeah I guess even though everybody has had different careers and different jobs everybody still has kind of a helping attitude in a service orientation whether they do volunteer things or they do something for somebody

whatever in their own way. I mean – I think everybody in this family to some extent has that. Some are quieter about it than others – but.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: I would say -- soc-- more of a social conscious.

LEVINE: And how about just growing up with that many -- sisters and – and brothers? I mean that's -- most people don't have that many people in their family? (Laughing)

CLARA: We had one bathroom. (Superimposed) We had one bathroom and you had to knock. When you had to go to the bathroom knock once. I have to go in there. Knock twice hurry up. Knock three times get out of there – get out of there.(Laughing) We learned to take fast showers. And then it would be like I spent too much in the bath and my curly hair so like was trying to make my curls or something. But it was like a big deal to like you'd get up early, shower, eat, and you know and all go to school at the same time. And – you know -- my grandmother lived with us too for a – I don't know – a eleven years.

LEVINE: Wow.

CLARA: My mother took care of her and she was in for it. So a lot of people to get through that bathroom in the morning. So that was always going, "Hurry up. Hurry up. I have to go to school, go to work". So I don't know how we all got through one bathroom. That was one of the things like you never had the luxury of taking a long shower, ever. You know – and the other thing is that we had a big long couch and we did have other chairs but we'd all like covert the couch. And till this day everyone of us has a blanket (laughing). And oh luxury use to lay on the couch with the blanket

everyone of us do this. Instead of a recliner, everybody wants to be on the couch because it was like the phone rang nobody wanted to get up an answer it cause you lost your space (Laughing). And they'd go, "you get it", "you get it", "you get it". Kick each other. One would be on one side of the couch the feet here and the other would be here with the feet here and it would be like Andrea and I use to have feet fights. (Laughing) Anyway to get the other one off the couch. And so – then like my (undistinguishable) Helen would be on the couch or Louie and I be on the couch on opposite ends and it's like nobody wanted to get out. And so that's was like the converted spot it's like you didn't have a lot of – you know – place which you can lounge you didn't have that luxury. And there was one TV. There was no other TVs in the house. It's that one. So it's like we pretty much watched the same things. We didn't really fight over what was on but – the couch was the big thing. With a lot of people it was tough. My sisters, Margaret won't admit this but she use to take Theresa's clothes and wear them without Theresa knowing and put them back (Laughing). That caused a lot of trouble. Theresa would find out and get mad start yelling. And then Theresa was busty (whispering) so she – Theresa – so she'd say, "I didn't take them I can't fit in your sweaters". But she use to take them anyway (Laughing). And she was the one that - under Theresa – younger – female - under her – younger - none us did that. But -- Margaret was notorious for doing that. And so that would be big fights all the time. Because Theresa worked and had nice clothes. And see Margaret was in high school and if she wanted to go somewhere she'd take her outfits and wear them without her knowing. (Laughing) That was one of the things - Andrea and I didn't wear each other clothes really too much difference in age. I mean we're – I was like two and half years older. But – those did and Mar - maybe –Margaret, Helen shared clothes but that – I remember that was Theresa and Margaret always-- you know –that – that – that (undistinguishable) clothes. That was the phone. You know – using the phone somebody would want to be on the

phone. Somebody be all the way down the stairs with the cord with the phone. So nobody would hear who they were talking too. (Laughing) That was one thing with one phone. One car. We had pigs growing up downstairs when – when we would make sausage my mother would kill the pig – have the pig killed at the farm bring the pig back. And the pig would be cut up downstairs to make sausages. So sometimes we would be down there you'd have – during the time of year made the sausages pigs would be there. I mean they were dead. But they would make them with the thing. Now they just buy big hunks of meat and make it. But – there was some strange things like growing up like the pigs were hung up. But one time we had three. (Laughing) And so when (Undistinguishable) (Laughing) things like that - kind of different that nobody else had. My mother use to tell a story that they had a pig in the driveway and that – what do you call it – station wagon and my father said to pick up that hitch hiker who needed a ride. And then when he saw that a pig was in the back he thought they were Indians. And he wanted to get out cause he didn't want even go the rest of the way. But that was my mother wanted the stories (Undistinguishable) oh what kind of people are you that would have a dead - dead pig in your car. You know? But – yeah going – growing up with a lot of people was hard. You know? We use to fight over the dishes. Who wanted to do – nobody wanted to do the dishes. You know? Who – you wipe this. You didn't wipe that. You wash that. We didn't have a dish washer. Folding clothes. You had fold clothes. You had – you had do housework before you went out. You know? That was like – you know? Couldn't go out until all the housework was done. You know?

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: It was like one of those things it's like oh. You know? You wanted to go and do this – no iron curtains. Oh no, wash the floor. And it's like – you

know – but there was a lot of people. And -- you know -- there was good things but you know obviously with so many sisters.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA; You know? They were – they were like you know build up a big house all the time so it was never quiet.

LEVINE: Oh.

CLARA: With all these people here.

LEVINE: So you would never be alone probably?

CLARA: No. No. Very – I don't ever - ever be alone. I remember always like a house full of people.

LEVINE: And is that true for like everybody? Their still -- you know -- they're not loners. Their more – wanting people around.

CLARA: Yeah. I mean I kind of enjoy the quiet myself. (Laughing) You know – when my mother was ill and taking care of her there was always people coming by. And it was like this what like the community kind of meeting place and people come to see my mother. And of course now that she's gone they don't come as much but they were always – my mother was like the center of it - of everything. And my father too when he was alive. They'd come to visit and -- you know? The birthdays, the occasions, the Sunday dinners it was always like – everything – every-you know – everything focused around that. But – my brothers were – my brothers weren't around as much once – once they went off to school. They were out doing their thing. You know? My brothers never really cooked here. I

don't know how they learned to cook but they do. They know how to cook but they didn't do it here. That time. My brothers were probably more – their less macho than most Portuguese men. Probably cause they had so many sisters.

LEVINE: Oh.

CLARA: You'd think we trained them. Cause – it's like after having so many sisters around they had to be. You know they had to be like well – they – they - their pretty liberal. They were pretty – (undistinguishable) pretty liberal compared to my older sisters. My – Herb is liberal compared to his wife. And Louie always was. And you know – typically especially in Herb's age group that wouldn't have been the case but having had so many sisters and my mother was so strong minded I guess it would have to be that way. You know that he – he's pretty open minded. They – but he's not really typical in that way of the culture. He's not. No he's not.

LEVINE: Oh –oh right. Right. Right. Right. (Superimposed)

CLARA: You know?

LEVINE: So what struck you about – wait let me just – were over an hour.

CLARA: Okay.

LEVINE: I just want to – ok – when you went (clears throat). When you went to the Azores was it – was there anything about the culture there that really struck you as different?

CLARA: I had seen pictures. I knew it was very green. Food was like – what I was accustomed too. I guess the smallness of the town. The size. I mean

everything was cobblestone. I remember Andrea and I were walking around and going “Oh my God we’re wearing heels”, there is no way you can wear heels on those cobblestone streets. So we ended up putting sneakers on. Couldn’t – Couldn’t walk around cobblestone. And – now everything is paved. A lot of streets weren’t at the time we went. Everything focused around everybody hanging out the window it seemed or they were all sitting on the stoop. But of course it was also vacation time and there were a lot of visitors there and feasts going around. Very quiet -- kind of rural. But then you’d have the just position of the cowboys with horses and you know milking cows. And then there would be Mercedes in the same street. You know they’d be driving a Mercedes and BMW and then be all these cows. You know? When I went with Louie, we went for a ride we had to stop because a cow was in the middle of the street. (Laughing) And you had to give the cow the right away. (Laughing) You know things like that – that is was like – very – a lot of wild flowers – you know -- I didn’t expect. See I lived in upstate New York for many years a lot of mountains in upstate New York it looked like that. A lot of mountains and a lot of lakes but very pristine lakes. And then of course you have the oceans. You had all that all and all around cause these were islands like this. I – I – I

LEVINE: Were you well received?

CLARA: Yeah. Oh yeah. It was like – it was like a parade – they were gonna have a parade come to – twenty – two had arrived from one family it was a lot. And --

LEVINE: Twenty – two?

CLARA: Twenty-two of us came – so the whole town kinda came out. And you saw cousins you never saw. Like in this picture here this is one of the

later pictures this is with – with a lot of the cousins that was from here and there. There were so many they couldn't fit in the picture. (Phone rings)  
That's nice.

LEVINE: Okay. We are going to pause here.

CLARA: Let me just grab that.

LEVINE: Continue and – why don't you say what has made you very satisfied that you've done in your life – what - what do – consider- what do you feel proud of – or what do you feel like has been a really -- triumph or accomplishment or ?

CLARA: Well besides going to school when I did I mean – I don't know if that was such a big accomplishment back then. But going back as an adult before I was fifty getting a master's was a big deal. Competing with you know people I was old enough to be their mother.

LEVINE: Right.

CLARA: Um. What other thing? (Pause)

LEVINE: Do you think your family, your mother and father in particular, found the American dream? Or do you think – if – if what –how – what would you say was a their greatest maybe dream they actually realized?

CLARA: I would say probably educating their children. Would- they would –my father would say that – my brother wrote a eulogy about my father and in it I can – I have – I have a copy of it were he kind of surmised – surmised you know my father's sentiments.

LEVINE: Oh yeah?

CLARA: In it. And it talked about

LEVINE: Oh that – that would be nice to have. (Superimposed)

CLARA: Yeah. It talked about you know how he viewed life. And you know maybe not in terms of all financial things although everybody did relatively well. Everybody improved their life more than they would have had out there for sure. My father would always buy lottery tickets hoping to strike it big. (Laughing)

LEVINE: (Laughing)

CLARA: You know what I mean?

LEVINE: Yeah. (Mumbling)

CLARA: He was really into that. I mean everybody did well. Nobody got in trouble. Everybody worked hard. Everybody had good careers. Better lives. I would say – he would say that they realized it. And it think that maybe they realized it too. I mean within their –considering they came in my mid-life. They did not come young.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: So I would say he would say he did he – you know was very proud of what he achieved and he always would you know say that he was a rich man by relatively –relative standards he-he was. He owned three houses before he died.

LEVINE: Oh.

CLARA: Which is amazing considering how many kids he had and everybody went to school. And he only had a second grade education so I would say he did.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CLARA: Um.

LEVINE: Okay. Well I think that might be a good spot to end.

CLARA: Okay.

LEVINE: And I want to thank you very much.

CLARA: Oh your welcome.

LEVINE: Yeah. I am speaking with Clara Serpa and – this is Janet Levine. It's January 12<sup>th</sup> 2009. And we're signing off.