



Allen Decker

My name is Allen Decker, and my story that I want to share was my introduction to New Bedford and the south coast of Massachusetts. Candidly, I knew zero or next to zero about this area. About the only thing that I had ever heard about the area was a reference to Buzzards Bay in a Jimmy Buffett song, and I had really no idea where it was. But July of 2004, I moved from Charleston, South Carolina to New Bedford with my family for my work. And the element that I want to relate is that the very first thing I did for work was attend an event under a big tent at the Fort Tabor, at the area that's the big grassy area between the fort and outer New Bedford Harbor. Just that big open space and this huge tent. And it was a very nice event, and it happened to be an absolutely glorious summer day, as I said, in July.

And I remember standing with my wife out on, we went outside the tent for some just a period of time, and we were standing there in the, not exactly twilight, but the late afternoon, early evening. As I said, it was an absolutely beautiful day. I think if you looked out across Buzzards Bay, I thought initially, "Wow, it's so clear. I can see France." Well, I'm kidding. But that was the Elizabeth Islands, obviously, that were on the horizon. And I thought, "Oh, that'd be fun to go see out there someday." And I have gotten to Cuttyhunk and Cuttyhunk is a very special island, and I can see why people really treasure their time out there. But the day the water was sparkling, the sun was... It was just crystal clear that day I felt it felt really good. And what I recall from that time standing there, the weather, as I said, was just really nice, was that there was a bunch of possibility in my life, in our lives, my family's life, and in the life of this community that I was getting ready to become a part of.

Just the possibility of what could happen. And we're now in the beginning of the summer of 2023, so it's been 19 years. I thought, candidly, that we'd be here three, four, maybe five years at the most, and then onto the next adventure. But it's been 19 years and it has honestly really been as good an experience as I could have anticipated, really being here in the West End in New Bedford, and getting to know the South Coast in Virons from the state line with Rhode Island on over to Wareham North to Plymouth and Freetown, sort of the watershed for Buzzards Bay. And then of course, Falmouth and Bourne out on the Cape. And it's been magical and it's just been a very positive experience for us. And we have made great friends in our neighborhood, and we both enjoy how we spend our time. I'm still working, but my wife has retired and those days are coming for me as well soon.

But it really has been just a very pleasant, pleasant experience here. New Bedford is a special place, and I'm really glad that I've come to know it and love it, and that the people who come here who know it, find it to be a special place as well. And there are not other places like it that I've experienced in my life. And so I just, I'm interested in sharing that and the recollection of 19 years ago and what might happen here and what I will tell you has happened here, has been a wonderful experience. So that's my story, and I'm sticking to it.