



Patricia Andrade

Interviewer:

All right. So this is Emily Reinl. I am here with Trisha who is going to tell a story. So Trisha, why don't you introduce yourself and go ahead.

Patricia Andrade:

Sure. My name's Patricia Andrade. I'm a native New Bedford person. I was born in New Bedford many years ago. I am a practicing surgeon, and I worked for many years in New Bedford, and I work outside the city right now, but New Bedford's, my hometown. And I wanted to talk a little bit about some of the things that are most important to me about New Bedford and some of the most important memories and sort of add that to the storytelling. So as I thought about this, one of the things that kind of came to me is that memories are interesting because you are not really sure if you remember things exactly how they were or if it was just because it was an impactful event or you're never really sure why you remember. And then when you start thinking about what you remember, more memories start coming. So it is an interesting exercise to try and think about my time in New Bedford.

So as I thought about what I wanted to say, I think for me the most important thing about New Bedford was probably my early years, like the first 10 years of, 10 years or so of life and the experiences that I remember during those times. And New Bedford, as I think about it, is a different city from what it was at that time. And that's the other thing. I know New Bedford as an adult, and geographically it's different. Logistically it's different. The makeup of the city is very different compared to what it was when I was growing up, or at least that's what I perceived. And so I think those first 10 years, and I'm talking about in the mid-sixties to mid-seventies, that decade of time was a significant transition for New Bedford as it was in my life too. And I think that's why they kind of come together as being really pretty remarkable.

And so then just to kind of put it in perspective, at the time, in the late sixties, early seventies, New Bedford became a very tumultuous place, as everywhere did in the United States. There was this huge consciousness of civil rights and racial discrimination and all of that. And that impacted New Bedford significantly. And it was at a time when I really could remember certain specific incidences, which I'll talk about in a little bit.

But just a little background, I'm a second generation Cape Verdean American, and all four of my grandparents migrated from the Cape Verde Islands to New Bedford. And in very different situations. My grandfather on my father's side was a whaler. He came as a whale man and then brought his wife and then established his family here. He worked whaling for a very brief time and then eventually worked as a caretaker at Buttonwood Park until he retired.

And my dad's family's from the island of São Nicolau, and they lived in the West End, which I'll talk about. And then my mom's family, my mother's parents came here and they all came here early 1900s really, just before the Depression. But my mother's parents were from the island of Boa Vista. And my grandfather came here first as like a mariner, I think, working on a ship and then decided, had some cousins I think in the Cape and decided to settle, and they decided to settle in New Bedford. But they worked in the factories of New Bedford and they lived in the South End. And so both areas had a significant Cape Verdean presence. And so it's interesting when I think about it, because they came, and this was well before Cape Verdean independence, so technically they came as Portuguese people, but they were really Cape Verdeans, like the culture was Cape Verdean, their friends, their music and the people they associated with. And the way that we grew up was really the concept of being Cape Verdean.

And so as they came and they settled, both of them really created homes and lives. Both sets of grandparents



eventually owned a house. My mother's family lived in the heart of the Cape Verdean community on Acushnet Avenue, right across the street from Montes Park. And that whole area was where a lot of Cape Verdeans first settled. Our Lady of Assumption Church is down there, and that's actually... There was one that was here before that was before me. But in their home, they lived on the first floor, my aunt lived on, the uncle lived on the second floor, and my aunt sometimes lived on the third floor. But we knew everybody in the neighborhood. And even though we were young kids, we were confined to the same side of the street. But we could walk two or three blocks.

Our independent area went from not even Walnut Street, but Russell Street to Wing, and I think it was Grinnell, but down near where the band club is, New Bedford Band Club. But we used to be able to walk on Acushnet Avenue without parents, and that was kind of our hangout area when we were kids. And then otherwise we were stuck in the backyard. But there are a few things from the South End that really stick in my memory, and most of it is related to sort of things that you smelled. At the time they had a huge factory, which took up multiple blocks in the center called Morse Twist Drill, and it was a huge building, but in the summer it emitted this sort of very oiled, like a burning, rubbery kind of smell. And so when I think about, I could almost remember the way that permeated the air when I think about more Morse Twist Drill, even when I go by the plot where it used to be.

But it was a kind of an anchor in the community. So it was a recognizable building. At Christmas time, they'd put this Christmas tree on the top of the building, which is just made up out of lights. So it was really an icon of what was the center and the heart of the community, even though it was probably creating toxic waste the whole time that it was there. But you had those smells in contrast with sweet smells of flowers and people in their gardens and rose bushes and all of that stuff. And so all of those different senses, when I think of those times when I was a kid walking up and down the streets, I think of all of those things that we experienced just from a sensory level. And it brings back all these really nice memories, mostly all fun, because we were independent, even though we were little.

And then there was a dry cleaners that was down the street, and you could smell... From washing clothes and the chemicals and the iron and the heat. And it seemed like it was all just our playground. It was all just our neighborhood, these blocks between where the band club was and the park and Our Lady of Assumption Church. I mean, everybody knew each other. And my grandmother was very involved in her community because she used to do these dinners for people who couldn't provide for themselves. And she was part of this thing called the Cuckoo Club, which is these Cape Verdean women, they were part, they used to do fundraisers and dances, and she was very active in that. And she'd have people coming. She had these friends, they'd play cards every week.

So when I think of the time they were really integrated, they assimilated into something. It wasn't really assimilation into an American life, but it was, because she loved Thanksgiving. My grandmother loved Thanksgiving. So they did assimilate, but yet they still kept some of the real traditional Cape Verdean things, cachupa and eating together in the kitchen. And you only went in the living room for special occasions. And so those are the kind of things that when I think about growing up in the South End part of my life, those sort of iconic things, the band club and those smells, and whose house was... Where you could go to anybody's house and you knew who they were and they knew who you were more importantly.

And then on my father's side of the experience was very different. It was in the West End, and we lived in the West End for a short period of time. We lived on Middle Street, which used to be Route 6. So people in the summer, we'd sit on the porch and you could read license plates from all over because people were going to the Cape. And I went to Cook, what was called The Cook School for third grade.

And at one point, because we lived in a two family house on the second floor, there was one of all of our cousins, because my mom and my aunt had five kids each. So each of us were in a grade at the same school, Cook School, which is now, which ultimately moved and became Carney Academy. So it's kind of an evolution of that. But the West End was different than the South End because the West End was a little bit, there were a little bit more diversity in terms of people of color. There were a lot of Cape Verdeans. There were some people from West Indian Islands, and then a few Black American families as well. So it wasn't hardcore Cape Verdean as the South End, from my recollection was, but it was still a very tight-knit community.



There was this, Parashinis was...both places had these stores where you could go get penny candy. There was one on the corner near my grandmother's house down the South End, but then there was this Parashinis Market that you could go get penny candy. And then things like Daddy Grace's Church was another kind of iconic building that I remember. And then my grandfather lived near what was called the Ropeworks, and I guess it was a rope factory at some point, I'm not really sure. And then the city jail was not too far, and that was all within these few blocks that we were, again, allowed to walk because my aunts and grandparents lived within blocks of each other. And so again, it was another community that we felt very safe walking from one place to the other.

And we used to you, I remember The Cook School. It was a really old school. It was a brick, classic brick school, and they had all the bathrooms in the basement and no doors, and when we were third graders, so everybody was kind of horrified to be, but this was just the way that it was. And we would play outside in the school yard for recess and before school. And yet it was amongst the city, but it seemed like it was, again, a very safe, contained place. And so again, when we lived on Middle Street, we'd sit on the porch watching the cars go by, and we'd be able to walk between, so you're talking about if few people think about County Street and Kempton and Middle Street, Elm Street, it was all in those blocks.

And so I have really happy memories because we used to just go to the park right up the street, the Middle Street Park, and we'd stay there all day and nobody cared. And we'd roller skate all over the place, and you just kind of got to know people. And it was a very good community. And then things started to change as the sixties ended and the seventies rolled through. They were having... That's when they started to have significant race problems in New Bedford and race riots. And the Ropeworks were on fire. And I remember somebody had been killed, I guess, down the South End, and we had to have a curfew, so we had to be in the house by a certain time. And we were in both, and it was in both of these communities where all of this turmoil was happening.

And that's really what I think changed both neighborhoods because the South End, before this whole race riots and everything, was a very open area. It was lots of neighborhoods. But I think when they started thinking about urban, what they called urban renewal, which was in response truly to the race problems in New Bedford, and they ended up breaking up all of these neighborhoods. And so the sort of destruction of the South End neighborhoods was the creation of Route 18. Route 18 has a great function, and it's easy to get from the North End to the South End when I think about how I use it now, but when I think about what it was like before, it really impacted a bunch of different neighborhoods because there was a Jewish, big Jewish neighborhood down the South End, and they got displaced. And some of the Cape Verdean neighborhoods got displaced, and it just kind of split things up. So it was sort of the beginning of the end of that really community feeling.

Interviewer:

Can I ask a quick clarifying question? The curfew you mentioned, was that something your parents imposed or was that the city?

Patricia Andrade:

No, the city imposed it. Yeah, the city imposed it. I think we had to be in the house between, I think by seven or eight o'clock at night. And this was in the summer, and the police were all over trying to enforce it, but it was because they had had a murder. I guess there was somebody that had been killed during these race riots, but it was an imposed curfew by the city.

And then by the same token, things in the West End changed significantly. The Ropeworks were caught on fire, and they weren't sure if that was intentional or not. And there was a lot of protesting going on. And the Black Panthers had a headquarters here in New Bedford, and they were gaining some strength. And I think the city started to get really intimidated by all of these things. And so they tried to figure out how can they one, stop it, two, prevent it from ever happening again. And so urban renewal came, and what happened with urban renewal was they paid people money to buy their homes, and people got displaced. They ended up buying another home outside of the area, and then they leveled the entire neighborhood. They leveled the whole neighborhood and



restructured it, and then restructured Route 6 from Middle Street to Kempton Street. So all of those, and then there was also the change with the creation of the Dartmouth Mall, which created the loss of downtown New Bedford at the time.

And these were all kind of happening all around the same time. And so it was in that, like I say, around that early seventies period. And so New Bedford to me is a very different city conceptually than it was when I was growing up. And I love New Bedford, and even now I still love New Bedford, but I recognize, and I guess it's a good thing that I'm old enough to have seen kind of things in evolution and to have these good memories and because... But I think New Bedford has figured out how to be a better city now. They were really struggling for a while, and I think with the Dartmouth Mall ruining downtown, that knocked people off their kilter too, because now what is the center? What do we use this whole area for? But downtown has really... With the National Park and the Whaling Museum and the Zeiterion and the Art Museum, all of those things are now creating another kind of culture in the downtown area, which is phenomenal. And I think that's great.

But there is some nostalgia. I get some nostalgia when I think about what New Bedford used to be like. But things change, and it still is a great city. I think the thing I like most about New Bedford is that there's something for everybody, and it's a very welcoming place for everybody. And people come from outside and they're like, "What's with this place? I feel so comfortable, and people make me feel very welcomed," and they don't feel like they have to align with one group or another. New Bedford's always been a welcoming place for people. For centuries. The Quakers were here and they worked with the Underground Railroad, and so enslaved people felt comfortable settling here. Frederick Douglass was a big impact here, and I think that that undertone of New Bedford continues, which I'm really happy.

And you see the Guatemalan population growing and some of the other populations growing and feeling, making themselves at home and opening up shops and things like that. So New Bedford is a remarkable city, it really is. And it's nice to see how it's coming into a really good place again. I think it was lost for a while, but probably everybody gets lost for a little bit, but it's in a good place now. It used to be great. I mean, it's almost great now, but it's getting there.

Interviewer:

It's [inaudible 00:20:57] back up.

Patricia Andrade:

Yeah. I think that's all I wanted to say.

Interviewer:

Right. That's fantastic. Any final thoughts before I stop the recording?

Patricia Andrade:

Let me see if I covered all the things. I think I said everything I wanted to say. No, because I think I really wanted to talk about New Bedford too, and how it is a great place to be. It really is. Are you from New Bedford?

Interviewer:

I'm not.