



Lynn Vera

Hi. So I grew up in the West End of New Bedford, one of six children. My dad was Joseph Vera and his father built the Vera Building at 261 Union Street for his law firm. He was a Portuguese immigrant who studied the bar and became a judge eventually in New Bedford. On my mother's side, my grandfather was Francisco Vierra, who immigrated to New Bedford at age 20 from Lisbon, the first of a bunch of his family. Eventually, five or six of them settled in New Bedford, and I remember them all from Thanksgivings when our house was awash with old, I thought they were old at the time, people, and the Portuguese language and a lot of food. My grandmother, Lucy Silva Baldo, would play the piano and we would all march around the room.

One of my memories is of hurricanes. Calling down to the South End where my grandfather Frank and my uncle, Bert Baldo, ran Baldo's Market, close enough to the cove that when, and this was all before the hurricane dyke, when the storm surge would flood the South End, they would be paying close attention as to whether it was rising up high enough to come to the hill on County Street where the store was.

And from the West End, I would call full of excitement about what was happening with the storm. And when it would thunder so loudly, my uncle would tell me, "It's okay, it's just the angels bowling." That struck home for me because my dad in the basement of the Vera Building downtown, had a 12 lane bowling alley, six manual and six automatic duck pin lanes. So I have many, many fond memories of growing up in New Bedford as part of a very rich Portuguese culture.

My father's family, his uncle and great-uncle and grandparents, they came as whalers from the Azores, Faial and Pico. And we grew up with things in our house that came from whalings, scrimshaws and portraits. Those were all donated to the museum and have been part of the Azorian exhibit for a few years now. That's Joseph Vierra. And my mother was Cecilia Baldo Vierra. I remember that she played basketball at New Bedford High School, so you can imagine that was well before Title IX. And she played the saxophone in the New Bedford marching band.

Growing up, we went to Bishop Stang and all played sports even though it was before Title IX, thanks to the fortitude of a young woman at the time, Terry Perry, Theresa Perry, who died as Teresa Dougall after coaching, and then becoming a principal at Stang for many years. I credit my lifelong athleticism to Terry Dougall. So there are many stories of growing up in New Bedford, but the hurricane before the hurricane dyke was one of them. Okay, I hope you like this.