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Batista Vieira:
An Oral History

Interviews conducted by
Don Warrin
in 2013

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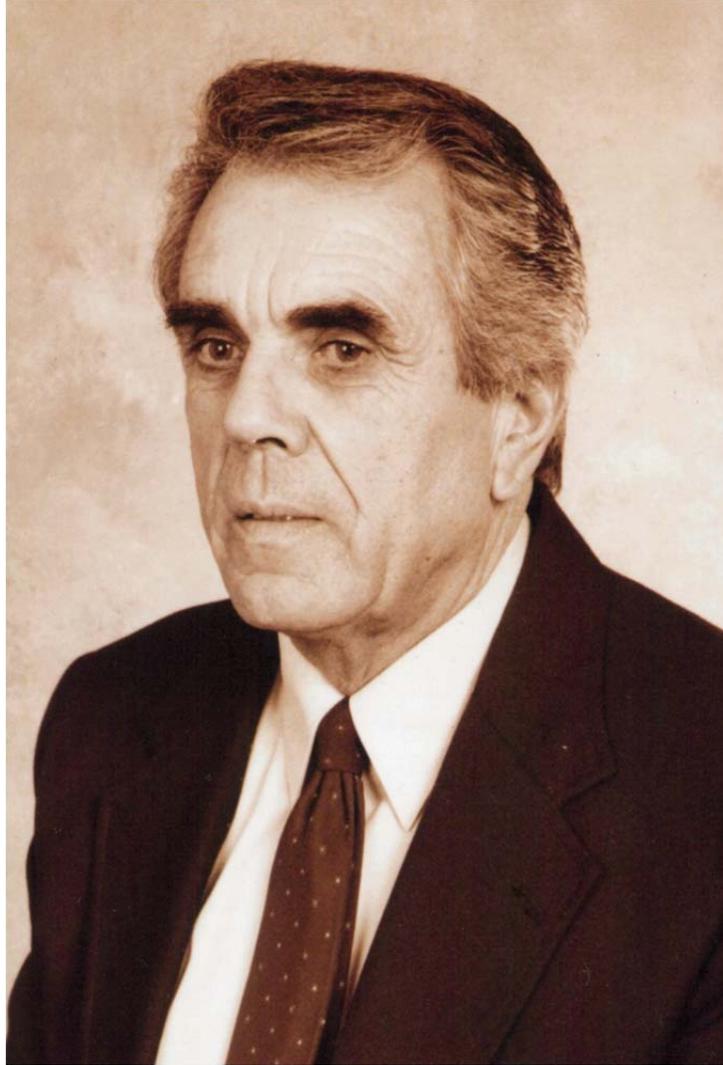
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Batista Vieira, circa 2013

Batista Vieira

On January 3, 2013, Deolinda Adao and I sat down with Batista Vieira for a short interview about his life. Also present was Dr. Manuel Bettencourt. Mr. Vieira speaks of his early years on the island of São Jorge in the Azores and of his arrival in the US as a teenager in 1954. Here he began work on a dairy, milking cows seven days a week, beginning at one-thirty in the morning. Later he moved into construction and began saving his money for investment. By the age of 21 he already owned a home and two rental houses, to be complemented many times over in succeeding years. He speaks of his wife and the success of his children, his radio stations and other community involvement. Finally we learn of his various awards, including from the Portuguese government and President Ronald Reagan.

Don Warrin, Berkeley, 2013

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Interview #1 January 3, 2013

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01-00:00:18

Warrin: We're here today with Batista Vieira to talk about his life. By the way, I'm here with Deolinda Adao. The two of us are doing the interview. If I could start and ask you your full name.

01-00:00:44

Vieira: My name is Batista Sequeira Vieira.

01-00:00:48

Warrin: Did that used to have a "P" in it at one time, "Baptista"?

01-00:00:53

Vieira: Used to have a "P." No more "P." The government took it out when I was in school.

01-00:00:58

Warrin: Really?

01-00:00:59

Vieira: Yeah.

01-00:01:00

Warrin: In one of the orthographic reforms. When were you born?

01-00:01:09

Vieira: I was born in 1937 on the island of São Jorge, in Rosais.

01-00:01:22

Warrin: To ask a little bit about your family, they were natives of Rosais?

01-00:01:29

Vieira: My mother's family are natives of Santo Amaro, São Jorge, and my father was born in Rosais.

01-00:01:43

Warrin: How did your parents meet?

01-00:01:46

Vieira: They met in festas. The Holy Ghost Festa over there. Then they got married. They had five children, five kids. I'm one of them. And I had a brother, Albert, Lino, Velma, and Bernardette. Then, after a while, we were raised. My father used to have a store. He used to have a wholesale store. He would sell for the other stores. Plus he has a regular store. Then we had cows. We had a dairy, small dairy, over there. What most of the people have at that time. Then few years later, because my mother was born in the United States, in Half Moon Bay, we decided we wanted to come to America, me and my brother, my oldest brother. My brother was turning seventeen, I was fifteen, and we

want to come to America. That time, not too many people came to America from Azores.

01-00:03:07

Warrin: What year was this?

01-00:03:08

Vieira: Nineteen fifty-four. I came right in the beginning of '54. My mother brought us over here. She was here with us four months, then she went back. My father didn't want to come over here, because he had a business there. Nice business. He decided not to come, but he did let us come. Very hard for him to let us come, but he did let us come.

01-00:03:32

Warrin: Let me just stop here for a second and ask you, your mother was born in Half Moon Bay? What was her story?

01-00:03:42

Vieira: Her name was Oliveira, last name. Ana Oliveira. My grandfather, he was here with thirteen kids. Then they wanted him to go to war in wartime, and he decided he didn't want to go to the war because he had thirteen kids to feed.

01-00:04:04

Warrin: World War I?

01-00:04:06

Vieira: World War I, that's right. Then they told him he had two things to do. He had to leave or go to war. So he decided, because he had thirteen kids, he decides to go back home. He could come back later if he wanted to, because the kids, majority, all born here. When my mother went back, she was seven years old.

01-00:04:33

Warrin: And he took all thirteen kids back?

01-00:04:35

Vieira: He took all the kids.

01-00:04:36

Warrin: To São Jorge?

01-00:04:37

Vieira: To Azores. All small little kids. My mother was seven. She was there all the time. They never came back. He made a pretty good life there. He had a little bit of money. He bought some property, and he stayed there. Then when we decided to come over, me and my brother—because my other brother's all younger, and my both sisters, they were in college to be teachers, schoolteachers. My youngest brother was too young, was only thirteen, something like that. Then we come over here. My mother brought us over. Then she was here with us four months, then she went back. We were here. We went straight to milking cows. My brother went to San Rafael, and I went

to San Jose. We used to see one another maybe every two months. I was only sixteen years old. My brother, he just turned eighteen. The reason we were very rushed to come to this country at that time, because if you're eighteen years old, in Portugal, you can't come to America.

01-00:05:54

Warrin: Because of the—

01-00:05:54

Vieira: He goes to the army. He loses the rights to come here.

01-00:05:59

Warrin: Did you have the permission to leave at sixteen because—

01-00:06:03

Vieira: Yes. My mother signed the paperwork, and my father, they signed for me to leave.

01-00:06:08

Warrin: Because often, they didn't allow you at that age because they wanted you to stay until you got in the army.

01-00:06:14

Vieira: But because my mother came with us, it was easier.

01-00:06:18

Warrin: Because she was an American citizen?

01-00:06:19

Vieira: She was gonna stay here for a while, and go back and forth. That was a little bit easier. Otherwise, you probably couldn't come either. That's true. But anyway, we come over milking cows. We worked seven days a week, that time. No days off. It was 1954. Nearly sixty years ago. Gonna be sixty years ago now. We didn't have no days off. We did milk cows, and after milking cows, we used to work in the fields the rest of the day. I used to get up at one thirty in the morning, and get out of the—complete milking the cows and wash the barn, all that stuff. By nine o'clock, nine o'clock I used to go have breakfast. They used to feed us, the owner of the cows, the owner of the dairy.

01-00:07:16

Warrin: What was the name of the dairy?

01-00:07:18

Vieira: It was Nunes and Estrela. Nunes and Estrela. It was a funny thing what happened, especially with me when I got here, because Nunes, Mr. Nunes, used to go to school with my grandfather on São Jorge, on the island. They went to the same school. The gentleman—the other owner was partner with the dairy because the dairy—Nunes use to own the dairy. Then he had one daughter. Estrela married his daughter, then he was partner. He made him

partner with the dairy. But he didn't want to put me on. He said, "He's too young. He's sixteen years old. He couldn't milk like a full man."

01-00:08:11

Warrin: But you had milked cows already?

01-00:08:15

Vieira: No.

01-00:08:15

Warrin: You hadn't?

01-00:08:16

Vieira: No. It was straight from the old country. When this dairy asked for the job, they had a place for a man, but they didn't have a place for a kid. That's what they told me. The old man, Mr. Nunes, he told the son-in-law, "I went to school with his grandfather." He asked me all kinds of questions. "I want to try him out here. This family is a hardworking family. I know the grandfather, I know the whole family." He put me on. They said, "We're going to try him." He only had one grandson, too. Then I went milking cows. Second day of milking cows, I was taking care of my job. Because I milked cows in the old country.

01-00:09:09

Warrin: That's what I was trying to ask.

01-00:09:11

Vieira: Yeah, I milked cows in the old country.

01-00:09:13

Warrin: When did you start in the old country? How old were you when you milked cows?

01-00:09:17

Vieira: About nine, ten years old, we start over there.

01-00:09:20

Warrin: How many cows would you milk at that time?

01-00:09:24

Vieira: We had a big dairy. It's ten cows. Over there at that time, it was a big dairy, ten cows. But I wasn't milking by myself. My father used to have two fulltime employees working the fields. But I used to go with them to help them milk the cows, help do what I have to do. That's how old you start working. Then you get home, you go back to school, like I did. You go to school four years over there. That's all I went to school. You got your high school over there. It's not very much really, but that's what it was. But anyway, here I milked the cows for almost four years. I used to work sixteen hours a day. Never less than fifteen. Between fifteen and sixteen, sometimes more, every day. I used to go seven days a week. I used to wash my clothes. The whole time I was in

dairy, I washed my clothes. We had a bathroom about, quite a ways from the place I used to sleep. I used to sleep in a little shack. Very small shack. It was me and another guy. Each one had his own thing. With a little mattress, small bath, small little bath, then big hole on the mattress. It was an old mattress. You would sleep there. Then we get up at one thirty in the morning, every morning, one thirty in the morning, to go milk cows. It was not an easy life. Believe me, it wasn't. But I pick it to be that way. I knew it was going to be that way, because my grandfather—go back to my grandfather—he was in America three times. He had shoe stores. He had one in Alvarado and two in the Valley. The funniest thing is, when I got to this country, when I was milking cows and go eat my boss's house, there was an older lady, very close friend, that used to live in Alvarado. Very close friends with my boss. When we discovered things up, she's one housed my grandfather. She housed my grandfather and fed him.

01-00:12:04

Warrin: When he was here?

01-00:12:05

Vieira: When he was here at nineteen years old. She gave me a picture of him.

01-00:12:15

Warrin: So she was fairly old by this time.

01-00:12:17

Vieira: My grandfather, beautiful man. Good-looking man. Nineteen years old. They didn't have good clothes. The photographer takes the picture, he has the clothes there for them to use to take pictures. I look back, how fortunate I was. My grandfather, he always said, "I don't want to die until I see both of you in America." He sent us stories. Eighty-one years old. He was healthy, and he died three months after we left. But he was very happy.

01-00:13:08

Warrin: To see you go?

01-00:13:10

Vieira: For us to leave, to come over to America. Very happy. He was very good. My grandfather's a good man. These are things I look back now. How successful I've been, my brothers, in business. I know he's looking at us right now and see how happy we are, and he's very happy too, I'm sure.

01-00:13:33

Warrin: That's great. Could you describe a typical day on the dairy? You got up at one thirty in the morning. At what time did you do the first milking?

01-00:13:46

Vieira: We got through the first milking, wash the barn, take the manure out of the barn, carry the manure out to the corrals. There were special corrals to put manure. It was all done by hand. When I got to go eat, it was about nine, between nine and nine thirty. From one thirty in the morning until nine thirty.

Then we eat. Then we go repair fences in Saratoga, San Jose, up in the hills. That's where they had the dry cows. Dry cows. We worked there until about twelve o'clock. We came home and eat, and go back at one thirty, two o'clock. Between one thirty and two o'clock, go back and wash the cows, because we had to wash all the cows. Wash the cows and start milking. Then we get to, again, nine o'clock at night. Eight thirty, nine o'clock. Sometimes the afternoon—it goes a little bit faster. Milking the cows goes a bit faster in the morning, because you didn't have to wash the barn at nighttime. You clean up everything else by the nighttime. Then we go back to bed after we get through eat. Sleep. One thirty, we get up again in the morning.

01-00:15:00

Warrin:

Did you nap during the day? Was there time?

01-00:15:02

Vieira:

No naps during the day. Very seldom, unless it was a rainy day. A rainy day, maybe we didn't go up in the hill. There was always something else to do, but sometimes, if it was wintertime, it was a little bit easier.

01-00:15:15

Warrin:

So you only had three or four hours a night of sleep.

01-00:15:17

Vieira:

Three, four, five hours a night. Four, five hours a night, the majority of nights. We have no time to go anyplace. During the week, we have no time to go to festas, to do anything, because there's no time. Sundays, I used to come to church, Five Wounds. That's my first church I came to, and still my church. Then I had a man bring me over, because I didn't have a car. I didn't have a car my first two years on the dairy. Everybody else had cars except me—car. I used to have a bicycle. My friend, he loaned me a bicycle. At that time, it was a lot of dairies all over the place. San Jose was packed with dairies. I used to drive my bicycle to go see my friends at the dairy. Different dairies. I did that every time I had a chance. If I had a little chance, I'd go see my friends. Very seldom, not every day, but once in a while, I had a chance. That's what I used to do. We had some days during the week where we used to go take the cows to the auction. Now it's a big shopping center in Milpitas. Forgot the name of the shopping center now, but it's the big, big shopping center there. The owner of the auction yard there. They used to pay me a little bit of extra money to go to the hills to help on the fences and to go to the auction once a week, help him take the cows to the auction. He used to give me fifty dollars a month. Then I was milking seven days a week and take care of the work seven days a week. At the end of the month, I made \$200.

01-00:17:12

Warrin:

So all together, you made \$250?

01-00:17:14

Vieira:

Two hundred and fifty dollars to do that.

01-00:17:16

Warrin: Of course, you weren't spending any.

01-00:17:19

Vieira: Fifty dollars, buy my clothes, pay all my expenses, with fifty dollars. Then I put the \$200 in the bank. The end of the year, I still had to pay income tax out of that money. It was a tough time, a real tough time, but we didn't have no choice. I was lucky I got a job, because at that time, there was no jobs. No factories in San Jose. There was San Jose Steel. There were a few creameries. There were—what do you call it? For the fruits. Canneries. There were a few canneries in San Jose. Just about all there is in San Jose. When I got here in '54, I think was about forty some thousand in San Jose. It was a big town really, but there were forty some thousand people. It was very tough days. I remember those days, cold, rainy. Used to rain a lot those days, not like now. It used to rain a lot. We go to the barn, milking cows. Sometimes we go out there, have to bring cows in from the field. Bring the cows in. We were wet. We have a jacket to go over, but still, a lot of times, wet. I buy boots. We all had boots. I buy my boots. When my boots would get older, holes in it, I used to tape them with a gray tape, the hard tape. I used to tape my boots. Then, also, 90 percent when I milked cows, my socks, I made it out of feed cows. The sacks you bring the feed in. I used to make the socks out of the feed sacks.

01-00:19:16

Warrin: Out of the feed sacks.

01-00:19:17

Vieira: Feed sacks. I cut them in pieces and I'd run them around my feet, and I used that.

01-00:19:23

Warrin: Was that comfortable?

01-00:19:25

Vieira: They weren't that comfortable. It was a little bit rough, but if you want to save a dollar, you had to do that. Everything is trying to save a dollar someday to go to the old country, or someday when I had a family to have my own house. The only thing I was always wanting the day I started working, I wanted to own a house for myself. I always wanted to own a house. Then I start saving money. When I met my wife on Holy Ghost Festa on San Jose, she was two years younger than I was. I got married twenty. I was twenty-one. Twenty-one. We were together for five years. She was just thirteen, fourteen years old when I met my wife here. We'd see once in a while in the festas. Once in a while, I asked to talk on the phone.

01-00:20:25

Warrin: But you didn't have much chance, if you were working seven days—you were still working seven days a week?

01-00:20:29

Vieira: Very little time. My brother got a car afterwards. Albert got a car. Once on weekends, like Saturday night, I would go to ask my brother take me to my girlfriend's. He used to take me there. I stayed there for a couple hours. I was never, at that time, allowed to go out with my wife, with my girlfriend.

01-00:20:59

Warrin: The parents wouldn't allow you?

01-00:21:00

Vieira: They wouldn't allow that. I go over to their house. I sit there on the sofa with them. She was the only daughter, too. She didn't have no brothers or sisters. I sit on the couch. Eleven o'clock, my brother pick me up. I was there for a couple hours. Then I won't see her again until a week later, sometimes two weeks later.

01-00:21:21

Warrin: This was a tradition also in the Azores. You didn't go out on a date.

01-00:21:27

Vieira: Azores, you didn't go out on dates. No dates over there. You couldn't even talk to your girlfriend in the Azores in front of the father and the mother. You weren't even allowed that, my time. You had to hide behind the walls. You've got to hide between walls to see your girlfriend, or someplace else. You go the festa, you couldn't even talk to your girlfriend, my time. Azores was a very tight place to be, especially small islands. Here, the first time I went out with my wife, it was four weeks before we got married. Four weeks.

01-00:22:07

Warrin: Did you have the permission of the parents at that time?

01-00:22:09

Vieira: Yes. First time I had a car. I went sometimes, on weekends, Saturday night, I went to a dance. My mother-in-law go with us. I was not allowed to take my wife a year before we got married—six months before we got married. My mother-in-law with us all the time.

01-00:22:31

Warrin: You had an escort there.

01-00:23:33

Vieira: Escort. That's right. I would not say everybody was that way, but majority of the people are still that way here. Even here, that time.

01-00:22:43

Warrin: The culture changed very little between São Jorge—

01-00:22:48

Vieira: The Azores and—yeah.

01-00:22:50

Warrin:

—and here, among this immigrant community.

01-00:22:52

Vieira:

That's right, very little. Because these people, like my father-in-law, he was here—the port is closed for about twenty years. Nobody came to America. The Portuguese people didn't come to America at all for about twenty years. These people is old-fashioned. A lot of these people, old-fashioned. My father-in-law milked cows all his life. He worked in a cannery. My mother-in-law worked in a cannery, too. There was no jobs to go but the cannery or milking cows or creameries. That's about all there was there in my time. Then after I got married, I was lucky enough to—there's no Portuguese in construction when I went into construction, painting. No Portuguese at all. There's not a Portuguese in business, in drywall business, sheetrock. Construction, there was a few born here. Lester Rose, Jorge Silva. Very few, born in America.

01-00:23:52

Warrin:

What gave you the idea to go into this?

01-00:23:56

Vieira:

They only gave me idea to go into this because I was milking cows in American dairy. Very good dairy. The owner is from São Jorge. American dairy, he was one of the richest Portuguese in San Jose. His name is Azevedo Mr. Azevedo. Very wealthy. He still owns big properties. He doesn't own, but his nephews own that. He has no sons. I went to work there.

01-00:24:28

Warrin:

Is this after you got married?

01-00:24:31

Vieira:

Before I got married.

01-00:24:32

Warrin:

Just before?

01-00:24:32

Vieira:

No, a year before I got married.

01-00:24:35

Warrin:

When you were first married, you were still working on the dairy?

01-00:24:39

Vieira:

No.

01-00:24:41

Warrin:

Did you have better hours at that point?

01-00:24:43

Vieira:

No. This dairy had a little bit better hours, but you still work—I was only there for one year. Before that, I was in this other dairy, two other dairies

before that, where that's what it was. The last year I was in that dairy, it was a tough dairy. A lot of hard work in there. A lot of cows. They gave you ten extra cows to milk a day. But me and my brother were there. My brother was a foreman there, too. They had a foreman there from Pico. That's the big boss. It was a big dairy. My brother was assistant foreman there. When I was working there, the man told me, the foreman—nice guy, real nice man, from Pico. Tough man, but a good man. I told him, I said, "I have a man, he's a big foreman on the Disheroon Painting Company." Big company, drywall and painting, everything. Two hundred fifty-man operation. This man is a big wheel there, superintendent there. He asked me if I want to go there, he will give me a job. I didn't speak a word of English. Very little English. Very little.

01-00:26:03

Warrin:

So this is after being here for five years?

01-00:26:06

Vieira:

Four years. I still didn't speak English. The cows never talked to me in English.

01-00:26:11

Warrin:

And nobody else did either.

01-00:26:13

Vieira:

Everybody who worked there was Portuguese. Majority didn't speak English either. The majority of these people didn't speak English. But I told him that. Then he told me, he said, "You're a good worker, a good man. Your brother is here. If you want to go try it, I'll give you thirty days." I was still working there when I got married. "I'll give you thirty days for you to try it. If you don't like it, I'll give you job. Your brother going to hold job for you." My brother was the lead man. We called lead man. If a man is sick, he takes over his crew. He was nice enough to do that. I tried it. I went to work—and started as an apprentice. From there, I told my wife, I said, "I'm not doing anything. I don't think they can afford me there." I was only making dollar forty an hour. I started dollar twenty-five. They went to dollar forty an hour. But I said—

01-00:27:24

Warrin:

At the paint place?

01-00:27:26

Vieira:

Per hour. That's what I was making per hour. My wife was good friends with this guy's daughter. In fact, sometimes the daughter, this guy's daughter, this foreman's daughter, she sleep in my wife's house on weekends. They're very close friends. My wife told him, said, "Batista, he thinks he's not doing anything. He feels he's not doing anything. He's painting, but he's not used to that type of work. He feels, when he gets to the end of the day, he didn't do anything." The guy told my wife, this foreman, Albert Held, says, "He's the best apprentice we ever had. The best apprentice that we ever had. He's doing

this much.” I was painting the fascia boards in the women’s jail in San Jose. He said, “We never had apprentice like that one.”

01-00:28:23

Warrin:

But you thought you weren’t working hard enough.

01-00:28:25

Vieira:

I thought I wasn’t doing anything, because I’m not used paint with a brush like this all day long for eight hours. To me, it’s nothing. I come from hard work. Carry the milk and the dairy, ten gallons of milk all morning and all in the afternoon, because that day there’s no pipe lines. We have to carry all the milk, one thing I didn’t tell you before. I was used to hard work, not used to that type of work. That’s nothing. That’s kid stuff. For me, it was kid stuff. He said, “No, he’s not leaving. He’s going to stay.” A year later, I was a foreman for that company. I speak very little English.

01-00:29:07

Warrin:

You had to speak a little because you—

01-00:29:11

Vieira:

I was working with American people. There’s no Portuguese there. Two hundred fifty men. I was the only Portuguese there. Then I was learning quite a bit. I was learning all I could. They made me a foreman. I was running a school on 24th Street, where the Freeway 280 took. When 280 went through, they took the school, but I was the foreman of that school. This superintendent used to come see me all the time, because he was running different schools. He was doing most all the schools in San Jose. There was a lot of commercial work at that time starting. Starting. You know, starting. I worked for the company as long as I was there. Then after, I brought my brother in, Albert.

01-00:29:59

Warrin:

Let me stop here for a minute before we get too far away from your marriage and the dairy. What was your wife’s name?

01-00:30:11

Vieira:

My wife’s name was Dolores. Dolores Machado. Machado. Last name.

01-00:30:16

Warrin:

Dolores Machado. When you got married, did she move into the dairy with you?

01-00:30:22

Vieira:

No. Before I got married, I bought a house. I had \$7,000.

01-00:30:32

Warrin:

All saved up in those four years?

01-00:30:33

Vieira:

All saved up. Seven thousand dollars. My wife, when she got out of school, out of 450 kids at the Willow Glen High School, they picked four kids, top

students, in that high school, Willow Glen, in San Jose. Very good high school. She was one of the four. She was supposed to went to college, but we got married. She didn't go to college. But when my grandmother, my wife's grandmother, give me—they had a ranch, 90-acre ranch. My mother-in-law had one daughter. They only have two daughters, my mother-in-law and another daughter. She decides to give me a lot on the ranch, a lot, and give the other cousin a lot. What I did is I bought a house, San Jose Airport. They moved 400 homes out of San Jose Airport. They sold 400 homes to move out.

01-00:31:43
Warrin:

To be moved.

01-00:31:44
Vieira:

To move out. I bought one of those house. Three thousand five hundred dollars, whatever it was, to move to the ranch. Then the house, it cost me another, more or less, \$3,000 to move it over there, to fix it up, to paint it, to fix it up, all that stuff. I had no money. My wife had, I think, \$1,600 saved. She worked in the insurance company on Stockton Avenue. A big company. She worked there. Working there.

01-00:32:22
Warrin:

After high school?

01-00:32:22
Vieira:

What we did, she had money enough to save for the furniture. Very cheap furniture. The best we could buy at that time. My wife bought the furniture and I bought the house. When we got married, we had no debts. We had \$500 in the bank. We took our honeymoon. We went to Disneyland. Then we went to that island by Los Angeles up there.

01-00:32:54
Warrin:

Catalina?

01-00:32:55
Vieira:

Catalina Island, on our honeymoon. We come back, we have \$500 left over. Because I didn't speak English, we go to a motel, my wife had to speak, because I was the dumb one. I was supposed to be speaking, but I didn't speak the language. But anyway, then we come back. A month later, month and a half later, there was a house for sale on Saint John, right over here. I had my house paid for. I was a very ambitious guy, very ambitious. I was making pretty good money. I was a foreman for the company at that time. I wasn't a foreman, but a dollar forty an hour at that time was a lot of money.

01-00:33:52
Warrin:

It was, yes.

01-00:33:53
Vieira:

Good money. I felt that somebody else—was an Italian couple. They knew somebody in my family. He said, "Why don't you get somebody else to buy this house for me?" It was third uncle, Mr. Simas. The guy come to me and

says, “If you want to buy that house,” he said—I said, “I’m going to buy it with what?” He said, “You got \$500.” That’s what he said, if we have \$500, he’ll carry the mortgage, but he has to get rid of the house. He was moving someplace else. He wants to get rid of the house and keep the mortgage. The house was \$10,500. I bought the house, \$500 down. I bought the house. A neighbor of his—he was not Portuguese, but a neighbor of his on Saint John Street over here, Mount Hamilton, close to my office here now, he heard I bought the house. He wanted to get rid of the house, an old couple. He wanted to move someplace else where their sons are. I bought the house. By that time, I already had \$500 in the bank. A little savings in the bank. My wife is still working. My wife is still working in the insurance company. With another \$500, I bought my second house. In three months’ time, I own three houses. I own one free and clear.

01-00:35:27

Warrin: And two mortgaged.

01-00:35:28

Vieira: And two mortgaged. The other one was five hundred—eleven thousand five hundred dollars.

01-00:35:32

Warrin: Did your rent these out?

01-00:35:35

Vieira: I rented out. Both rented out. I don’t know. Very little rent. A hundred fifty dollars a month, something like that. Two hundred dollars, two hundred fifty a month. I think it was \$150 a month. Then, from there, I bought an old car, an old car from Isaacson. Isaacson is the big company, feed company, in San Jose. Big company. They sell feed for the dairies. I knew his son. I bought his car for—I think it was \$1,000. A thousand dollars or twelve hundred dollars. After two years in this country. Now I’m going back and forth a little bit. Then I bought the car. I had the car for thirteen years. In thirteen years, I owned fifteen homes.

01-00:36:30

Warrin: How old were you when you bought these first two rental homes?

01-00:36:37

Vieira: I was just turning twenty-one years old.

01-00:36:39

Warrin: Twenty-one, and you—

01-00:36:40

Vieira: Twenty years old. Twenty-one.

01-00:36:41

Warrin: So you became an entrepreneur by that time.

01-00:36:46

Vieira:

At twenty years old I was already, I owned one house free and clear. Because the little \$200 I used to make a month. Then a few years later I would make a little bit more, but that's what I started out with. Then from there, I was a contractor already. I was a contractor. I worked for the company for about four or five years, then I went the business for myself. I was painting places—automobile company on First Street, San Jose. The guy talked me into buy a car. Trade in for painting I was doing there, plus I pay the balance. That time, the automobile, brand-new automobile, the best one. Ninety-eight one, ninety-eight (Oldsmobile). The top automobile was about \$4,000. Forty-some hundred dollars. I bought the car. Then *my* car was still working good. I gave it to my sister, Bernardette. Bernardette used the car for many years after that. She was a schoolteacher here. She came from the old country. Then I had my Oldsmobile for many, many years. Many years. Years and years. Then I paint the Cadillac place. San Jose. The owner of the Cadillac place—because I was doing a lot of commercial work, painting. I contract a lot of commercial work. He talked me into buy a Cadillac. A Cadillac, that time, it was something a little guilty. I bought the Oldsmobile first. Then I bought the Cadillac after. Then my kids started going to college.

01-00:38:44

Adao:

I have a question. You had said that you spoke very little English. How did you get the licensing—

01-00:38:52

Vieira:

Can you speak a little loud, please?

01-00:38:53

Adao:

Yes. You had said that you spoke very little English, but that you became a contractor. How did you make it through the licensing process for the contracting, to get into the contracting? Didn't you have to do a licensing process for that, and how was that all arranged?

01-00:39:25

Vieira:

When I went to be a contractor, I was only very young. Speak very little English. That time, I got a guy, good friend of mine, American guy. I made him a temporary partnership. Temporary partnership. He went and took the test with me. He took the test with me. We passed the test, because you were allowed to ask questions. You were allowed to that. You were allowed to do that. I passed the test. He wasn't part of doing any work or anything. We stayed together about a year later. I got the license automatic. Automatic, I got the license. Legally, that's the way it is. Then I continued my license. In fact, I took another license. I have two licenses as a contractor. I have one in Sacramento right now, when holding. If there is any problem with the last, I had the other license that I took afterwards. But that's what it was. That was tough. At that time, the union was very strong. I was not a union.

01-00:40:54

Warrin:

Did you ever join a union?

01-00:40:56

Vieira:

Yeah, after a while. I didn't have no choice, because the union made me—to get jobs, I had to go into the union. I went to the union for about twenty years, twenty-five years. I said, "I don't want to be union anymore." I get out just in time, because today you get in union, will never get out of union, in our days. It was a tough, tough time, tough time, to be a contractor. When I went into business, I was very young, twenty-something years old. Twenty-three, twenty-four years old, whatever it was. I was very young when I went into business. People used to ask me, "How can you survive? You just started business. How can you get jobs?" The Portuguese people especially, they asked me, "How can you survive?" I said, "I have more work than I can handle. I have a lot of work. I have a lot of work." I didn't have any jobs. I had very little work. But I always play I have a lot of work, because if you play you had no jobs, you'd get no work, because you're no good. You have to play you have a lot of jobs.

01-00:42:14

Warrin:

And maybe you'll say—

01-00:42:16

Vieira:

If this guy has got jobs, young like this, he just got in business—how can he get so much work? Very short time, telling not the truth but telling my side of the story, my way, I put a man working for me. It took me very long. I had one employee. His name, Albert Sousa. But I always play that I had a lot of work. When you're in business, you play you're broke, you're going to be broke. Next day, you're more broke. When you're in business, any type of business, you can't do that. You've got to play the game.

01-00:43:00

Warrin:

The customer has to have faith in you.

01-00:43:04

Vieira:

Exactly. A lot of people don't have faith that a young guy like me is starting business. How can this guy have work like that? I'll tell you one thing. I've been in business forty-nine years. It's going to be fifty years next month. I'm going too far away, but just tell you, nobody—nobody—on my forty-nine years—you can ask any Portuguese family—I have a complaint I didn't do the job right, or if my man didn't do the job right, I go back and fix it. I have no complaints until today.

01-00:43:40

Warrin:

Until today? You mean up until now, you haven't—

01-00:43:43

Vieira:

Up to now. Up to now. Never.

01-00:43:45

Warrin:

That's quite a record.

01-00:43:47

Vieira: My record--You can ask any Portuguese. You know a lot of them. They know me well enough. It's been a tough time. It hasn't been easy. It hasn't been easy at all. [knock on door]

01-00:44:09

Warrin: Excuse me, I think we—

01-00:44:23

Adao: She's not going to leave.

01-00:44:12

Warrin: I think we'll stop it here. [break in audio] Here we are back after the short intermission here. I'd like to take the opportunity to back up a little bit. You mentioned your sister. You had only four years education in the old country and nothing here as I understand.

01-00:44:42

Vieira: Not an hour.

01-00:44:44

Warrin: Your sister came over, and she was a schoolteacher. What kind of education did the rest of your siblings get that was different from yours?

01-00:44:57

Vieira: We were five in the family. My father, at that time he felt that the girls needed education.

01-00:45:07

Warrin: That's rather unusual.

01-00:45:08

Vieira: More than the men. They need education more than the men. They went through four years education there. Then they went to college over there, in Faial. One went to Faial, one went to Terceira. Islands.

01-00:45:22

Warrin: *Colégio*, the—

01-00:45:23

Vieira: College. Went to college there, to be schoolteachers. They were both schoolteachers in the old country for about two years. One was more than two years, but about two, three years, schoolteachers in the old country. They were both in Terceira, schoolteachers. Then they decided to come to America, come over to America. Then when they got here, they went electronics, because a lot of electronics in San Jose. We looked up friends of ours. They got them a job in electronics, and they went over to electronics. But their mind is teaching. Their mind is always teaching.

01-00:46:08

Warrin: So they're working in a little factory putting things together?

01-00:46:11

Vieira:

That's right. Work in the factory, put things together in electronics, on the computers and all that stuff. But they always want to be teachers here. What they did with all of us, we helped them, is they went to college at night, night school, work all day long, and work in night school. America is a good country. They gave them certain credits because they were schoolteachers in the old country. Then they got their degrees as schoolteachers. Then they went teaching like they did—Bernardette and Velma. One just retired last year, and the other retired a few years back. When she retired, the oldest one, Bernardette retired, she still wasn't happy. She went to teach on jail. San Jose jail. Sometimes she had police next to her. She teach there, I don't know, a couple of years, or three, four years. She teach there quite a few years, after education, because she was single, she didn't have no kids. She wanted to do something to help. Then at the same time, when she was a schoolteacher, she went and got her real estate license. That's the oldest one, Bernardette. She got a real estate license. Then when she got her real estate license, she went teach. She's just part-time teacher and part-time real estate. She used to give days off to the teachers when the teacher was sick. She had jobs every day. If she wanted to. But when she had appointments to sell houses, she went to sell the house, and then she didn't go teach that particular day. The other one was a full-time teacher. Well, she retired two years ago, but she still teach. They call her every day to go teach, the younger sister, Velma.

01-00:48:27

Warrin:

Velma. She's a substitute teacher.

01-00:48:28

Vieira:

She's a substitute teacher now. Sometimes she doesn't go, but she loves to teach. She teach some weeks every day. She got teachers there. When they get sick, they call her automatic for her to come in, to take her place. She's not in high school. She's in junior high, I think, so small kids, or smaller kids. They all love her. She still teaches. She's probably teaching today. But anyway, they both retired, but that's what happened to them in the old country. He couldn't afford to put everybody through college, my father. It was more important to put the girls through college it is the boys. Then we decided to come to America.

01-00:49:22

Warrin:

That's interesting, because it's more typical to put the men through college and let the women fend on their own.

01-00:49:33

Adao:

Get married.

01-00:49:34

Warrin:

Right, exactly.

01-00:49:35

Vieira:

My father was the other way around. The other way. They're all here now. We're all here. My brothers both died already. They were big business operations. In fact, my brothers, they both worked for the company I worked for. I did not finish my case before, because my youngest brother, he milked cows, too, when he come from the old country. Then I put them both to work with me at this particular big company, and we come out to be foremen in this. All three of us, Albert, Lino, and myself. We were all foremen at the Disheroon Painting Company, big company. Then we put quite a few Portuguese there already, and they're working for us there. My brothers and us. We learned everything from that company. Estimating, everything. The company trust us 100 percent. But we were the type of people, we learned to go on our own one day to be in our own business. Then after, me and my brother, we decided to get our license, like I just explained it. He did the same thing I did. We went the business almost together. Never been partnerships. My brother went, he got his license three months ahead of me. He went three months ahead of me, then I went right after him in business. We all worked for the company. Then my other brother, he was three years younger than us, he went to get his license. He went on his own, too. Three of us. We're the three Portuguese in business, as far as we know, state of California, from Azores or Portugal continental.

01-00:51:23

Warrin:

Is that right?

01-00:51:23

Vieira:

Come from the old country. I'm talking about come from the old country. As far as we know, we're the three first ones. Well—

01-00:51:30

Warrin:

Excuse me. The three first ones to have your own business?

01-00:51:34

Vieira:

To own his own business. Each own his own business. But we were pretty close together. We all went to business close together. Then after that, we hire hundreds of Portuguese people working for us. Hundreds of them.

01-00:51:47

Warrin:

By this time, immigration was growing.

01-00:51:50

Vieira:

Immigration is growing fast from Azores. From Faial, from São Jorge, from Graciosa, all over, from all the islands. We hired all these people. My brother, one time he had—Lino and Albert, they had about 250 men each one.

01-00:52:10

Warrin:

What work were they doing?

01-00:52:11

Vieira:

Drywall. Sheetrock, taping, all that stuff. They were in that type of business. That time, San Jose was growing like crazy. It was the top of the deal. Myself, too. We had just got good top years to grow in San Jose and San Francisco, all over. I mean, growing.

01-00:52:30

Warrin:

About what year was this?

01-00:52:31

Vieira:

It was, I would say, in sixties. Sixties. Far back and forth. My brothers, we hired our people because we had people from Continent, from all the islands. At that time, a lot of these people we hired, they were going into business for themselves. I would say 80 percent all the Portuguese today in drywall business, sheetrock business, painting business, like myself, 80 to 90 percent, they all work for us. They all learned the trade with the three of us. Each one in his own business.

01-00:53:14

Warrin:

So this is a cultural trait—

01-00:53:17

Vieira:

That's right. We hire our own people, because our own people, they're a lot harder-working people. They're very hardworking people. It was our language, it was our culture. They needed jobs. A lot of these people, they were milking cows, they were on janitor. They had not very good jobs. Construction business, all very good jobs. Pay well and all this stuff. And also, we're very fortunate to have our own people working for us, because they're good workers. They made us money. People we can trust. On jobs, good foremen. Made good foremen out of these people. I'm not saying the Americans didn't do the same thing. They did the same thing, but it was our culture. Our culture, we always work better, our own culture.

01-00:54:03

Warrin:

Work harder, perhaps. What I meant by cultural trait is that these people worked for you, but then they went off and got their own licenses.

01-00:54:11

Vieira:

That's right. A lot of them. We got a lot of good people in San Jose. Goulart. All kinds of people. The majority of these people all worked for me and my brothers on different things. I always stay friends with people left me. Good workers, good people. I always try to, when they leave, to give them an old ladder, an old piece of equipment for them to take with them. And we never, never one time a guy left me, because I didn't want him to leave me. But they left to go do the same thing I did, to do on their own. And believe me, we have a lot of wealthy Portuguese construction business today in San Jose area, all over the state of California. We do. We did very well.

01-00:55:08

Warrin:

And especially, it seems to me, from the people I know in this area, and maybe because San Jose grew so exponentially.

01-00:55:16

Vieira:

That's true. San Jose grew. It's more in San Jose than anyplace else. But believe me, there's a lot of them in San Joaquin Valley, they learned from the other ones in San Jose. A lot of these, they moved to the San Joaquin Valley, too. A lot of them. A lot moved to the Bay Area, to San Francisco, to San Leandro, all over the place. There are a lot of successful businesspeople they went in. Then after that, we start buying property. We bought a lot of property. My brothers bought a lot of property. Our first time, I bought three stocks. I bought a bit of stock, because everybody was buying stock that time. Three stocks I bought, I lost most everything on it. Not very much money. One was \$5,000, one was \$3,000. But that time, it was quite a bit of money that time. I bought an orange juice stock from another state. I forget the state now, but it was another state. I bought 5,000. It was growing big time. Very short time, maybe two, three years later, it went down from \$5,000, \$1,200. I said, "No more stock."

01-00:56:38

Warrin:

I think this is a good point to stop. We have to change the tape. We'll take a break.

[End Audio File 1]

Begin Audio File 2 vieira_batista_02_01-03-13_stereo.mp3

02-00:00:09

Warrin:

I'd like to go back and ask you about your coming to America. What was it like for you, coming from a little island in the Azores, to California? I was wondering what you expected to find here and how things really were when you got here. Did the people seem different in different ways?

02-00:00:50

Vieira:

When I came, started getting to America, New York and through there, on the plane, and I see all the lights on these cities. I didn't realize cities. I didn't realize, really, what all those lights was all about. It was just very confusing, because I was not—I come from a little island. Went to a couple islands when I was there, and get in America and see all this. Then when I got to New York, when we stopped there, see all that airplanes. See all of that. It was just unreal for me. How this happens? How could this be? I think that was impossible to—in a different world. It's a complete different world. Then when I come to land in San Jose, I came from San Francisco to San Jose, you see all these cars on the road. All these lights against me when I come in a car. It was just very impressing, America. For me, it's a different world. I was kind of, how can this be? It was very impressed on me, America. Everything my grandfather told me, it was all real. My grandfather used to tell me and my brother how

America is, and this and that. He was in business. He'd tell us all about this, and I believed him, but I never thought it was really—what I was seeing, it was not really.

02-00:02:49

Adao: There was no electricity in the Azores when you left, correct?

02-00:02:52

Vieira: What?

02-00:02:53

Adao: There was no electricity in São Jorge?

02-00:02:57

Vieira: No, there was no electricity in São Jorge. Just start coming in. We still used lights.

02-00:03:03

Warrin: Lamps.

02-00:03:04

Vieira: Lamps, yeah. There was no electricity. They were starting to put the little generators over there for special days, like festas. They were just starting to bring in electricity. I was raised under dictatorship. I was raised under Salazar. That time, there was no freedom on São Jorge, anyplace.

02-00:03:30

Warrin: Particularly in the Azores.

02-00:03:32

Vieira: That's right. Our eyes were complete closed, believe me. It was just starting to open up a little bit. For instance, in São Jorge, island of São Jorge, only a few people voted for the president Salazar for the main things. My father is one. Maybe a dozen people used to vote on the whole place. My father, he vote, because he was a little high position there. But far as that goes, we didn't have no freedom at all. I mean, no freedom. Very little freedom.

02-00:04:08

Warrin: Then coming here—

02-00:04:09

Vieira: We could play cards. We could play cards. Only thing is, we couldn't say anything about policemen, tell the police anything. We couldn't go talk bad about the managers there or the government. We couldn't talk bad about anybody that belongs to the government. It was just pure trouble if we will do that.

02-00:04:31

Warrin: Then when you came over here, it was the opposite.

02-00:04:34

Vieira:

When we come over here, I see all this freedom. I said, “These people are crazy, give all the freedom to these people.” I see things, doing things, a different way. All kinds of stuff. What’s on my mind, couldn’t believe the freedom it was here. I was just not used to that kind of freedom. Of course, I learned, like the rest of them, to appreciate freedom in America. Appreciate the freedom in America. That’s the way it is. Those days, those countries would have no freedom, but we didn’t know anything different. After I got in America, most of the people, a lot of people, want to go back, after make money, go back and live there. After I was here, I said, “I’m going to stay here.” Even I was sixteen years old, milking cows, I said, “This is the place.”

02-00:05:36

Warrin:

What were your reasons?

02-00:05:39

Vieira:

Because I’m an ambition man, even at a young age. I see things far away, far away, far away. I see this place, I’m milking cows right now. Why can’t I have a dairy someday when I’m a big man? Why couldn’t I own a dairy? Why can’t I own this? I should. If they do it, I could do it. I was only sixteen years old. The only thing I had in my mind also is, if I ever have any kids, I’m going to work twenty-four hours to give them an education. I don’t care. Education, in this country, everything. I see these big people, see all these people come to church. I see a lot of people, good jobs, education, good jobs. I was milking cows. I said, “There’s got to be more than milking cows. There’s all these good jobs. My kids, I hope they don’t have to milk cows.” I always say that. When they were growing up, I was not a wealthy man. I’m still not a wealthy man. But I was not a wealthy man, but I worked day and night to put them through Catholic schools, both of them. Went through Catholic schools. Always paid. Then after that, they went to the high school. They went to Bellarmine College Prep., one of the best schools in San Jose, the high school. Then after they picked the college, one picked to go to Santa Clara University, and the other one picked to go to Saint Mary’s in Moraga. Saint Mary’s in Moraga, and the other, the engineer, went to Santa Clara. Then after that, they were on their own. They got good jobs. I was in business. I worked day and night. It’s a lot of money to put two kids through college. A lot of money. Then after that, I always tell my kids, “These grandkids, they’ve got to put them through, my grandkids”—tell my wife, “We’ve got to help those kids through college, through university. These kids got to go to universities.” But I didn’t have to say that, because my kids, that’s what they believe on it. One of them is an attorney, one of my grandkids an attorney, the other one is a property manager. He took business. They’ve both got good jobs. The other two are still in high school, at Bellarmine College Prep. Because I don’t have a day of education, I had to do it all hard way. The hard way. I had to use my back a lot. My head, too, but my back had to be used a lot.

02-00:08:32

Warrin:

If we could just take a look at that life, going from this little place in the Azores to here in California, we would think, superficially, that this hard work on a dairy wasn't really good for you, but I can see that it was a transition which allowed you, rather than just going into a factory and being inundated, that you had a certain isolation here while you accustomed yourself to being integrated in this new society. It also taught you hard work, which is something that you've continued through your life in various professions.

02-00:09:28

Vieira:

That's very true. That's the reason made me think a lot, because the hard work I did, I would say, "If somebody else can do it, I can do it." I didn't have the privilege to go to school here because I had to work every day. I didn't have no father, no mother here. I had to do it my own. My brother, same way. When I went to business, I used to have two crews. I had a crew during the day, working all day, and I had a crew at night, because I used to do a lot of telephone work. When I did telephone work, it had to be done at nighttime. Nighttime, you only had a few switchboard operators. It's still like in the old country here. All the women—there's not that many in these telephone companies. We had to cover the window with plastic, put a ladder, two by fours across, and put a plastic on top of the ladies, and we were painting the ceilings and painting everything.

02-00:10:36

Warrin:

While they're still working?

02-00:10:36

Vieira:

While they're still working. We had to do that that time. I went through a lot of stuff like this. What people today don't realize is that America, even that time, if you want to call São Jorge or call Lisbon, you had to push it in to call the islands or call—

02-00:10:58

Adao:

You mean the switchboard operators?

02-00:11:00

Vieira:

That's right, the switchboard operator. They still had that. And I did a lot of that, day and night, to be able to put my kids through colleges. Because it was not enough money for everything. At the same time, I was buying a lot of property. That time, I wanted a little bit of everything. And I knew I could do it. My brothers, same way. We all think we could do things like that. Then after that, I started my kids—buying property. I bought a lot of properties, and my—

02-00:11:39

Warrin:

What kind of properties would you buy?

02-00:11:42

Vieira: In San Jose here. The majority of my property is in San Jose. Then I bought in the Valley, too, after a while, but majority was here. I was in debt. For instance—

02-00:11:52

Adao: You mean homes?

02-00:11:54

Vieira: Homes, mostly homes.

02-00:11:54

Adao: Your properties were mostly homes?

02-00:11:55

Vieira: Then I went to commercial. Buy a lot of commercial. I went more commercial. Commercial, it's easier to handle for tenants. Even the building here in my office here. When I bought this property right here, on the corner was a gas station. Texaco gas station. I bought this property, and that one there, the man is Italian. The company, but Italian old folks. They want to sell it. But I had a big name ready to buy a lot of property. They came to me. They said, "You've got to buy this property from us. We're old. We're retired. We have no kids. We want to get rid of this property. You've got to buy it from us." I said, "I would love to buy this property." I wasn't here, but this was a house with a gas station over there. I said, "I would love to buy this property from you, but no money." He said, "Well, you own a lot of property." I owned one across from here, here. I owned one across from here already. It was eight stores across from here. They said, "You can do it. How much money you have to put down on this property?" This property at that time is \$45,000. The gas station and this house, \$45,000.

02-00:13:26

Warrin: What year was this?

02-00:13:28

Vieira: I don't remember exact year. I have so many things on my mind, but it was long time ago. It was long time ago. That price, it's got to be long time ago. I said, "I have \$5,000." They said, "It's not a problem. Can you pay this property in four years?" I said, "Yeah, I can pay it in four years." "Then give us \$5,000. We'll make a loan. We still own the property. We keep the loan on the property, \$40,000. Then, in four years, you pay us." Every year, I made a payment every year. Would be no problem for me to do that. All my properties I bought, the people carried the loans. I never missed one payment, never, on my properties. I'm talking about a lot of property. I had a lady, Mrs. Leal. Her name, Mrs. Leal. Nice old lady. She lived behind this gas station here. Go back to property. I used to own a paint store on the corner here, my building. Right on the corner, I owned a paint store. I had two employees there in the paint store, right in the corner here, right across from me here. That time, I was a contractor, but I gave a day off to the employees myself, to

not pay nobody else to come in. Their day off. I had to control this thing more or less to keep track of this stuff. When I had the days off over here, two days a week off, the lady, Mrs. Leal, lived behind the gas station across the street here. I used to cross her. She's an old, old lady. I was in the paint store there, I see her, I go get her across the street. There was no lights here that time, no lights.

02-00:15:34

Warrin:

And a lot of traffic.

02-00:15:35

Vieira:

A lot of traffic here. Santa Clara Street, there's a lot of traffic. I cross here. When she come from the church, I cross her again. I did this for about three years. She had one daughter who lived in Los Angeles, the mother. She told the daughter, said, "I want Batista Vieira to buy this house when I die." She was getting pretty bad shape. The daughter came pick up the mother to live with her. She speaks Portuguese. I think she was from Faial, I think, Mrs. Leal. The daughter came get her, and the mother said, "This house, you've got to sell it to Batista Vieira." I said, "Mrs. Leal, I can't afford to buy your house." It was like a duplex there, behind the gas station here. "You can get a lot more money than me. When I buy, I buy cheap. I don't buy high prices, because I can't afford high prices. You can get a lot more money." She said, "No, I want you to buy this house." Bill Silva—everybody knows Bill Silva—he had an offer for the house, \$132,000. I gave her an offer of \$72,000 to Mrs. Leal. "Mrs. Leal, you can get a lot more money." I was honest with her. "I only can afford to pay \$72,000." I know Bill Silva. He's still alive. He offered \$132,000. Somebody else, old Portuguese couple, want to buy the house to live here. I said, "I can't afford any more than that." Mrs. Leal is pretty well-off people. She said, "It's your house for \$72,000." And I bought the house for \$72,000. The house on the—like a duplex there. I was honest with these people always to tell them, even today.

Another house I bought from a guy who used to—it was a Mexican guy. He lives close to my house over here on 30th Street. I bought this house for \$11,000. This guy used to be the janitor of I.E.S. Hall. I forget his name. He was there for many years. He was a cook. Used to cook for the band. He was a good friend of mine. Cooked for the band. I'm sure Mr. Bettencourt remembers him. I forget his name now, too. But anyway, he asked me, "Why don't you let me buy that house? The house is already mine." But it was cheap. I bought it cheap. He was a nice guy. I said, "Okay, you can have the house." Someone at that time loaned him the money to buy the house, these people I bought it from. Then let go the house.

Another house, I bought, too. Another old lady lived next to Davide, my son, Davide, over here on Shortridge. There's another house there. The lady I used to see from Pico. I used to do the same thing to her, help her, trim her trees, help her out. That corner house there. Do everything for the old lady.

Everything. She told the daughter, “Mr. Vieira, Batista Vieira, he’s got to buy this house from me. He helped me all these years. Many, many years.” Lived across the street from her. The daughter told me, “My mother wants you to buy the house.” When the mother died, I said, “Look, you can get more money from the house.” The house went to bid in a courthouse. The bids. The guy trying to buy the house, he used to be—in fact, he was secretary of the Portuguese band Nova Aliança in San Jose. He’s still there. He came to me, he said, “Let me bid the house. It’s just you and me. Let me bid the house. Don’t go against me.” Bettencourt, he knows all these people. I went to court. I didn’t bid the house, because he needed the house pretty badly. He had four kids. I let him have the house. I wanted the house pretty bad, too. I bid all kinds of places. Another place, I got the building. His name is—he used to sell cars. What’s his name?

02-00:20:37

Bettencourt:

Emilio?

02-00:20:38

Vieira:

Emilio Sousa. There’s another one. I bought a building on 27th Street, and he came to me. He said, “Batista”—his wife is my neighbor in the old country—“I need that building. I have no place to move my cars to.” He’s a salesman. He sells cars. “I can’t get a place to move my cars, and I know you bought that place, because I went to the people. The people told me sold it to you. This will save a life.” I said, “Bill, look, I have too many buildings anyway. You want that building? You can have it.” Then turned the papers in. He bought the building. I have a lot of stories like this. I did a lot of these. I always buy, but I buy cheap. Because I had plenty of time to buy, it didn’t bother me to lose a few places, to help other people. I had a lot of this stuff.

02-00:21:39

Warrin:

How many properties do you own at the moment?

02-00:21:44

Vieira:

Yes, I do. I’m probably the biggest landlord Portuguese in this area. One of the biggest, not the biggest, but probably one of the biggest landlords in San Jose. Portuguese. Yes. We do own a lot of property. I want to bring something up for you for this thing. My wife—I haven’t mentioned her yet—my wife, she’s my right hand. Without my wife, I would never be as successful as I’ve been. Never. She’s my right hand. She’s as smart as any man can have a wife. She took care of all my books. Took care of all my business side. All the business I own—we own five radio stations—all the business I own, everything goes through my wife. Painting business, inside. Outside, she doesn’t do anything. Inside, everything. All the books. All my secretary does all the books. Secretary does all the work on the radio station and all this stuff. My wife goes to her. She checks everything. And she catches a lot of mistakes, too. And I’ve got good people working for me. I’ve got real good people. But people make mistakes, and that’s when my wife comes in and finds the mistakes. I always say, my wife, she’s almost a perfect woman. She

raised my kids perfect. She's a good grandmother. She raised some of my grandkids, because they were working. My daughter-in-laws, they were working. She's almost a perfect woman.

02-00:23:50

Warrin:

When did she start helping you in business? Was it very soon after you got married?

02-00:24:01

Vieira:

My wife started helping me the day we got married. Before we got married. Because without her, I wouldn't have that job guarantee like I have. A guaranteed job. But not just that. After I went to painting, the union make me go to school. After all this stuff. I did speak very little English. It was apprentice school, called apprentice school.

02-00:24:40

Warrin:

What did you learn in the school?

02-00:24:45

Vieira:

City College. I went to two hours, once a week, an apprenticeship. Learned nothing there. Very little, because I didn't speak the language. I had one American kid. Didn't speak Portuguese, didn't speak Mexican either. That guy, I still today, we're best friends. He's in business, too. That guy used to do my work. Then I had a teacher, Mexican teacher, a good teacher. He always closed his eyes. He never saw this guy helping me. You know what I mean? Because my real boss told the teacher—might have just come to me. My boss had told him, he told the teacher—because the teacher, he was a painter. Foreman at some other company. He told me, "You will never, never fire Vieira." That kid, he's always going to pass anything.

02-00:25:57

Warrin:

And you did.

02-00:25:58

Vieira:

I always passed everything. You know what I mean? That's how lucky I've been, too. I went through a lot of things. People don't realize what you have to go through. Like these kids got a lot of opportunity, like my kids had opportunity to get in good jobs, because they have school. That's one thing I had missed at a school. Everything I did was the hard way.

02-00:26:24

Adao:

So about the radio stations, can we talk about that a little bit? How does that come into this whole—

02-00:26:43

Vieira:

To go back to the radio stations is a story. It's kind of—well, that time, we had Joaquim Esteves, most important man in our community. At that time, he was the wonder man everybody looked for. He was in the radio business many, many years. But the problem we had at the time, Tito started getting a little bit better on the radio business. started to get a little bit better. Before,

the radio station, you'd sell time to people. Things started getting a little bit better and the station started to get better deals than the Portuguese people would give them, like Esteves and all these people. They start kicking all the Portuguese out of these stations. KLOK, San Francisco, KBIG, all kinds of radio stations.

02-00:27:27

Warrin: Why did they do that?

02-00:27:28

Vieira: They did that because they could get more money through somebody else, through the Mexicans, through other nationalities. They could do better through somebody else. They always kick us out.

02-00:27:39

Adao: Because they were renting radio time?

02-00:27:42

Vieira: We're renting time. We're not buying the station. We're renting time. They were renting time from these people. But they got better deals or something else, they kick the Portuguese out to put these other people in. It come to a day, I was in business for a long time.

02-00:28:42

Warrin: Okay.

02-00:28:47

Vieira: We used to be good friends, Joaquim Esteves and Joe Rosa and myself. All kinds of people. Then we decided one day, why don't we buy a radio station?

02-00:28:59

Warrin: About what year would this be?

02-00:29:01

Vieira: Pardon?

02-00:29:02

Warrin: What year would this be?

02-00:29:05

Vieira: It will be thirty-nine years next July. It's way before that. A couple years before that. Probably forty-one years ago, or something like that. Whatever it comes out to. Then we decide, why don't we buy a radio station? A lot of these people buying radio stations had less money than we did at that time. Then we formed a kind of corporation together, a bunch of us. It was quite a few of us. It was ten, twelve of us. Then we decided to buy Los Gatos radio station, an FM. That time, the FMs were not popular at all. Nobody wanted FM at that time. AMs, they were worth a lot of money. FMs were a little bit cheaper. Radio at that time, we pay a lot of money for the station. But we bought the station. We're buying the station. When it comes to come out with

the money to pay for the station, everybody was sick. I mean sick. The mother had a problem, the grandmother had a problem. Nobody come out with the money. Some people, they were afraid. They had the money, they were just afraid they were going to lose the money. Then the end of the deal, only three of us. There was only three left: Joaquim Esteves, myself, and Joe Rosa. All these people. We said, "We're going to buy the station, three of us." We bought the station. Then after we buy the station—

02-00:30:53

Warrin:

What is the name of the station?

02-00:30:55

Vieira:

KRVE. California, you have to have "K." "R," Rosa, Vieira, and Esteves.

02-00:31:05

Warrin:

So you changed the name—

02-00:31:06

Vieira:

We used our letters. We used our own letters from our names on the Esteves—or the station. Then we had the station for quite a while. Esteves was the manager of the station. Was three equal owners. Nobody had more than the other one. It was three equal owners. But we made the contract with Esteves and all of us. We said, "Anybody can sell out, but nobody can force nobody out." Nobody could force nobody out. It was right in black and white. Because one of us could try to sell and screw up the station, or somebody else come in. We could sell it to the owners first, the other two owners, but if they didn't want to buy it, then they could sell it to somebody else. But we couldn't even be forced to sell. Then after that, one of the owners want out. Joaquim Esteves want out. He want to sell out. Me and Joe Rosa bought it out.

02-00:32:14

Warrin:

So he was retiring at this point?

02-00:32:15

Vieira:

He's retired. Retired from a thing. We bought him out. After we bought him out, we changed the rules of the station. We went more commercial, more business. More business. Esteves was there. He was the manager, but it's more like he has a program there. He was a pretty well-to-do man. He didn't care about selling time to other people. What we are more interested, sell hours to other people. We went commercial right away, soon as we bought it out. One time, we had twenty-four programs there. Twenty-four programs. We sell hours to different people, all kinds of people.

02-00:33:04

Adao:

All Portuguese at that time?

02-00:33:05

Vieira:

All Portuguese. One time, there was twenty-four Portuguese programs at that station. But believe me, half very poor. The language was very poor. Little by little, they went away, because they were just very poor. Some people, if they

knew what they were doing, they wouldn't even go in. They wouldn't even go in, believe me.

02-00:33:33

Adao: I remember the station.

02-00:33:35

Vieira: I'm one of them. Never went to radio, because I know I don't speak Portuguese good enough to be on the air. That's why I don't go on the air. Sometimes I go on an interview, but that's about all. People got to realize, when they go on the radio, on the air, you have to know a little bit about it. Be professional, a little professional. But we want to make money, we sold time. We needed the money to keep the station. We sold the time to them. It worked out fine. Less than a year later, we bought another radio station. We were doing very well.

02-00:34:11

Warrin: What station was this?

02-00:34:13

Vieira: We bought KRVE. I mean, KLBS. We owned KRVE. We bought KLBS, in Los Banos. We bought that station.

02-00:34:25

Warrin: Was that already a Portuguese station?

02-00:34:27

Vieira: It was already a Portuguese station. Part of Portuguese station, yes. That station had already been a Portuguese for about thirty years. Miguel Canto e Castro was there. Quite a few of those people were there. We bought it at that time, me and Joe Rosa only.

02-00:34:43

Warrin: Was this an FM station also?

02-00:34:45

Vieira: AM.

02-00:34:46

Warrin: AM station?

02-00:34:47

Vieira: AM station.

02-00:34:47

Warrin: Because it was an older station?

02-00:34:49

Vieira: It was an old station. By that time, it was still pretty popular. AMs were still pretty popular. Then, a few years later, we decide to separate, me and Joe Rosa. We owned both stations. I always rented the stations myself. Me and

Joe, we got along very good. We never had problems. But it come to the time he didn't need me, I didn't need him, and we separate.

02-00:35:16

Warrin: Which station did you—

02-00:35:18

Vieira: KRVE and KLBS. We both owned that together.

02-00:35:23

Warrin: But which one did you work at, or did you manage?

02-00:35:26

Vieira: I managed both of them. I managed both of them from San Jose. We had a guy over there who ran a little bit there. I wasn't in the station myself. I was here in my office. Everything was run from here. I would go there every day. I would go to that station every day and call Los Banos, or they call me when they need me. Otherwise, me and Joe Rosa, we made the decision, when we were partnerships, what are we going to do with the station. They had to follow what we said. We could not change anything without both of us be present, and we never changed anything unless our managers—we call them managers of the station—be with us. That's a law we had, to not confuse anything. Not confuse the employees, not confuse anybody. We had to be together to make a change. I couldn't make a change without Joe, no. Joe can't make a change without me, no. The way it is. But after a while, we decided to separate.

02-00:36:28

Warrin: It would be easier to manage if you were the only person making a decision.

02-00:36:32

Vieira: That's right, it would be easier. But this way, we made decision, it was half owner. It was half owner. I think it was fair this way. After a while, we decided to separate. Short time, maybe a few years. Few years, we decided to separate. I told him, I said, "Why don't you separate everything?" Because he's a real estate man. He's in real estate. "Because we own property, we own the property in Los Gatos, we owned the property in Los Banos together." We owned all the properties there. I said, "You separate, then I'll pick. I'll pick." Joe Rosa said, "No, you separate, then I pick." I said, "Why don't you do it? You're real estate. You do separation. It will be easier." He said, "No, no, you separate." I went home, multiplied, divided, added things together, and I proposed it. I said, "Here it is. Take what you want." The Los Banos took all the property. Took the properties, took Los Banos. He took the money. I told him, "I will give you so much money," or, "You've got to give me so much money." Then he picked the Los Banos station. I mean, he picked Los Gatos station, KRVE. Then I kept the buildings, plus that, the money we agreed to. Then we're friends. We've stayed friends. A month later, he quit Portuguese completely. Because it's hard. It was hard, very hard. He has obligations.

Let's put it that way. He had obligations. In Portuguese, he couldn't meet the obligations.

02-00:38:30

Warrin: And so he dropped the station?

02-00:38:32

Vieira: He switched to English. English. He went to English. I think it was about a year. I'm not sure of the time, but about a year he sold it. Big money. He sold it for a lot of money. He sold the station. Then I kept Portuguese all the time. I kept my Portuguese station. I find the open for KSQQ. I find the open for KSQQ on the radio. I pay an engineer to find me a radio station.

02-00:39:13

Warrin: KSQQ? Where is this located?

02-00:39:16

Vieira: Right here, San Jose. KSQQ, San Jose station. I pay an engineer over 50,000 bucks to find me KSQQ. Then—it's crazy. Then he finds KSQQ. After I find KSQQ, it was not my station. Even I find the only last hole on the radio business, on radio. The last frequency on the radio. After that, anybody could apply for that frequency. I spent the money to find it.

02-00:40:01

Warrin: They opened it up and then—

02-00:40:02

Vieira: They opened it up. The government opened it up. That's the law. Today, it's different. Now they sell it. That time, it's free. But we have seven people apply for that thing. Seven people apply. That time, they prefer Indians, Chinese, Mexicans. They had preferences. Portuguese were not minorities. Japanese. Any of those people have over us. Then, as I said, I spent the money. Then I was the last one in line, like the Americans. Same thing. Americans have no rights to that station. Then we all fought it. You've got to have an antenna. Where are you going to put your antenna? You've got to put this, you've got to do that. It's terrible what you have to go through to own a radio station. It's terrible. I know; I went through two of them. This first one, that way. Then we don't agree. Nobody agrees. Let's fight it. We went to Washington to fight it. Washington, D.C.

02-00:41:14

Warrin: Do you have a lawyer by this time?

02-00:41:15

Vieira: I have two lawyers. I had a lawyer all the time. We have a lawyer right now for our station in Washington. You have to have a lawyer there, twenty-four hours. Our attorney hire another attorney. There was fourteen attorneys. Everybody had two attorneys. We went in front of judge in a big conference room. Judge is up there, with his feet in the air, like a cowboy judge. He's up there listening to everybody.

[Six minutes of text deleted.]

02-00:47:15

Vieira: This is just part of my life. The rest is unreal. I never cheated nobody a dollar, a penny, black and white. It has to be done all profession.

02-00:47:32

Warrin: Let's go back a little bit. If you could talk about the beginning of Portuguese radio in California. Could you give us a little background? You talk about Joaquim Esteves. Was he the pioneer in the whole state, or at least Northern California?

02-00:47:52

Vieira: As far as I know. I wasn't here. I know that three first is Arthur Ávila and Mr. Azevedo. The way I understand it, the two first, really. There used to be a lot of fighting between both of them, the way I understand it.

02-00:48:13

Warrin: What stations were they at?

02-00:48:15

Vieira: They were in a San Francisco station. One San Francisco station. One just died not too long ago, one of the ladies, whose name was Rosinha. She was a very nice lady. In fact, I talked to her myself afterwards. That time, there was a lot of fighting between both of these two—one people on one side, the other one on the other side. When I came to this country, I listened to Rádio Esteves all the time. That's my favorite program. I didn't speak the language, plus you see a little news from here, from there. I was always very interested on the radio business. I didn't know nothing about the radio business. Even before we talk about buying the radio business, before I even think about buying radio business, I always thought about, someday, that probably is a good business to be. Just thinking. Just thinking. Then when it came to that time when we all agreed to buy a radio station, everybody put so much money down. From there on, I said, "There's no way back now." After we got involved, there's no way back. The FCC, when you apply for a radio station, you have to give all your life away. You have to give your father, your grandfather. They go five generations.

02-00:49:50

Warrin: Why would they do that?

02-00:49:51

Vieira: I don't know. They go five generations back, FCC. They go and find out about your father, about your grandfather. They go find out all about your family. Then your life goes in that book. The questions that you were asked, they go in that book. I have that book. Joe Rosa has that book. The book is this thick. It's about two inches thick. Before you own the radio station. When you buy a radio station. I think it's a lot easier now than it used to be. I think right now it's easier. When they interview you for the radio station, it takes a

day or two, whatever time it took. I don't remember now. You tell them everything about you. Where you come from the old country. They check if you're Communist, if you have any relations with bad people. All that goes in that book. If you lie to the FCC, you're disqualified automatic. Automatic, you're out of there. I know Esteves' life from day one.

02-00:51:05

Warrin:

Because of what you read?

02-00:51:06

Vieira:

Because I have the book. I get a book. I know Joe Rosa from day one. They know me from day one. Joe Rosa knows me from day one, the day from the old country, anything. He knows about me until that time. Esteves knows about me. We all know, three of us. We'll never tell about us, but we all know about one another. That's the reason it's very complicated to own a radio station. It's very, very complicated. That's the reason, today, it's a lot easier. I know it is a lot easier today. I don't think they have to go through half of what we used to go through. Plus, we're foreign people from another country. They want to be sure you're honest. Three of us is from the old country. All of us from the old country. The government owns all the TV stations. The government owns all the radio stations. We own it long as we do things right. The day we do things wrong, the government owns them. Doesn't make difference how much money—it's worth millions and millions. It doesn't make any difference.

02-00:52:19

Warrin:

Essentially, the government is the final owner. You are sort of—

02-00:52:25

Vieira:

We're operators.

02-00:52:26

Warrin:

—operating it.

02-00:52:27

Vieira:

We operate it. We own it. Long as we don't trade American—we don't trade the laws of America, as long as we don't abuse it. Soon as you abuse it, people lose their radio stations every month. Every month, the government takes over radio stations. Every month, one, two, three, four, five, a dozen. There's 9,000 radio stations in America. Over 9,000. The radio stations and TV stations, over 9,000. And every day, the government takes radio station, TV station, every day, because people think they can do anything they want to do on the radio station. You can't do that. Yeah, you've got freedom, a lot of freedom, but freedom stops with somebody else's rights.

02-00:53:14

Warrin:

And there are things you can say and things you can't say—

02-00:53:17

Vieira:

That's exactly.

02-00:53:18

Warrin: —on the radio.

02-00:53:20

Vieira: We are obligated to some things. We interview you, if you say something bad, we cannot let you go back to the air anymore. You're out of the air. Even if you've got a contract, we won't sign a contract with you for anything. You sign a contract with us, the contract, I'll tell you right there. If you abuse the laws, FCC rules or the rules of the radio station, you're off the air, automatic.

02-00:53:45

Warrin: So this is very different from owning a newspaper.

02-00:53:48

Vieira: Pardon?

02-00:53:49

Warrin: This is very different from owning a newspaper.

02-00:53:50

Vieira: It is different, yes. It's very different. The newspaper, you have a lot more freedom than we do. We have plenty of freedom. Believe me, we have plenty of freedom. But the newspaper, you can put lies all day long.

02-00:54:04

Warrin: And you don't have the government sitting on top of—

02-00:54:06

Vieira: You have no government sit on top of. We do have, because newspaper is not worth anything. Another thing, I owned a newspaper for three years, three and a half years.

02-00:54:19

Warrin: Portuguese newspaper?

02-00:54:20

Vieira: Here, a newspaper. No, a newspaper, weekly newspaper.

02-00:54:25

Warrin: What was the title of that?

02-00:54:27

Vieira: I have one there. Mr. Bettencourt, if you pick up one inside there, bring it over for him to see, please. Inside of my office there, on the shelf there. I owned that newspaper for over three years. It was a very popular newspaper, because we used to tell the truth, the people. We used to tell the truth to people. Very controversial newspaper. I owned that newspaper for a little over three years.

02-00:55:13

Warrin: So it's called the *Semanário Português—Notícia*?

02-00:55:16

Vieira: Yes. *Notícia*. It was a newspaper in Angola. The guy who worked for me, he come from Angola. José João de Encarnação. He was a controversial man. He worked for me for thirty-five years here. He just retired last year. That newspaper, very popular in Angola. We were off the air. I just had a radio station in Los Banos. I didn't have a radio in San Jose. I had a radio in Los Banos. I was waiting for this station. I told him, I said, "Why don't we make a newspaper when we're waiting for this?" I did make the newspaper. He ran the newspaper for me, José João. This newspaper is very controversial.

02-00:56:16

Warrin: Why was it controversial?

02-00:56:17

Vieira: Because we tell the truth. We felt we tell the truth, like newspaper does in America. Sometimes they lie like hell, too, but they tell the truth. Some of these things is controversial stuff. We were very popular. But—

02-00:56:40

Adao: You said you owned it for three years? What years were those?

02-00:56:42

Vieira: I only owned it for three years, because I'll tell you what happened after three years, three and a half years.

02-00:56:46

Bettencourt: Nineteen eighty-five.

02-00:56:47

Adao: This was in the eighties.

02-00:56:49

Warrin: Excuse me, I think we have to stop again and put in a new tape.

02-00:56:54

Vieira: Okay.

[End Audio File 2]

Begin Audio File 3 vieira_batista_03_01-03-13_stereo.mp3

03-00:00:07

Warrin: Okay, so we're back with another tape. Where did we end off here?

03-00:00:18

Adao: You were talking a little bit about the newspaper and how you owned it for three and a half years.

03-00:00:26

Vieira: Like I said, we had a newspaper for about three years, a little over three years. Then, after, I got sick. I was shaking all the time, one side of my mouth. It was

twisting a little bit. We have quite a few different business. When I went to the doctor, the doctor told me, he said, “You have to get rid of some of this business. You want to do them all, but it comes to a time, you have to get rid of some of the business.” That’s why I decided to sell the newspaper. I sold the newspaper to João Brum. Then I had another company when I had to get rid of them, too. Then I kept my main companies only, the painting business and the radio stations, a few other. That’s the reason I got rid of newspaper, because I kind of got sick. Too much pressure. The doctor felt I had too much pressure on me. I had to get rid of something. I took his advice, and that’s the reason I sold the newspaper.

03-00:01:47

Adao: There were some efforts to have, or open, TV stations in California throughout the years. Being that you were into radio, were you ever involved, or did you have any interest, in those efforts?

03-00:02:03

Vieira: I know they tried to get me in. They tried to get me to go in, but I felt TV stations is—we’re not set up for TV stations. TV stations, you have to have a lot of white shirts. You have to have a lot of new shoes. You have to have a lot of things what I don’t think our people is prepared for that. It’s very expensive preparation, and I knew, because I had the radio business, the expense on the radio business is very big, too, and I felt TV, you will never make it in California. I felt that way. I just felt that.

03-00:02:49

Adao: You were right.

03-00:02:50

Vieira: Yeah. I never want to get involved.

03-00:02:54

Adao: So maybe now we can talk a little bit about your involvement in the Portuguese community. You have been involved in many different levels and in different organizations. Do you want to talk to us a little bit about that? When did it start, et cetera?

03-00:03:11

Vieira: I’ve been involved in the community for many, many years. As a matter of fact, my first involvement, really, in Portuguese—I’ve been involved in everything, but one of the things we didn’t have in the state of California, it was Portuguese bands. A bunch of us got together—not too many. Father Macedo was the main guy. Borba. He was a mestre. It was quite a few of us. We got involved on that. We finally got together and made a band, a Portuguese band, a marching band, to go behind the parades. The Holy Ghost and all that stuff.

03-00:03:59

Warrin: Was this the first band in—

03-00:04:01

Vieira:

First Portuguese band. There was a band there before that, but it was not Portuguese. It was an American band with quite a few Portuguese playing on that band. Mr. Frank Bettencourt was one of them playing on that band, too. But not Portuguese band. This is first band ever in state of California.

03-00:04:16

Adao:

Is this the Banda Velha?

03-00:04:17

Vieira:

Banda Velha. Yeah, Banda Velha.

03-00:04:19

Adao:

From San Jose.

03-00:04:20

Vieira:

I was one of the founders of that. I'm a past president there, too. I've been involved in all of that stuff. Most of these bands, I helped them. I helped most of these bands to survive. I've been involved in all the bands, matter of fact, and I helped all the bands. Even today, Banda Velha, the old band is my band, the one I started, and I help all the bands to survive, even to right now, through the radio stations, for their festas, for everything. We do all that. Everything is important, but that's one thing that was very important in the radio business, because I had the only radio station in California. But I had a station in the Valley, I had a station here in San Jose, that covered most all the Portuguese community. The biggest Portuguese community I cover. It was quite a few Portuguese people die, that was dying. Quite a few old people, and even kids, little kids. They had no money to be buried. Then I decided to—said, "I'm going to ask for money to bury"—I think it was a young lady that time, or young woman. The mother didn't want her to be burned. We went to the radio station and I made an appeal on the radio to give money to bury this particular person. What happened is we got the money. We needed about \$10,000 for everything. We got \$10,000 in about an hour and a half. We had what it cost, the burial. We had the cemetery, we had how much it would cost. When we got to the money, I quit. I said, "No more." I thanked the people for it. I was there myself on the air, on the radio. I'm the one that made all these appeals myself, first. I told the people, "Raised enough money. I don't want you to send me anymore money." And they stopped. That time for that person. Then after that, somebody else died, somebody else died. Anyway, when we came to the end, until I quit, we buried forty-eight people.

03-00:07:10

Warrin:

Over how many years?

03-00:07:12

Vieira:

I would say maybe four years' time. I would think four years' time. Four or five years. No more than five years. I don't think more than five years. We buried forty-eight people. Me, myself, go on the air, ask for money to bury these people. Come to the end. I was getting tired, too. We stopped doing that.

We stopped doing that. But we did a lot to these people. Matter of fact, one man, he died in Half Moon Bay, and that man was a young man. He was 840 pounds.

03-00:07:52

Warrin:

Eight hundred and forty pounds?

03-00:07:53

Vieira:

Eight hundred and forty pounds. To get that man out of this bedroom, where he had been there for years, a couple of years, two or three years there, they had to break the door. They jammed the door. They had to break the door. The front door had to be broken to get him out of the house for the burial. Also, to bury that young man—he was a young man, too, maybe thirty-some years old, twenty-something years old, thirty years old—we asked for the cost of burial to make a suit, to make the box, special box for him. To do everything, it cost \$18,000. In an hour and a half, less than two hours, we had \$18,000.

03-00:08:41

Warrin:

Is that right?

03-00:08:42

Vieira:

Less than two hours, way less than two hours, we had \$18,000. Our people is very good to give. Portuguese people, they're very good to give. We stopped completely here in the Valley. We asked for money, both stations; the Valley for the Valley, and San Jose for the Bay Area. The last man we buried we already didn't ask for no more money. We said, "We're not going to ask no more money." I think people really don't need a lot of money. Plus, it's getting tired now. This time, we're not going to ask more money. A year later, a Portuguese man in the Valley, San Joaquin Valley—in fact, I think Los Banos—not Los Banos, but Turlock or Modesto—he lived under the bridge for ten years. Under the bridge for ten years. He died under the bridge.

03-00:09:40

Warrin:

What bridge would that be?

03-00:09:42

Vieira:

One in the Valley. Then Dias—he's part owner of the funeral parlor up there. This has been about three, four years ago already. He called José João, my manager up there at the radio station. He asked was I ready to stop everything. He asked José, "Can you ask Mr. Vieira to make one more 'peditório'? One more ask for more money to bury this man. This man has suffered for ten years under the bridge. If we can give a decent bury." José João called me. He said, "Yes, we'll have them do it." He did a special deal, too, for the thing. They buy a cheap box. Not cheap, but an expensive box to bury this man. The funeral cost \$5,000, I think it was, because the funeral parlor did a special thing, too. Everybody did a special thing. I asked for that money fifteen minutes. I think it was fifteen minutes. They had \$5,000, in the San Joaquin Valley. My stations did a lot of good. I don't have a radio station just for myself. I have five radio stations. Two small radio stations and three big radio

stations. We could make a lot of money if we were English. I only have one station Mexican, Spanish, in the Valley. Twenty-four hours Spanish. In the Valley, we have one twenty-four hours Portuguese. San Jose, we have one called Antenna Two. Twenty-four hours in Portuguese, but you have to have a special radio for that. The other stations, we also sell time. We have Portuguese, but also time to Chinese, Mexican. We sell time for them to be on the air, too. I have a radio station not just for myself as the owner of the radio stations. It's to serve the community. I think I serve my community as good as anybody can serve community. I already proved that. Everything we do for poor people is free. We ask for a lot of money in my radio stations. A lot of people ask for money through my station for build churches, to repair churches in the Azores and Portugal and the Azores. Or somebody gets killed in the old country, or somebody lost a house or lost something there. We ask for money in my radio station. I let that happen in my radio stations. It's all free. We don't make any money out of that thing.

03-00:12:44

Adao: You have had radiothons.

03-00:12:47

Vieira: We have radiothons, ask for money. We've been talking about the radiothons. You just left for a few minutes. We buried forty-eight people. One cost \$18,000, and less than two hours, we had \$18,000. The man was over 840 pounds. He died in Half Moon Bay. The others, an hour and a half, an hour. Everything was less than two hours. We had \$12,000. We never asked for no less than \$12,000. But as soon as we had enough money to bury that person, we tell the people on the air, "No more money." If any money was left over, sometimes \$500 left over, \$200, \$300, \$500 left over, that money would go to those people's church in the old country. Pico, Faial, São Jorge, or Continent, whatever it was. We controlled all the money ourselves. We paid the bills, and then the rest of the money, we would send the money to that particular church they were baptized, or were born in it. We kept this thing real in control. Otherwise, we just don't give them the money. We paid the bills. We paid the bills.

03-00:14:01

Adao: In addition to having radiothons, you also donate radio time for some community organizations, or for things like Portuguese teaching programs, or for the broadcasting of the Sunday liturgy. I don't know if it's still on, but I think for many years, it was the broadcasting of the daily rosary, that you donated time for that as well.

03-00:14:39

Vieira: We do a lot of radiothons. I wasn't going to talk about that, because I don't want people to get an impression I'm over here making a show-off. I don't like that. But you brought that up. We do radiothons all the time. All the time. We do it for POSSO, an organization to help old people. We do it for a lot of things, radiothons. We have the whole day for them to ask money, free. We

give the hours and the air for free to anybody who wants to do something like that. We give the masses. We give the rosary. We have a lot of things we do for free. A lot of them. There's things we charge, like if they have a big parade on Alum Rock Avenue, a big parade someplace else, we do charge to pay our employees only. To pay the employees only, not to make money for the station, really. Even the Valley, they pay a little bit in the Valley for the mass, very little, and for the rosary, too. We give them a day, all day, whatever time the hours they need, all day long, for free, for them to ask a little bit money to help pay some of the expenses. That's all we do. The rest, everything we do is free.

03-00:16:11

Adao: You also have daily information on all the events on the community. You have a community bulletin board that is also free of charge.

03-00:16:22

Vieira: We do the bulletin board twice a day here. Anything to help people is free. Anything they're making money out of the station, they have to pay. It's not a big thing, but they have to pay. Anybody who's making money for themselves, they have to pay, or they're making money, they have to pay a little small fee. But anybody we advertise on those bulletins, the comunidade, for help people or for good organizations—for instance, to help a church in Pico, Faial, or São Jorge, or any other, or continental, they do an event to help that church, that's all free. All the advertising we do for three weeks, a month, everything is free. Only thing we do collect a little bit of money some people, they're making money out of us, out of the station. Yeah, we do charge a small amount to some people. But the rest is all free. We do a lot of that. That's what I believe on it for my station. We do things people think, why I do it? Why you do it? A lot of, why you do it? We do things in my island, we do things in my other island. We spend a lot of money, my own money. Hundreds of thousands of dollars now putting this out. Hundreds of thousands of dollars I spend in the islands to do things for them. I don't have to. But I do. I'm not talking about peanuts, but you brought this up a little bit. But anyway, I don't want to be treated different anybody else. I don't like that. You know me quite a bit. You know the way I operate. I'm the type of guy, when I have something to say, I say it. I'm not going to run around the bush.

This little bit of my history is like this. My kids, Davide and Joseph, they both retired from their jobs. They're working with me now. Working for themselves. I have two daughter-in-laws—wonderful daughter-in-laws—I'll tell you one story, very important to tell you about my daughter-in-laws. When my kids were little small kids, I always would joke with them. I used to tell them, when they're seven, eight, ten, twelve, fifteen years old, "Two things I want you guys to do for me. Never marry a girl from continental. Never marry a girl from Faial." It was a joke, but I always said that to them.

03-00:19:18

Adao: And did they?

- 03-00:19:19
Vieira: One married a girl, a wonderful girl, from continental, and the other married a wonderful girl from Faial. It's funny the way this work out. It was a joke all my life.
- 03-00:19:33
Warrin: And they hadn't listened to that part of their dad's advice.
- 03-00:19:38
Vieira: This happened. I said that on my twenty-fifth anniversary of the radio business. The president of the Azores was there with a lot of people. I brought this up. Everybody laughed like hell, because it was a joke, but in the end I'm very happy they married those two girls, because they're good daughter-in-laws. You know what I mean? There's a lot of things we did, we still do. We don't do for show-off, make a scenery. But I do—very proud of my family. That's most important thing for me, is my family, and very proud of my kids and my family. They're a wonderful family I have. That's the main thing. The most important thing I have there in my life, too, raise a family like I do.
- 03-00:20:30
Warrin: That's a wonderful story.
- 03-00:20:32
Adao: Shall we talk a little bit about the awards?
- 03-00:20:34
Warrin: Yes, I think we should. Perhaps we can put some photos in front of the camera. Manuel, if you could hold up that young man here, sitting by a cow. What year is this?
- 03-00:21:08
Vieira: Fifty-four. Nineteen fifty-four.
- 03-00:20:10
Warrin: Nineteen fifty-four. So this was just after you arrived.
- 03-00:21:13
Vieira: Right after I arrived. I was sixteen years old.
- 03-00:21:17
Warrin: Sixteen years old. It is a milking machine. By this time, you weren't milking by hand, is that correct?
- 03-00:21:25
Vieira: Yes, I was milking the cows there. You see it.
- 03-00:21:28
Warrin: Oh, you are by hand. I see. It goes directly into—
- 03-00:21:35
Adao: It's a milking machine.

- 03-00:21:35
Vieira: They had a machine, but we had to finish up milking the cows by hand. Begin, the machine will milk most of them, then the rest we had to do it by hand.
- 03-00:21:44
Warrin: Then you finished up. Okay, thanks. Then we have an award from the Luso-American Education Foundation. Manuel, why don't we just do it right over there? Maybe, Manuel, we'll put you in this history, too. If you could just explain what this—
- 03-00:22:15
Bettencourt: This is the Luso-American Education Foundation Dia de Portugal award. This was the first award that we gave to an individual that had done a lot for the Portuguese community. We thought, the board of the Luso-American Education Foundation, that Batista Vieira was the one that should receive the first award.
- 03-00:22:48
Warrin: What year was this?
- 03-00:22:49
Bettencourt: This was in 2007. July 2007.
- 03-00:22:57
Adao: June.
- 03-00:22:58
Bettencourt: June 2007. It was at City Hall in San Jose, the Rotunda, celebrating the Dia de Portugal, de Camões e da Comunidade Portuguesa. And he was the first recipient for this award.
- 03-00:23:15
Warrin: Good, thank you. Of your many awards, and you have an impressive office full of family and awards—I don't think we could count them. This award is—Manuel, again, if you could explain just a little, please. If you could explain—
- 03-00:23:47
Bettencourt: This is when Mr. Batista Vieira received this award, the Comendador, the Ordem do Mérito. What year was this?
- 03-00:24:04
Vieira: I don't remember. It was the year the president of the Azores—
- 03-00:24:08
Bettencourt: It was in June 1989.
- 03-00:24:11
Warrin: And the people in the photo?

03-00:24:14

Bettencourt: People in the photo is the President of Portugal, Mario Soares. And the one who's giving him the medal is Correia de Jesus.

03-00:24:35

Adao: He was, at the time, the secretary of the Portuguese communities?

03-00:24:38

Bettencourt: Communities.

03-00:24:42

Adao: So he was in charge of awarding the—

03-00:24:43

Bettencourt: This was in June 1989.

03-00:24:46

Warrin: Okay, great. Thank you. A quick look. A commendation from President Reagan.

03-00:25:03

Bettencourt: You should explain what—

03-00:25:09

Vieira: Talking about awards, I do have about a hundred awards or more from all over, from different things, different awards, here in my house. This award, I didn't deserve this. This is from Ronald Reagan, the president of America. They were talking over there about nationalities and Portuguese people, and he wanted to award somebody with an honor, President Reagan, some Portuguese. I don't know who told him about my name, because I did not deserve this thing, but somebody told him about my name, I guess, and he wrote me this award and he sent it to me. I was very proud of it. It's something, I don't like stuff like this, but it's something I'm very proud of. If he wrote this award, it's because maybe he thought I deserved it. Even I think I didn't deserve it.

03-00:26:15

Warrin: I'm sure you did. If there's a legacy we might like to leave more than any other, is to leave a place name, a toponym, here and there. This is—maybe you could explain.

03-00:26:33

Vieira: This is my place where I was born, São Jorge. What happened is I did a lot of things for that since my place, was born on it. It was award given to me by the president of the Azores, the Azores president, was an Assembleia. They voted to make an area—it's a big area—by the church, by the hall, by the band, by a lot of things. In the middle and everything else. It's a big place. They call them Largo Batista Sequeira Vieira. The government made this award to the Largo. It's right in front of the church, right in front of everybody.

03-00:27:24

Adao: So that means that there is a square which bears your name in the island of São Jorge, so that is the equivalent of the square Batista Vieira.

03-00:27:34

Vieira: Yeah. Those are the things I really didn't think should have been done. But the president of Azores did it about two years, three years ago, whatever it was.

03-00:27:49

Adao: But you also have things named after you, public spaces named after you, in California as well.

03-00:27:58

Warrin: Here's a couple. This is Vieira Park here in San Jose.

03-00:28:10

Vieira: Far as we know, they don't have any Portuguese parks in San Jose. They want to put a Portuguese name in a park. This particular park, I owned this land many, many years ago. The city of San Jose decided to put a Portuguese name on the park, and the mayor, with the city council, they named the park my name and my family, Vieira. Whatever happened, happened. Nothing I can do about it. Like I said, I don't think I deserve it. That one there is me and my wife. Me and my wife here, Dolores. This ranch used to belong to my wife's grandfather. This ranch is one of the oldest ranches in San Jose. Never, never been sold. Most everything has been sold in San Jose for housing, for big money, for everything else. Well, this ranch has never been sold. It stayed in five generations. With my kids now, it's five generations. We still own a piece of this ranch, a big piece of the ranch. We still own a piece of the ranch. That piece of the ranch is my wife's, what we already put in my kids' name and my grandsons' names. Hope continue in family deal. Then in the park, they made a history. The city center, they made a history how this ranch started. The name of the ranch when it started out. And I was still on after, over 150 years, in the family. That's a lot of years, over 150 years in the same family.

03-00:30:45

Warrin: That's a long time.

03-00:30:46

Vieira: You know what I mean? That's the one that this is all about.

03-00:30:51

Warrin: Wonderful—

03-00:30:52

Vieira: Also, that picture is on the park. The picture like that is on the park. If anybody goes in that particular park, sees my kids there, my sons, the grandmother. Everybody's there in that park, that picture in the frame. The big picture in the frame. The city made them do that.

03-00:31:18

Warrin:

Good. This has been a very interesting afternoon, and we've certainly learned a lot about your life, your contributions, to the Portuguese community in San Jose and in California in general, and even back in the Azores. We want to thank you for this opportunity.

03-00:31:40

Vieira:

Thank you very much. I appreciate that. Since last year, you asked me. Somebody tried to get me since last year. I don't like to give interviews, to be honest with you. I'm asked a lot for interviews. I turn the majority down. I do. Not because anything. It's just because I just don't like interview. First thing, I don't speak English very good, and my Portuguese is not very good either, because I've been in this country—it's going to be sixty years. Next April, it will be sixty years. A long time. My business, a lot to the American people. I deal a lot with American people. That's the reason I don't like to give interviews, because I'm very poor interviewing. But I thank you very much for you take your time to come over, interview me at my own office. I appreciate that. And like I said, I have a lot of awards. It doesn't go up to my head. It's still lucky.

03-00:32:50

Adao:

We thank you very much for your time. You did just fine. You were a wonderful interviewee, and we appreciate your taking the time to give us your life story.

03-00:33:04

Vieira:

Thank you very much.

03-00:33:05

Warrin:

Thank you.

03-00:33:06

Vieira:

Thank you.

[End of Interview]