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Portuguese Americans
in San Mateo County

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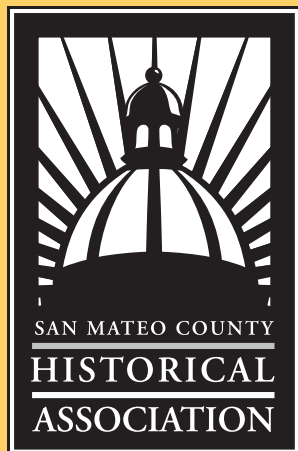
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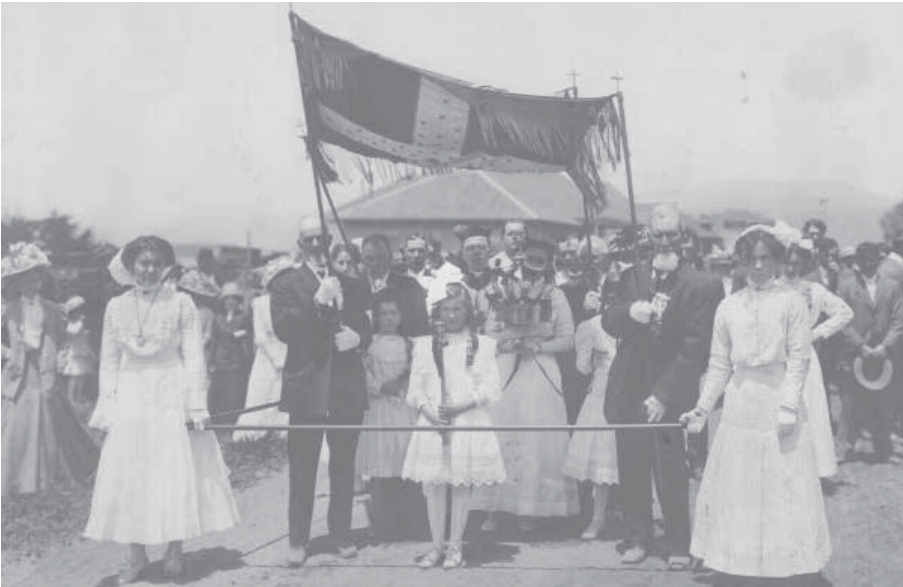
Errata: In the last issue of La Peninsula (Vol. XXXVII, No. 2), the captions for the front and back cover were inadvertently omitted. On the front cover, Grant Washburn at Maverick's. Photograph by Ed Grant. On the back cover, Grant "Twiggy" Baker won the 5th Annual Maverick's Contest in 2006. Photograph courtesy of Doug Acton/insidemavericks.com.

Front Cover: Holy Ghost parade participants leaving the Pescadero Holy Ghost chapel, 1914. Photograph courtesy of Ron Duarte.

Portuguese Immigration

to San Mateo County

Joan M. Levy



The Queen and her retinue, Half Moon Bay, 1916.

When reading about the early Portuguese settlers of San Mateo County, two curious patterns appear. First, nearly all of them came from the Azores, a small group of islands off the coast of Portugal. Second, many Anglicized their surnames soon after arriving in America, making it difficult to follow the families past the first generation. Why? The reasons behind these two puzzles eventually reveal themselves.

When mainland Portuguese planned to emigrate, they generally sought the established Portuguese colonies in Africa, South America and Asia. Natives of the Azores had fewer opportunities, however, and the most expedient way out, to them, was by way of the American ships that put in to their small ports.

The Azores, also known as the “Western Islands,” lie in the North Atlantic, about 900 miles off the coast of Portugal. The climate there is moderate and the terrain mountainous due to their volcanic origin. Fishing, including whaling, and agriculture had been the main occupations there since the Portuguese inhabited them in 1432. The largest of the nine islands, São Miguel, is 297 square miles in area. Historically, their location have made the islands a “half way station” for trans-Atlantic travel.¹ It is not surprising, then, that 18th Century American whaling vessels put into the Azores to re-provision.

Joan M. Levy

Joan Levy is a member of the Board of Directors at the San Mateo County Historical Association and volunteers in the Archives at the Museum. In the past, she had also been a volunteer docent at the Sanchez Adobe. A third generation Californian, Joan has always been interested in California history. After retiring in 1989, she returned to college to complete her B.A. in American History with an emphasis on California and Latin America. Using 1846 Northern California as her focus, she digresses in many directions. For five years she contributed local history articles for the *San Mateo Daily Journal*.

A term was coined among the whalers, “stealing the Portuguese.” The whalers liked the young Portuguese because they were hard working, quiet and cheap.

As the population of the Azores increased, the people developed an appreciation for the value of land. The population density of the island of Fayal in 1864 was 398 persons per square mile. Due to the mountainous landscape, only 40% of the land was livable.² Customarily, the oldest son inherited the family farm; younger sons had to strike out on their own. Poorer farmers didn’t even own the land, but rented it from the rich. Over time, reasons to leave the islands, especially for younger sons, included: a spirit of adventure, overpopulation and the threat of starvation, a land tenure system that limited the possibility of gaining land, and, after 1800, a mandatory military conscription of all boys at 15 years of age.³

There were times when the push to leave home was even stronger for these young Portuguese. In the 1830s a potato rot and in 1853 a grape fungus hit the islands, wiping out some of the major crops. An orange blight occurred in 1877, and drought was a constantly recurring threat.⁴

Although the Azores were part of Portugal, there was little patriotism wasted on the mainland. The people of the Azores felt their government generally ignored the problems and concerns of the islanders. There were plenty of reasons to leave, even though the young men were devoted to their families, villages and home islands. The American whalers provided an opportunity for leaving and a possibility for a better life. Even though it was illegal to emigrate, the men would stow away on departing ships. A term was coined among the whalers, “stealing the Portuguese.” The whalers liked the young Portuguese because they were hard working, quiet and cheap.⁵ Life at sea was tough, however, and the crewmen were not always treated well.

Often the Portuguese would “jump ship” when they reached a place that promised better opportunities. Many settled in New England where the whalers were based. Some went to Hawaii or the coast of California. The Spanish and Mexican governments accepted the earliest of the Portuguese settlers here as they were Catholic and the Portuguese people were considered kin to the Spanish. After 1848, the discovery of gold lured many more people to California. An 18-page propaganda booklet was published in Portugal advertising the glories of California. The fertile soil was mentioned as well as the gold. The intent of the leaflet was to encourage trade with the newly wealthy land, but it actually encouraged gold seekers. Between June and November of 1849, three Portuguese ships arrived at San Francisco. In addition, many Portuguese served as crew on the other vessels that landed here.⁶ Some of the earlier settlers in nearby Hawaii relocated.



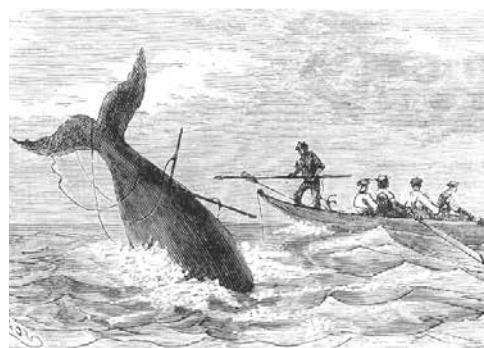
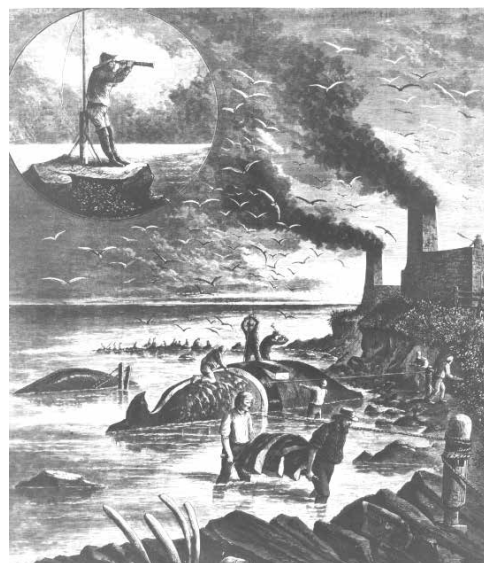
Whaling station near Pescadero, c. 1890s.

An anti-foreigner movement in the mines as well as general lack of success caused many of the newly-arrived miners to seek other occupations once they were here. The California coast was ideal for a type of shore whaling familiar to the Portuguese. Instead of going off to sea for long periods, a sort of “part-time” whaling could be carried out from home, with time to tend to agriculture and traditional fishing as well. The California Gray Whales migrate north with their newborn calves hugging the coast in spring. The Humpbacks travel south to Baja in the fall. They also stay close to shore at this time, looking for food.

Shore stations were established on cliffs on prominent points of land. Even before the gold rush, a few Portuguese whale stations had been established in California.⁷ Año Nuevo, Pigeon Point and Pillar Point were locations used in San Mateo County from the 1860s to the 1880s.⁸ Lookouts could spot the migrating whales off the coast. Crews in longboats would chase the whales, harpooning them. The crew was then in for what was called a “Nantucket sleigh ride,” being pulled to sea by the whale as it tried to escape. When the whale tired, it was killed and towed to shore where the blubber would be rendered to oil.

Each station would have a captain and mate in charge of the operation and at least two pilot boats. These were long narrow boats with odd-looking sails. There was a cooper to build barrels and about 14 men as crew. This was in addition to two men left on shore as lookouts.⁹

The whaling industry provided a living, but not much prosperity. The aim of the men was to eventually be able to buy some land.

Whale hunting as illustrated in *Sea and Its Wonders*.

Whaling station on the California coast.



Half Moon Bay surrounded by farm land, c. 1900s.

Gradually the whale population diminished. In the 1870s, petroleum began to replace the use of whale oil, and the industry died by 1900.¹⁰

As whaling subsided, more traditional fishing grew. Catches of crab, salmon, tuna and sardines provided a modest living for the Portuguese colonies. Canneries were built at Princeton Harbor.¹¹

Besides whaling and fishing, agriculture was a natural occupation for the Portuguese. Gardens and livestock had always surrounded cottages of the whalers near the shore. They grew crops that had been familiar at home: grapes, fruit, potatoes and other cash crops. Dairying became a specialty of Portuguese farmers.

Once the Portuguese men were established, they sent for their families. Most early immigrants were unmarried men. Some married local girls and others married daughters of other newly-arrived families. There is a common pattern sometimes called chain migration. When the first adventurous travelers are established, they send word back home and more people come from the same village to settle in the same area in the new country. Settlements developed around Pescadero and Spanishtown, now known as Half Moon Bay. The coastside had already assimilated Spanish, Irish and Anglos. There was much intermarriage.

Some Portuguese families who had been established on the east coast of the United States, like Francisco Duarte Terra of Rhode Island, soon heard of the colony in San Mateo County and relocated here.¹² Northern California attracted large numbers of Portuguese, especially where farming was prevalent. During the times of the greatest immigration, mainland Portuguese tended to go to Southern California where fishing was the more common occupation. Once the railroad crossed the continent, many more moved to California. As the trains ended at Oakland, the East Bay became the focal point of California Portuguese settlement.¹³ By the 1890 census, San Mateo County was one of 6 counties in California with the largest Portuguese population. All 6 were in the Bay Area.¹⁴

The arrival of the Portuguese in America came in waves. The earlier arrivals were incidental to the whalers carrying crewmembers who jumped ship. The Gold Rush was a catalyst for more in the years right after 1848. A treaty between the U. S. and Portugal in 1908 aided immigration for a time, but an American law requiring a literacy test starting in 1917 slowed it down. In 1920, the US began using a quota system, which further slowed Portuguese immigration.¹⁵ Another surge of immigration from the Azores, however, began in the 1950s, and many families on our coast sponsored relatives coming over.¹⁶

Between 1912 and 1914, members of 17 families from Ponta



W.P. Fuller Paint Company, South San Francisco, 1915.

Delgada on the Azorean island of São Miguel came to South San Francisco. The men worked at the steel mills, the meat packing plants and Fuller Paint Company in “The Industrial City.” They generally settled in the area south of town, around Commercial Street, Baden Avenue and Railroad Avenue.

Antonio Martin was born in São Miguel in 1893. He was one of the first to arrive in South San Francisco. He met his wife Maria Mederios at a Portuguese Festa in Oakland. After courting for two years, they were wed in 1916. They had no wedding reception, only lunch at a local restaurant in Oakland with his best man and the bride’s matron of honor. They were Antonio’s uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Soares of Daly City.¹⁷

The early Portuguese were fairly successful at keeping their culture intact. They were a family based people. Women were working equals with their husbands, as all hands were needed to help the families succeed. It was a male dominated society, with the husbands definitely the heads of the households. They were Roman Catholic - almost to the point of mysticism, although the women were the spiritual motivators of the families. The men were often anti-clerical, feeling that the priests had little useful knowledge when it came to the manual labor that was their livelihood. In the Azores, education was not highly valued, as experience in fishing and farming was the key to success.¹⁸ Boys from poor families began to work at an early age. This was their education. Only rich boys, or sometimes girls, had the opportunity to learn to read and write.

The men worked at the steel mills, the meat packing plants and the Fuller Paint Company in “The Industrial City.”

Traditional Sopas and Carne

- Baguettes, cut diagonally in thick slices and left over night to dry.
- 2 tablespoons Olive Oil
- 6 or 8 cloves of Garlic, chopped
- 2 large Onions, chopped
- 3 pounds of tender lean Beef, cut into strips
- 1 teaspoon Cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon Allspice
- 1/4 teaspoon Cloves
- 1 teaspoon Sugar
- 1 Tablespoon Tomato Paste (A New World addition)
- 1/4 cup Tomato Sauce (Also a New World addition)
- 1 cup White Wine
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh Mint leaves
- 2 quarts of beef stock
- Salt & Pepper to taste
- Fresh Mint Leaves

Heat oil in Dutch Oven or other oven proof covered pot. Saute onions and garlic, but don't allow them to brown. Add meat, a small amount at a time. Lightly brown, but don't cook through. Remove to plate before adding next batch. Return all meat to pan. Add spices and sugar. Toss to coat. Add Tomato Sauce and Paste, wine and chopped Mint. Simmer to blend (about 5 minutes). Add broth and stir. Broth should stand about 2 inches above the meat. Cover and bake at 325 degrees for 2 1/2 or 3 hours. Meat should fall apart. Check and add broth if needed while cooking.

Remove meat from broth to serving dish. Place stale bread in a deep serving dish in layers with fresh mint leaves. Pour broth over the top. It should be soupy. Garnish with mint leaves.

Geraldine Duncann, *San Mateo County Times*, June 17, 1998.



Members at IDES Hall, Pescadero, 1890.

Mutual aid societies were an important function of the Portuguese culture. In the early days in the Azores, when fishermen were lost at sea, widows and orphans needed to be looked after. Burial societies were common in the villages. At first the Church opposed these groups since they were not religious in nature. They were seen as secular fraternal organizations.¹⁹ Eventually, however, these societies were tied into a celebration of the Holy Ghost, about five weeks after Easter on the Feast of Pentecost.

The festival dates back to around 1296 with Portugal's Queen Isabela's devotion to the Holy Ghost. A celebration honoring the poor for a day with dancing and free food was started. It has been described as the main holiday of Portugal, similar to our Thanksgiving.²⁰ The Church has long since accepted the festival and the societies, and they are now closely associated. Each island in the Azores, if not each village, held its own version of the Festa. A queen was selected who wore a crown decorated with doves to represent the Holy Spirit. The free banquet traditionally consisted of beef or beef soup and bread soaked in the broth.

The Portuguese communities in San Mateo County, as in other areas, organized their cultural societies according to the customs of their old villages or islands in the Azores. Half Moon Bay and Pescadero have the *Irmandade do Espiritu Santo* (IDES). South San Francisco has its Santo Cristo Society. The function of these organizations is to carry on the language, traditions and customs of the Azores. They are civic, community and business lodges.

The Festas now last about three days, usually beginning on a Friday and ending on Sunday or even Monday. Parades, crowning of the queen, dances, fundraising auctions and a Catholic Mass are parts of the celebration. Sometimes organizations in an area stagger the dates of their celebrations, allowing for progressive attendance at more than one. The free banquet is still at the heart of the observance, but has expanded and now is sometimes a full barbecue. The Festas go by various names in each community. Sometimes the non-Portuguese call them “Chamarritas,” after the native Portuguese dance that has been a prominent part of the party.²¹

In interviews held some years ago with Manuel Bettencourt, William and Annie Cunha and Mary Fernandes, they all mentioned how hard the work was in the old days and that about the only recreation they had was the annual Holy Ghost Festival.²²

In looking at the Portuguese communities in San Mateo County, it is sometimes difficult to follow the old families past the first generation or to guess at the ethnic background of people from their surnames. This is because some of the newcomers readily Anglicized their names.

Although Azorean culture is strongly family based, there appeared to be little reverence for family names. The Latin custom of using mothers’ as well as fathers’ names often caused some confusion. The people also seemed content to go by nicknames, especially when there were several people with the same first and last names. This, added to American unfamiliarity with the Portuguese language, caused many Portuguese to go by new identities in their new country.

In one case, a young Azorean named Antonio Soares sailed away on a ship replacing a steward named Rogers. The other crewmembers referred to him as the “young Rogers”, so by the time he settled in the Bay Area, he had become Antonio Rogers.²³ When asked their names, the Portuguese no doubt gave them, but the American seamen were usually unfamiliar with the Portuguese language, or unskilled in spelling, so the name became whatever it sounded like to the Anglo. The illiterate young Portuguese often couldn’t write or spell the name, either. Thus the name Milla became Miller, Terra became Terry, Machado became Marsh, Ignacia Gaspare became Nancy Jasper.²⁴ Pereira became Perry and Madeira became Wood (in translation). In another case a man named Joaquim became Joe King.²⁵

Rosa Pedra Brown was one of the earliest Azorean women to settle in Half Moon Bay. The first informal Festa was held at her house in the 1870s, and she was the one who brought the first Queen’s crown from Portugal.²⁶ She was married to Manuel Valadao, but he



Half Moon Bay Band during parade.

Examples of Name Changes

Milla = Miller

Terra = Terry

Machado = Marsh

Pereira = Perry

Joaquim = Joe King

Madiera = Wood

Ignacia Gaspar = Nancy Jasper

Evelina Martins = Evelyn Martin

Joao Rodrigues
from the village of Cabrilho =
Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo

Endnotes

¹. *Collier's Encyclopedia* (The Crowell-Collier Publishing Co. 1964) Vol. 3, p. 410.

². Robert L. Santos, *Azoreans to California*, (Denair, CA: Alley-Cats Publications, 1995), p. 35.

³. Santos, p. 33.

⁴. Santos, p. 34.

⁵. Santos, p. 54.

⁶. W. S. Brown, "A Historical Study of the Portuguese in California," (Thesis, University of Santa Clara, 1944) p. 51.

⁷. Tony P. Goulart, project coordinator, *The Holy Ghost Festas*, (Portuguese Chamber of Commerce of California) p. 19.

⁸. Goulart, p. 277.

⁹. Gail Weber, "A Brief History of Shore Whaling on the San Mateo County Coast," (Student Monograph 84-96, San Mateo County History Museum Archives, 1984) pp. 3 - 4.

¹⁰. Mitchell P. Postel, *Peninsula Portrait*, (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publishing, Inc., 1988) p. 79.

¹¹. Alan Hynding, *From Frontier to Suburb*, (Belmont, CA: Star Publishing Co., 1982) p. 146.

¹². Patricia Dunbar, "The Portuguese Migration to the Coastside of San Mateo County," (Student Monograph 77-24, San Mateo County History Museum Archives, 1977) p. 6.

¹³. Goulart, p. 20.

¹⁴. Brown, p. 60.

¹⁵. Brown, p. 67.

¹⁶. Nicole Freeling, "Worlds Together, Half Moon Bay's Connection to the Azore Islands," *Half Moon Bay Review*, Special Section, May 2001) p. 3.

¹⁷. Patricia Pastor, "The Portuguese in North San Mateo County," (Student Monograph 86-207, San Mateo County History Museum Archives, 1986) p. 7.

¹⁸. Santos, pp. 98 & 103.

¹⁹. Santos, p. 103.

²⁰. Wilfred Azevedo, "Chamarita, or The Holy Ghost Celebration," (Student Monograph 93, San Mateo County History Museum Archives, 1939) p. 1.

²¹. Goulart, p. 284.

²². Elsie Gorski, "Transcription of an Oral History" (Half Moon Bay, CA: The Spanishtown Historical Society, 1978).

²³. Carlos Almeida, "San Leandro and the Portuguese," *The Pacific Historian*, Winter, 1972, p. 36.

had changed his last name to Brown. No one knows why, unless it was a similarity to the pronunciation of the last syllable of Valadao. His brother Antone, also known as Brown, became her second husband after Manuel died. A third brother in Half Moon Bay, John, retained his original surname of Valadao.²⁷

The mother's names and father's names also get confused. In the case of the family of Antone Phillips Dutra, out of eight children, six went by the name of Phillips and two by the name of Dutra.²⁸

Even that early explorer sailing for Spain whom we know as Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo was a Portuguese, Joao Rodrigues, who happened to be from the village of Cabrilho.²⁹ We have immortalized his name as Cabrillo on countless streets, highways and schools throughout California. First names, too, were a problem, as it was a custom to name one's firstborn son Manuel. This meant that it was a very common first name and was repeated many times in an extended family, even with the same last name.³⁰ Adopting a nickname could clearly ease the confusion.

Sometimes schools registered the children with Anglo spellings to their names. This may have been due to misunderstandings, or it may have been intentional, to help assimilate the children into the dominant American culture.³¹

It has been said that assimilation of the Portuguese in California was slower than in other places because of the isolation of the colonies and the continuation of the traditional farming and fishing enclaves. In other areas like New England, where employment was found in mills and factories, knowledge of English was necessary.³² Within families, traditional ways were perpetuated. The father headed the household, and mixing outside the culture may have been discouraged. This was probably a protective, rather than an exclusionary effort.

The Portuguese were said to have had no particular interest in politics, a continuation of their attitude in the Azores. To poor people in the old country, political activity was an area reserved for the rich or educated elite. Many put off citizenship for years, due to the inconveniences of the paperwork. The language barrier may also have been a deterrent to applying for citizenship.

Things seem to have changed, however. In 1993, the local Half Moon Bay newspaper referred to the "politically powerful Portuguese community" which did battle with the local cable TV company, demanding a Portuguese language channel for the area. Mike Ferrera at that time claimed 20% of the residents had ties to the Azores dating back 130 years, and that a high percent of the locals spoke Portuguese.

There was a temporary agreement to carry some broadcasts from Portugal and a few hours of local programming in Portuguese each week.³³ In 1994, an informal office was set up at the I.D.E.S. hall in Half Moon Bay to aid in the paperwork for the naturalization process.³⁴ That same year, when the local 6,000 subscriber weekly newspaper began a Spanish language page, the editor received many calls complaining that there were no Portuguese pages.³⁵

In modern times a new phenomenon has arisen. As many of the successful more recent immigrants from the Azores are reaching retirement age, some are moving back to their hometowns in the islands. They are able to live very comfortably on a modest income in the land they left 30 or so years ago. Extended families now span the globe. Tourism is expanding in the Azores. Travel has become more affordable. People are able to visit the old country and see friends and relatives from San Mateo County like the Bettencourt and the Silveira families have done.³⁶

So what began as an opportunity for young Portuguese from the Azores to better their fortunes became the beginning of a community on the California coast. In San Mateo County, whether the name is Perry, Miller, Wood, Martin or something more identifiable as Portuguese, the customs and language of the old country are still perpetuated. This is thanks, at least in part, to the activities of the local Holy Ghost societies and their commemoration of the Feast of Pentecost that brings people together to celebrate their culture.

Endnotes (continued)

24. Dunbar, p. 6.
25. Santos, p. 101.
26. Dunbar, p. 8.
27. Goulart, p. 284.
28. Dunbar, p. 6.
29. Clipping File 72-447-O San Mateo County History Museum Archives.
30. Clipping File 72-447-O San Mateo County History Museum Archives.
31. Evelyn Martin, "Memories of Pa" (Student Monograph at South San Francisco Library History Room).
32. Santos, p. 102.
33. Lorna Fernandez, *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 30, 1993.
34. Caronyne Zinko, Chronicle Correspondent, *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 11, 1994.
35. Mark Simon, "Peninsula Insider", *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 4, 1994.
36. Freeling, p. 10.



The Half Moon Bay Queen and her retinue leave church, 1936.

The Holy Ghost Festas

in the County of San Mateo

José Rodrigues

José Rodrigues

José do Couto Rodrigues was born in Lomba de Maia, São Miguel, Azores. He emigrated to the United State in 1963 and received his MBA from San Francisco State in 1977. Since his arrival in the United States, he has been deeply involved in the Portuguese community as a radio personality for many years and an officer of many organizations - Portuguese Heritage Publications, Portuguese Athletic Club, Cabrilho Bank, Portuguese-American Political Action and many others. He is married to Delminda, a native of São Jorge, and has resided in San Mateo since 1982. If you are interested in learning more about these celebrations to the Holy Spirit and other facts on the history of the Portuguese in California, please visit the website www.portuguesebooks.org.



Holy Ghost parade in Half Moon Bay, 1914.
Photograph courtesy of Joseph Vargas.

Today, the festas in celebration of the Holy Ghost are the largest, most popular and visible civic, religious and cultural manifestations of Portuguese life in California. In 2008, over 90 brotherhoods, from as far north as Crescent City to as far south as San Diego, held celebrations in the state of California.

Queen Isabel of Portugal, wife of King Dom Diniz, is usually credited with the introduction of this devotion to the Holy Spirit in Portugal by founding a brotherhood in Alenquer, sometime between 1296 and 1325, and building a church staffed by Franciscans. However, the devotion to the Holy Spirit in Portugal pre-dates Queen Isabel. The Knights Templar erected their church to the Holy Spirit in 1160. But the celebrations held by Queen Isabel grew ever more popular in Portugal as the royal couple added elaborate rituals, including the coronation of a common poor person and the distribution of food to the poor.

Soon after 1427, when the Portuguese discovered and settled the Azores, these celebrations were established and continued in the islands by the early settlers. However, because in the Azores these settlers encountered a very different environment than the one they were used to in the mainland, including their first experiences with earthquakes and volcano eruptions, these celebrations became the most important religious manifestation in every one of the nine islands of the archipelago. The celebrations represented, in many cases, the pity and a way to show repentance before God, as they thought that these natural phenomenon were the result of God's revenge for their imperfect lives. From an original concept of sharing with the less fortunate the gifts one had been bestowed upon, the tradition also encompassed the concept of *promessa* (promise) of the people to receive God's favors and protection.

In the Azores, as well as in California, the brotherhoods function independently from the Catholic Church hierarchy, which is often a source of some friction since the festas more pagan-rooted rituals are not always well accepted by the church.

While the Holy Ghost festas have almost disappeared in mainland Portugal, they are still central to the cultural and social

manifestations of Azoreans and their descendants everywhere in the world, but particularly in the United States, Canada and parts of Brazil.

These celebrations were brought to California around the 1850s when the first Azorean settlers established whaling stations along the entire coastline of California. Then as now, the overwhelming majority of the Portuguese in California came from the Azores.

The first celebration to the *Divino Espirito Santo* is thought to have occurred around 1865 in Carmel where a group of Azorean shore whalers donated enough silver dollars to enable a local silversmith to craft a crown for the Festa. That historical crown is now part of the collection of historical artifacts on permanent display at the Carmel Mission Museum adjacent to the San Carlos Borromeo de Carmel Mission in the Monterey Peninsula. Unfortunately, except for the oral traditions transcript by Sir Richard-Joseph Menn, the diocesan curator of the Carmel Mission, no documents have been found to affirm the exact date and format of that celebration.

From that spontaneous beginning, brotherhoods were established in other areas along the coast, namely Half Moon Bay, Pescadero and Sausalito, and later inland, where the increasing population of Azoreans came to settle and turn their efforts from shore whaling to agriculture. There are official records of 149 *Irmandades do Divino Espirito Santo* (Holy Ghost brotherhoods) having been organized in different cities of the State during the last 138 years. Today, 98 of these societies are still active. Almost all of them own their halls and on the day of the celebration alone served over a quarter million free meals of the traditional *sopas*.

Half Moon Bay had the first documented celebration to *Divino Espirito Santo* in the State of California. In 1871, the Portuguese who lived in that location started the celebrations to the Holy Ghost in Amesport, now called Frenchman's Creek, at the home of Mrs. Rosa Pedra Joaquina, who became known as Rose Brown. The celebration consisted of a parade with a Holy Ghost crown she had brought from the Azores, from Mrs Brown's residence to a Catholic church, where mass honoring the Holy Trinity was celebrated. After mass, the parade returned to her home, where a free barbecue was served to all in attendance. By 1895, the present society of *Irmandade do Divino Espirito Santo* - I.D.E.S. was formerly organized and celebrated its first festa in 1886. Because of the folk Azorean dance Chamarrita that usually took place before the closing of these celebrations, the Half Moon Bay celebration is also known as the Chamarrita Festival.

Mrs. Rose Brown was born on November 11, 1841, in the island



First Holy Ghost crown, property of Rose Brown, used for the 1871 celebration in Half Moon Bay. Photograph courtesy of Tony Goulart.



Rose Pedra (Joaquina) Brown, reportedly the second Portuguese woman to settle in Half Moon Bay in the mid-1800s. Photograph courtesy of Joseph Vargas.



Early 1870s Holy Ghost celebration meal in Half Moon Bay. Photograph courtesy of Joseph Vargas.



Holy Ghost parade at Half Moon Bay chapel with IDES President Joseph Vargas, late 1900s.



Antone Brazil, the parade Marshal, one of many generations of Portuguese-Americans active in the Pescadero celebration. Photograph courtesy of Donna Brazil.

of Corvo, the smallest island in the Azores archipelago. She immigrated to the United in 1865 and was buried in Half Moon Bay on March 17, 1909.

Energized by the devotion of the first celebrations and the increase in the number of Portuguese immigrants settling in that area, the Portuguese community decided to buy land and build a hall for their celebrations. By 1895 the *Irmandade do Divino Espirito Santo* had its present hall on Main Street, which future generations of Portuguese have enlarged and modified to meet the needs of the much larger community.

Following the eruption of the Capelinhos Volcano in Faial in 1957, the Azores experienced the exodus of almost one-third of its population to North America. Attracted by the new jobs in the nursery industry, a new wave of Azoreans came to settle in Half Moon Bay and re-kindled the devotion to the Holy Spirit and the commitment to the *Irmandade do Divino Espirito Santo*, IDES.

Nowadays the celebration on Pentecost Sunday has become a huge tourist attraction for the city of Half Moon Bay. On that day, thousands of people from all over the Bay Area come to join the local community in the oldest recorded celebration to the Holy Spirit in the State of California. It is not uncommon for the IDES to feed five thousand people on the day of the celebration.

By the early 1900s about 250 Portuguese lived in the town of Pescadero, located just about twenty miles south of Half Moon Bay. Portuguese immigrants had lived in that area, and Pigeon Point in particular, since the establishment of the shore whaling station in 1862. The present Pigeon Point lighthouse was built in 1872 on the location

used as the lookout point by the shore whalers. The whaling station functioned until the 1880s when the economics of shore whaling forced the Portuguese to turn their efforts to agriculture. João Cardozo, from Loural, São Jorge, and Manuel and Maria Mesquita from Pico and João Bernardo (also known as Captain John Bennet) are some of the very first settlers in the Pescadero area. Besides whaling, which was not a year round occupation, the local Portuguese residents leased land and worked as dairymen, farmers and loggers.

With the thriving shore whaling business at Pigeon Point and farming around the entire area, soon the Portuguese population of Pescadero, who used to travel to Half Moon Bay to participate in the celebrations, saw the need to start their own. The first festa took place in 1900. The celebration, lasting three days, was modeled in most of its traditional aspects to the one in Half Moon Bay. However, and in keeping with the tradition of that first celebration, the brotherhood in Pescadero continues to serve its famous barbecue rather than the traditional *sopas* provided everywhere by the other festas in California.

The hall on Stage Road, which includes a chapel with a beautiful altar, was built by 1914. The Portuguese of nearby San Gregorio also became active participants in the yearly celebration. To this day, the celebration in Pescadero takes place on the sixth weekend after Easter (the weekend before Pentecost Sunday). Every year over one thousand people came to partake of the free meal available to all present.



Early Holy Ghost Parade in Pescadero.
Photograph courtesy of Fran Lawrence.



Horse and buggies were the primary means of transportation to the early Holy Ghost Festas in Pescadero. On the right side is the auction yard where donated cattle and other animals were sold to defray the costs of the celebration. Photograph courtesy of Fran Lawrence.



Contrary to many other places where the Holy Ghost celebration meal consists of bread soaked in meat broth and meat, in Pescadero, the tradition is barbecued steak. Photograph courtesy of Donna Brazil.

Only a few Portuguese families live in the town of Pescadero, now with a population of around two thousand; however the names of Brazil, Duarte and Nunes are still very common.

In today's Holy Ghost festas the religious processions have given way to parades. The queen, a young unmarried teenager, dressed in a white bride-like dress and with a beautiful hand-made and artistically decorated cape draped over her shoulders, has emerged as the dominant figure rather than the *mordomo* (president).

There is no documentation of other organized Holy Ghost celebrations in San Mateo County, although it is highly probable that small, private, family-oriented celebrations took place at the homes of many Portuguese who settled around the county.

Santo Cristo Festa

José Rodrigues

The Portuguese-American community of South San Francisco has celebrated its annual festa to *Senhor Santo Cristo dos Milagres* – a veneration to *Ecce Homo*, a religious event that attracts people from everywhere in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1914.

This celebration, started by immigrants from the island of São Miguel, Azores, and under the auspices of the then mutual-aid society *Real Associação Autônômica Micaelense*, was modeled after the largest annual religious event held annually in the Azorean archipelago, the *Festa do Senhor Santo Cristo dos Milagres* in Ponta Delgada.

In California, due to the influence of the local Holy Ghost celebrations, the festa to *Senhor Santo Cristo* in South San Francisco, now an independent brotherhood, has come to incorporate many of the Holy Ghost festa elements - the use of a queen, a parade instead of a religious procession and the free distribution of *sopas*.



Details of the Santo Cristo cape on exhibit in the San Mateo County History Museum's exhibit, *Land of Opportunity: The Immigrant Experience in San Mateo County*. Photograph by Randy Silver.

Memories of Pa:

An Azorean Patriarch of South San Francisco

Evelyn Martin



The Martins Family of South San Francisco. Joseph Martins (b. 1920), Mama Maria Martins, Albert Martins (b. 1926), Papa Antonio Martins and Evelina Martins (b. 1918). Photograph courtesy of Evelyn Martin.

Evelyn Martin

Evelyn's early story is told in her paper. After graduating from high school, she worked at several local businesses, finally becoming the secretary to the plant manager at the South San Francisco company that became part of Merk and Co. She always was active in her community, especially the Historical Society of South San Francisco, the Catholic Church and the Portuguese Santo Cristo Society. In the 1970s, she decided to go to college, and wrote her paper as part of a class assignment. In 1988, she was recognized by the South San Francisco Chamber of Commerce receiving their Outstanding Citizen Award. Now retired but still just as active, she celebrated her 90th birthday last year.

This history is about my father, an Azorean Patriarch, who came to South San Francisco, California, at the age of twenty. It was he who privately suffered intense pain at leaving his mother and father; it was he who made a decision to also leave his brothers and sisters, as well as friends that he loved dearly.

Pa's Early Life in São Miguel

A month never went by that Pa did not mention his family. His parents were always in his thoughts, and somehow we knew they would always be with us vicariously. He never forgot them and sent money and clothing to support his family. By doing this, it was his way of telling us we had grandparents and relatives and were never to forget them.

Pa was born on May 15, 1891, in the family home. São Miguel did not have a hospital. He was baptized in the Church of Our Lady of Presentation in Capelas, a village on São Miguel, an island in the

There were always religious activities, but the most important one was the Santo Cristo Celebration.

Azores, Portugal, and was given the name of Antonio Jose Martins.

Education was not a part of Pa's life when he was growing up. Poor boys did not attend school, as they had to work to support the families. However, the girls were given that privilege, so Pa's sisters received an education. The rich boys, however, were provided with schools and those seeking professional degrees had to go to Lisbon or Coimbra for there were no colleges or universities in the Azore Islands.

Pa started working at the age of nine for he was a poor boy. He would carry rock to build the homes and rock fences throughout the village. His pay was about ten cents per day; yet it was a job that paid a higher wage than working on the farms. At 14, he helped his father who rented a six-acre farm that had grapes and vegetable products. He worked on the farm until the age of twenty and during this period, learned to make wine, listened to the poets on the street corners and enjoyed watching religious plays on the platforms in front of the church. There was no scenery and the performers relished being the star performers - comparable to the Greek tragedies no doubt!

Religion was very important to Pa while growing up. His mother saw to it. The family always had to attend mass, regardless of any event. His mother guided them well for his father was only concerned about supporting them. There were always religious activities but the most important one was the Santo Cristo Celebration (Holy Christ of Miracles) held on the fifth Sunday following Easter. From all parts of the country, people would attend to participate in the religious procession which lasted for hours. The event would last for three days and Pa was always proud to walk in the procession. Miraculous cures have been attributed to Santo Cristo and those who have received some form of blessing or answer to a specific prayer to this Saint, would offer cattle, wheat, flour, which were later distributed to the poor and less fortunate.

The Portuguese Family

Pa's family was always mentioned as often as possible. His father was Jose Martins, a peasant who loved the earth. He also was a shoemaker who made wooden shoes (*galoches*) for the women in the village. His mother was Jacinta Marcis de Encarnacaco, who never worked outside the home but was an excellent weaver in addition to her role as wife and mother.

Pa's oldest brother was Jose, named after their father. He was the first son to leave Portugal and settle in the United States; he went to Fall River, Massachusetts. Jose was married but had no children. For some reason Pa never discussed his oldest brother.

Firmino Martins was another brother who had at one time served in the Portuguese Army as a soldier. It was a good opportunity for Firmino to obtain his education and schooling, which was denied to him as a boy. He, too, immigrated to Fall River, Massachusetts, where he lived for six years before returning to São Miguel. While Firmino lived in the East, Pa was encouraged to visit him but Pa always preferred California. Until he died, Firmino was the sole distributor of all the family news and events from Portugal through the brotherly letters, which Firmino wrote, but read by someone else because Pa didn't know how to read nor to write.

Tofilo was the actor and poet in Pa's family. He also did not know how to read and write, but possessed a fantastic memory. He could recite verses, poetry and acted in plays, which gave him a reputation, par excellence, until he died at the age of nineteen from influenza.

Ludviana and Maria were Pa's only sisters. The two of them did not work on the farm as they were allowed the privilege of going to school to learn how to read and write. Both sisters married. Ludviana was constantly busy raising nineteen children although many, I believe, died in infancy. Maria had nine children and was the only one alive when Pa returned to the Azore Islands for a visit in 1954.

Pa loved his father although he was very strict. He must have been hardy, for the Azores were often ravaged by violent storms; yet he was kind and compassionate. He also was a man of determination and persistence and he knew life wasn't easy. Everyone knew the village shoemaker for he would always come into the village riding on a donkey.

The land was his father's home. He always told Pa it was the land that made you, nourished you and eventually claimed you. No matter what man did to it, man needed land for it was always waiting to be worked on - it was permanent and eternal. Because land meant so much to Pa's father, he rented six acres each year from the rich landowners. The peasants or the poor did not have ownership of farms in the Azore Islands. Land was too expensive and the poor cannot pay for it. All members of the family, from the youngest to the eldest, worked on farms. The rental fee was paid from its resources when the harvest ends. If there was anything left, it would go toward the family income. The farmers could not afford new mechanization to replace primitive methods of farming, so Pa's father and his brothers worked long hours.

On July 15, 1912, while working on his father's farm, Pa received a Military Notice requesting him to serve in the Portuguese Army. He

Evelina Martins or Evelyn Martin?



Evelyn Martin. Photograph courtesy of Evelyn Martin.

When Evelina returned from Portugal, she attended the local grammar school on Grand Avenue at the age of 7. She did not speak English, but did very well with her Portuguese. The other kids would laugh at her when she said her name in Portuguese.

Learning English was difficult, but she tried. Evelina decided to do something about her name, so she asked Mary Gaspar, a neighbor, to give her an American name. Her new name was Evelyn Martin. Her teacher and the other students preferred this name.

As a result, the Martins family is also known as the Martin family.

Two reasons prompted Pa to leave the land of his birth. One was to improve his economic situation, and the other was because his uncle, Antonio Soares, living in California at the time, offered to sponsor him.

was excused, however, for the Army did not summon him and his number was not called. Feeling he had become a free man, he decided he would not work for his father. It did not give him income and he left São Miguel, Azore Islands, to seek fame and fortune in a new world.

Immigration to America

Two reasons prompted Pa to leave the land of his birth. One was to improve his economic situation, and the other was because his uncle, Antonio Soares, living in California at the time, offered to sponsor him.

The Azore Islands, for many years, had been in a state approximating medievalism, life being meager and uncertain. The police, especially, were after the peasants and the fishermen constantly, owing to a suspicion that fishermen were taking part in smuggling operations. The laws favored the landed aristocracy and prevented the rise of the poor man. There was no such thing as free enterprise. There were very few schools and the peasants and fishermen distrusted those. People who could not read and write were forced by law to vote. Anything that resembled politics gave fear to the peasants. People became very suspicious and looked to the United States for succor. Population was also increasing on the Azore Islands, which had 264 habitants to the square mile in 1911, the year before Pa left the Azores. On May 7, 1908, a treaty was signed by Portugal and the United States concerning the Azorean people who were leaving their homeland to be helped by the United States. Portugal never forgot the help given by the United States for its people, and air bases operated by the United States government are located on São Miguel at the present time [1976].

On August 29, 1912, Pa became part of the surge of immigrants leaving the Azores for California, as that state was more prosperous than Rhode Island and Massachusetts where many Azoreans were stopping because they could not afford the trip to the West Coast. There was also a tremendous movement toward the West, as peasants believed California was the land that had money growing on trees. They found out the truth when they arrived. In 1912, the voyage to America took ten days. Pa came on the ship *President Wilson* which stopped in New York and Boston. He took the train to California. Both fares were covered in the \$200 which Antonio Soares had sent to Pa before he left the Azores.

Antonio Soares was the brother of Pa's mother. In the Azores, he originally had worked as a houseboy for a rich merchant. He never wanted to serve in the Portuguese Army, so one day while a ship from

the United States was in the harbor, he secretly climbed aboard. No one was aware of this, for his employer only knew he was going to buy groceries at the market. Instead, he took the grocery money and his personal belongings and left without telling anyone. He worked his way on the ship and decided California, not Fall River, Massachusetts would be his destination. He felt the Portuguese Army would not take the trouble to look for him, as it was too costly to track him down at such a great distance as California! It was many years later that he wrote his wealthy employer and apologized for what he had done. He also sent the amount of money he had taken for the groceries. Pa mentioned how much suffering Antonio Soares went through because of his actions. He lost personal contact with his parents for twelve years. During this period, he got married but had no children.

A California Wedding

In 1914, Pa met his wife in Oakland. It was at one of the Portuguese celebrations given by the Holy Ghost Society of Oakland. She, too, had left São Miguel to make a better life for herself. Her uncle, Manuel Pacheco, from Modesto, California, had volunteered to sponsor her. He sent her money and Mama was to settle on his farm in Modesto, but Mama decided she should live in Oakland because there were Portuguese dances and newspapers there. The life on the farm did not appeal to her. Mama was born in the Village of Seven Cities on March 4, 1893, and came to California when she was 20 years of age.

Oakland had a large Portuguese community that wished to maintain Old World customs. Pa would attend their social activities for it was at these events the bachelors would learn when young ladies were arriving from the Azores. He finally heard a young girl by the name of Maria Medeiros would be coming to the Holy Ghost Celebration. He left for Oakland on the San Francisco Ferry to search for the new arrival! When he arrived, he was given information about her. He was to go to see a Mrs. Antone Phillips, which he did. He did not know Mrs. Phillips or Maria Medeiros, so he knew he had to do something. Two people were walking toward him. One was a lone woman, and the other lady was walking with a boy and girl clutching her hands. Pa felt Maria Medeiros wasn't married so he gambled on talking to the lone woman. He felt sure of himself. As he approached the lone woman, he said, "I am looking for Maria Medeiros, are you she?" The lone woman answered, "No, I am not her. Maria Medeiros is the woman who is following me with the two children." Pa was highly embarrassed at what he had done, but it turned out very well. Mama was staying with Mrs.

Oakland had a large Portuguese community that wished to maintain Old World customs. Pa would attend their social activities for it was at these events the bachelors would learn when young ladies were arriving from the Azores.



Antonio Martins and Maria Mederios married on September 3, 1916. They are pictured with Isabel and Antonio Soares (standing) who were their sponsors. Photograph courtesy of Evelyn Martin.

Phillips and made her home with her until she married.

Two years after their acquaintance, Pa married her at a Catholic Mass, September 3, 1916, at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Oakland, California. The wedding ceremony was performed by Rev. Henry J. Ferreira, a Roman Catholic Priest and also of Portuguese extraction. Pa and Mama and other Portuguese immigrants went to Rev. Ferreira's church to be married because he spoke Portuguese and had a Portuguese parish. The priest was willing to help any of the immigrants who could not speak English. Mama and Pa told us they could not get married until the debts had been paid to their sponsors. Yet, with this problem confronting them at the time, Mama wore a long, beautiful white dress with miniature pearls at the collar and Pa wore a business suit with white men's gloves. It was very fashionable in those days for men, as well as the women, to wear white gloves at their wedding.

The best man and matron-of-honor at the wedding were Mr. and Mrs. Antonio Soares, Pa's kindly uncle and wife from Daly City, California. Pa was especially proud of his uncle and best man. He was his mother's brother and Pa felt the family, even though they lived in São Miguel, was present at the wedding.

There was no wedding reception. The four went to a local restaurant for lunch in Oakland and, after that, the newly married couple left for South San Francisco via the San Francisco Ferry. They had the grand sum of twenty dollars but Pa had a steady job with W. P. Fuller & Company and was paying \$40 per month for a home on Aspen Avenue. He felt secure.

He stayed at the home on Aspen for four years. Because he wanted a family and needed a larger home, he moved to Railroad Avenue and paid \$50 per month for a two-story house. He did not like to pay rent for he felt he was not gaining anything in return. He loved the earth as his father did and wanted to own something, a house and garden. Finally he decided he should build his own home. Pa designed his own home because he needed a basement. It was on Commercial Avenue. The price was \$5,700; built by Frank Bettencourt of San Mateo, a Portuguese contractor. It was a two-story dwelling with three bedrooms, a living room, extremely large kitchen (it had to serve as a dining room area), a pantry off the kitchen with a front and back porch. Mama always wanted a dining room but since Pa needed the garage and basement, she regrettably gave up her dining room!

The American Family

While Pa and Mama lived on Railroad Avenue, two children were born. Evelina Martins, a daughter, was born on July 20, 1918. The family almost lost her as the influenza epidemic touched South San Francisco and she was given the last rites. There was one doctor in the town. He was extremely busy at the local hospital which only had ten rooms. When babies were born at that time, they had to depend on a mid-wife by the name of Maria Monize to take care of new babies. Pa told me one day it was Maria who brought me into the world.

On January 31, 1920, the first son named Joseph Martins (after his grandfather) was also delivered in the home on Railroad Avenue. Maria Monize also assisted at his birth. Pa remembered 1920 as a good year because he now had a son!

On May 11, 1922, another son was born and named Manuel Martins. Pa and Mama decided to return to Portugal for a visit and left July 5, 1922, for the Azores. Because Manuel was newly born, he was not able to withstand the rigors of the voyage and died two weeks after their arrival in the Azores.

The last child was a boy named Albert Martins. He was born on June 8, 1926, on Commercial Avenue. He was the only baby to be delivered by a doctor. Mary Gaspar, a neighbor, assisted in the delivery.

To support his growing family, Pa worked as a tractor operator for the W. P. Fuller & Co. His pay was \$4.00 a day and his job was to deliver pallets of boxes of paint or drums of paint to the pier. He had a perfect record, better than those who were able to read and write. It was a mystery as to how Pa could ship orders without getting them mixed up, as he did not know how to read and write. He knew he would find a way, so he developed a code system of his own. For each customer's order, he would identify the customer by using a different color crayon, which he would mark on one box or one drum, when he picked up the orders in the shipping department. If the order had three boxes, one box was marked and that indicated the other two would go with the marked box to complete the customer's order. Advancement never came to him, however. He was given an opportunity to be a superintendent, but it could not materialize due to his inability to read and write.

His first car was a Model T Ford which he purchased in 1924. It was a four-door sedan, with an oval window in the back, and had seats that when you sat down, your feet could not touch the floor. He was very proud of his car and there was no problem driving it. He was able to obtain a driver's license due to a Mr. Venturi, an agent at the Motor

Joseph Martins



Joseph Martins during the war.

Joseph served in the U.S. Medical Corp in the 1940s. Movie star Lew Ayres was his medical instructor at Monterey. During the war, Joseph took care of the wounded soldiers after the bombings. He was also a military policeman and once protected President Roosevelt in Casablanca.

Joseph served in battles and campaigns in Algeria, Tunisia, Sicily, Rome, Arno and the Rhineland. He met Marie, his future wife, in southern France.

After returning home, Joseph became a volunteer to take care of the Blessed Mother's Grotto at the All Souls Catholic Church.

Maria Martins



Maria Martins. Photograph courtesy of Evelyn Martin.

Maria left São Miguel and was sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Antone Phillips of Oakland.

She had a difficult time when she came to South San Francisco because she could not speak or write English. She returned to Portugal twice, but finally stayed in America.

When she arrived, several Portuguese families were living on Commercial Avenue. They were the Silvas, Sanchez, Gaspar and Costas. When one mother gave birth, the other mothers would cook dinner, wash and iron clothes

Vehicle Department in San Mateo, who also helped other immigrants obtain their licenses by asking verbal questions, rather than obliging them to take the written test. He would ask such questions as, "Where is your left hand? How do you use it to make a left turn?" Needless to say, many an immigrant drove a car because of Mr. Venturi.

Mama was a housewife and mother who kept an immaculate home, watching over her children with love and devotion. In 1929, she decided to work at a fish cannery to supplement the family income. Mama did not want to be left out as some of the local Portuguese women were employed. The position did not become a permanent one because she had to get up at four o'clock in the morning to meet the five o'clock morning train for San Francisco. Perhaps it was also the guilty feeling she had when she left her children that early. Although a neighbor would come in to help the family, Mama gave up the cannery position after four weeks to resume the role of wife and mother. The job paid 35 cents an hour and even though it was a short duration, she did receive a Social Security Card for the effort.

In raising his children, Pa did not adhere to the American way of life. To him, discipline was extremely important for respect and obedience. As a result, he was very strict with us, which, no doubt, was a carry-over from his own upbringing. We always were told what to do and certainly could never answer him back. Right or wrong, he was the boss of the Martin household and we had to abide by his wishes whether we liked it or not.

My brothers and I were always given invitations to birthday parties, picnics, etc. but we had to refuse them politely, after asking permission from Pa and being told we could not go. Pa was able to explain his reasoning later in life when we were older. He just did not want us to be hurt or highly embarrassed at these events. "I want you to know I had to raise you within my means. It is much more important that I give you a home, food, clothing as I am responsible for you. I did not allow you to go because I just could not afford the extra expense. Also, if you could go to a party and not be like the other children, it would be wrong for me to put you in a position of embarrassment." He would explain that to go to a birthday party, for instance, you would need a new dress because the other girls would have one. Then you would ask to buy a birthday present. Every child likes to have something new and every child likes to give a present; you are not different than any other child. He was right in his thinking although it was difficult for us to understand it at the time. After Pa paid his home and received higher wages, he changed philosophies. Through it all,

we learned honesty, self-discipline and to separate valuables from non-valuables, but most of all, the value of responsibility and sacrifice. To put it another way, Pa was telling us a person should live within his means and not worry about keeping up with the Jones family.

Our family was very economical. Pa saw to it. We would share with other Portuguese families the expense of buying a pig to save on food. Four families would buy one, sharing the price and food in equal portions. Mrs. Manuel Costa would give her backyard for hog killing and her shed for drying the sausages. It was always hustle and bustle at these events. Time could not be wasted. It was up to the men to take care of the hog, by tying him to a bench and fighting to keep him down. Once the pig was killed, the women would scurry with pots to catch his blood. Some women would be chopping onions, garlic and parsley to mix these ingredients with the blood. When the mixing was done, the women would be ready to make the blood sausages.

The pork sausages are made by cutting one-inch pieces of pork, mixing it with garlic and marinating it in a mixture of wine and vinegar. After three hours, the women start making the sausages which are later taken to the curing shed. Contests would be held to see how many sausages could be made per hour. It was at these gatherings that I would sit next to Mama to learn the makings of a blood or pork sausage, but somehow the thought of blood and a pig fighting for his life did not appeal to me.

It was time to eat when the sausages were in the curing shed. This meant while the fire was burning in the shed (a small fire of bay leaves on a cement floor) the smoke would drift toward the sausages which were hanging on sticks to dry them. Soup was always served. Most always it was *Calde Verde* (green soup) made of thinly-shredded cabbage and other vegetables into a broth comparable to the Italian minestrone. At these meals, the men would bring their homemade wine and join the continual chatter of the Portuguese language. After the drying process, washing and cleaning the pots and pans, including sidewalks, the day was over. Each family would go home with food to stock up the family larder for another four months.

Pa shared an active social life within his community, along with the seventeen Azorean families who came to South San Francisco between 1912 and 1914 to settle around Commercial Street. Many happy letters were received from friends and relatives so there was a daily exchange of news. Community life was important. When a baby was expected in a family, the other families would take care of the laundering, provide meals and take any small children into their homes.



Joseph Martins and Marie Gilberte Aimard were married in France on April 21, 1951. Photograph courtesy of Evelyn Martin.

Albert Martins



Albert Martins during the war. Photograph courtesy of Evelyn Martin.

Albert served in the U.S. Navy from June 17, 1944 to June 6, 1946 as a carpenter on the *U.S.S. New Kent*, APA217.

When Albert returned home, he continued his carpentry and studied to become a contractor. He was able to build 10 to 15 homes in South San Francisco that have withstood earthquakes with little or no damage.

No one paid for a baby sitter or sent the laundry out. It was the Azorean memories, customs and ideals that kept them happy and together.

Pa was a connoisseur of wine; he had learned the art from his father. Each year he would go into the grape market in San Francisco to order one ton of grapes; he would say half ton white and half ton black. A permit would be required from the Alcoholic Beverage Department from the State. Pa knew how to write his name and would sign the form after I filled in the information.

The wine crusher was ordered months in advance, for the Italians in the community were competing with the Portuguese to rent the crushers. Pa was smart at this too. He didn't want to be left out, for the roster was always full of Italian names, so he would sign up a year in advance of when it was time to pick up his grapes at the market.

All the Portuguese families helped when each family made his wine. Pa would do the same for them. Our house constantly smelled of wine during the crushing of the grapes for the fermentation operation. Not only was the odor powerful, but also there was a continual musical sound of bubbles. To sleep at night was an unforgettable experience. The one-ton vat, which contained the crushed grapes, was directly under my bedroom. The more noise the bubbles made, the more assurance Pa had that his wine was going to be better than the previous year. The one-ton vat, the barrels and his expertise in wine-making was a strong indication that Pa looked forward to proving he had the best wine on the block.

Pa also had a contest with Mr. Louis Grassi, an Italian who lived next door to us. Each year the two of them would get together, pour a glass of his own wine and have a lengthy discussion by comparing clarities, grapes used and period of fermentation. The glasses would always be held to the ceiling in the basement, and when no one would win in the contest, both men made a toast to each other, happy to be friends and neighbors! Even after both were deceased, the daughters carried on the tradition. Once a year the two of them would raise their glasses to the ceiling and make a toast, Val Grassi to her father and Evelyn Martin to her Pa!

Pa had talent for music. Even though he did not have lessons, he could play the guitar by ear. He had brought a Portuguese guitar when he came in 1912 to America. I always had a desire to play the piano, but he did not approve. Finally, when I started to work, I decided to buy one. My salary from the five and ten was small but part of it went into my savings for the piano. One day an ad caught my eye. Without Pa's knowledge, I had the piano delivered to the house while he was

TO BE GIVEN TO
THE PERSON NATURALIZED

No. 4692998

Rollen No. 2864

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Age 47 years, sex male, color white, complexion ruddy, color of eyes brown, color of hair gray, height 5 feet 3 inches, weight 165 pounds, visible distinctive marks none, marital status married, former nationality Portuguese.

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me.

ORIGINAL
(Complete and true signature of holder)

(SECURELY AND PERMANENTLY)

STATE OF CALIFORNIA ss:
COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Be it known that ANTONIO MARTINS
then residing at 535 Commercial Ave. South San Francisco, Cal
having petitioned to be admitted a citizen of the United States of America, and at
a term of the SUPERIOR Court of SAN MATEO COUNTY
STATE OF CALIFORNIA held pursuant to law at
REDWOOD CITY on NOVEMBER 25th 1939
the court having found that the petitioner intends to reside permanently in the
United States and in all respects complied with the Naturalization Laws of the United
States in such case applicable, and was entitled to be so admitted, the court thereupon
ordered that the petitioner be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.



Antonio Martins

Antonio Martins citizenship papers. Courtesy of Evelyn Martin.

working. The best place for the secret was my bedroom. When I had to start practicing, Pa started asking questions, "Where did you get the piano?" I always told the truth. "I bought it with my money." "You send it right back!" I told him I had to keep it because the lady from whom I purchased it would not make a refund. Pa was mad because I had disobeyed him, but I kept taking lessons and practicing the chords. Because of his natural ear, Pa felt I could not learn to play the piano. One day while he was working in the basement, he took a broomstick and rapped the basement ceiling under my bedroom and hollered, "You better quit now Evelyn, you will never make it." He was right. I never did. The piano was given to the Santo Cristo Society because they needed a piano at the time to rent their hall.

Pa was very strict about my dates. If the boys were Portuguese, permission was almost always granted before I finished asking for it. He would encourage it but it was always, "No" for my dates of other foreign extraction.

Pa always had a secret desire to become a naturalized citizen. He wanted to be a citizen of the country of his adoption. Since he could not read nor write, he was determined he would find a way. With the help of a personal friend, Mr. Jose Reiz, a Portuguese from Cape Verde Islands, Pa's determination helped him to memorize the little book that would make him a citizen. For six months, once a week, Pa would go down to the basement to study. Mr. Reiz would recite the questions and answers until Pa had memorized them.

The great day arrived for the trek to Redwood City. His supervisor, Mr. W. Bitt at W. P. Fuller company and Mr. Victor Boido,



Albert Martins and Diane Venturi were married in South San Francisco on May 27, 1967 at All Souls Catholic Church. Photograph courtesy of Evelyn Martin.

Antonio “Tony” Martins



Antonio Martins sponsored his nephew to come to America in the 1940s. He was allowed to come into the country on the condition that if the United States needed him to fight the war, he would do so.

Tony arrived in San Francisco by train. He walked all the way on Highway 101 with a suitcase on his shoulders until he met Louis Belloni at the Grand Avenue Station.

owner of the South San Francisco Bakery, were his sponsors. Pa had failed the test twice but on the third attempt, he became a naturalized citizen. It was one of the happiest days of his life and a jubilant one. The bottles of his homemade ruby red wine were enthusiastically opened and praises sung. Pa had made it!

Pa always believed in helping people or anyone who needed help. When he received a request from his brother Firmino Martins for his son to come to America, Pa did not hesitate. He arrived at our home on April 24, 1944. Cousin Antonio did not waste time after leaving the Azores. He went to evening school at Commerce High School in San Francisco by bus, as he did not know how to speak English. He received a high school diploma after five years at night school. He can write and speak English very well and has become a naturalized citizen. Because Pa's uncle, Antonio Soares, had sponsored him, Pa was very happy to sponsor his nephew.

Pa's Religious Life

Religion was part of Pa. He would attend Mass and come home and work in his garden. He would see to it that his children attended catechism and received the sacraments of Communion and Confirmation. He was also an usher at the 9 o'clock Mass on Sundays when he could make it.

As a member of the community, he would participate in the annual Santo Cristo celebration. The purpose of the Santo Cristo celebration in South San Francisco is to carry on the same traditions of the Azoreans in São Miguel.

Pa was a charter member and responsible along with the other Portuguese men who came in 1912-1914 to start the Society. I can recall Mr. Antonio Mattos of Oakland coming to our house to induce Pa to start a branch in South San Francisco. Mr. Mattos was responsible for starting the *Irmandade de Santo Cristo de Mocorros Mortuarios* in 1937 in Oakland. This organization also was constituted of Azoreans who were living in Oakland at that time.

After Mr. Mattos' persuasion, Pa started working to collect money for a Santo Cristo statue to be sent from São Miguel, Azores. The meetings were held at the homes of Mr. Jose Diaz on Commercial Avenue and Mr. Manuel Castro on Railroad. There were seventeen Azorean families who worked to get the Society started. The Society was incorporated on October 17, 1940, with a common seal with the words Santo Cristo Society of San Mateo County. The organization is still in existence. It has a membership of 125 members, of which some

members are the sons and daughters of the original seventeen families [1976].

Pa and the others managed to collect \$500 to purchase the statue. It was delivered to the All Souls Catholic Church on Walnut and Miller Avenues, after permission by Archbishop Hanna to hold an annual celebration by the Portuguese people. For years, this celebration was an outstanding success. Parades would be four hours long, and every politician saw to it that he would ride in a car during the parade to be noticed. Drill teams, professional groups, lodges and associations all participated to become a highlight at this celebration. The town eagerly looked forward to the out-of-town visitors. It meant money for the bars because the parade went up the main street to go to the church.

There is a fine tradition with this event. Pa always felt at home for the reason that the Santo Cristo and its principles were here just like it was in Portugal. The purpose of the Santo Cristo celebration is to take time from our daily lives to thank the good Lord. People comment, "Why thank God only on three days?" It is a true statement; however, the Portuguese wish to take time in their daily lives to publicly acknowledge God by sharing their faith with others. This is in gratitude for all the blessings the good Lord has given them.

The event takes place in May just as it was done in São Miguel. It takes three days for the celebration which commences on Friday night and ends on Sunday evening. All members and volunteers work extremely hard. The *sopas* (soup) is made from beef that has been donated by Portuguese families in Gustine. There is no charge for this meal and anyone who walks into the area is welcomed to sit down and break bread. On Saturday night there is a dance with Portuguese music. If the Portuguese dancers (a special group) are available, they will dance the dances of the Portuguese - the Chamarrita and the Fado.

The parade is on Sunday morning. The Santo Cristo statue is put on display at the chapel and then is carried by young boys in the parade that leaves the hall and goes to Mater Dolorosa church on Miller Avenue. When Mass is over, the parade returns to the hall for fun and eating the *sopas*. *Linguica* sausages are sold and *Masa* (Portuguese sweetbread). *Tramuse* (beans) and *Favas* (horsebeans) are also sold. The lunch of *sopas* is a treat for all those who love Portuguese food.

The celebration ends with an afternoon dance on Sunday. It is interesting to note that in past days, the Portuguese celebration was an exciting thing to look forward to. Every child and parent would hurry to the parade to watch the drill teams and drum corps. It would be a difficult thing to get into the local drill team (S.S.F. Raiders)



Charter members in the Santo Cristo Society of South San Francisco, Evelina Martins' parents help her hold the candle on the right. Photograph courtesy of Evelyn Martin.



because the waiting list was long. The parade would bring cities together. The Portuguese would come from as far as Gustine in buses and automobiles. It seemed as if the whole island of São Miguel was present, then everyone met in the parking lot. Many a girl met her husband at the dance or at the celebration, just as Pa and Mama did in Oakland. On May 7, 1925, Hugh McNellis, the Mayor of South San Francisco honored the Portuguese by a proclamation inviting everyone to this city to attend the traditional Santo Cristo celebration. Pa had a small part, but his faith was big. The Society is stronger, for the young boys and girls arriving from the Azores today automatically become members and work as hard as the original founders. The Society will flourish, no doubt, because of such zeal and enthusiasm [1976].

The Final Days

In 1956, Pa died of cancer at the Kaiser Hospital in South San Francisco. Pa was a considerate person at times. When we saw him the night before he died, he put his arm around me and thanked me and apologized for being so strict. He even said he wished he had treated me differently. I told him never to feel sorry or have any regrets. I respected him for the good job he had done with what he had to do. He looked at me and said, "I have a long night ahead of me." Joe and Albert were present as well as cousin Tony. Pa thanked them. That was the last time we saw him. The next morning he was gone.

Some of my fondest and treasured memories are the moments I personally spent with him. I never stopped asking him questions. Pa died a happy man. He had a full life. The last time he was able to stand on his feet, he stood at the window and saw the Santo Cristo parade march past the hospital window. With little strength left, he stood and waved back and the sound of music and marching feet took over.

Author's Note

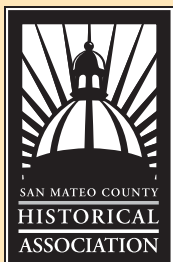
Evelina Martins and her family wish to especially thank Joan Levy for her interest in the story of her father, but more importantly for her help to correct and submit ideas in the finalization of this story.



Evelina Martins celebrated her 90th birthday with nephew David (Albert's son), brother Albert, and nephew Richard Martin (Joseph's son). Photograph courtesy of Evelyn Martin.



In both 1880 and today, one-third of the population of San Mateo County was born in another country. To learn more about the stories of local immigrants, visit the San Mateo County History Museum's exhibit, *Land of Opportunity: The Immigrant Experience in San Mateo County*. Portuguese artifacts include a Holy Ghost Festa crown and Santo Cristo Festa cape. Photograph by Randy Silver.



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