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The New Immigrant

Interview with Jorge Manuel Pereira

By Philip J. Rackley

"For people like us who have gone through a Revolution, we saw Portugal come out of the dark ages into the twentieth century. We have brought that to America. The early immigrants lived most of their lives under fascism. Though they are exposed to American democracy, few participate. The new immigrants are trying to change that and make a difference."

The Revolution: View from the Azores

When I was eleven, I learned there are certain things you should not talk about. My family was always opinionated politically. My maternal grandmother was arrested and sent to jail for a month because she said something bad about the dictator, Salazar. And my aunt's husband was arrested in the student revolt. That caused a big commotion in the family.

On my mother's side, they didn't see my grandfather's point of view. They despised the republic completely and wanted the monarchy, which ended in 1910. Salazar was in power from 1932 to 1968, when he fell off his chair, literally. He had a stroke and fell off the chair and was basically kicked out of the government. He was never officially told he was no longer prime minister so he died believing he was still in power.

Before the '74 Revolution, some neighbors at our house in Ribeira Grande, São Miguel, were talking about prices and food being too expensive and I just turned around and said, "Oh, it's all the government's fault." My mother looked at me and said, "Well, there are certain things you cannot talk about and blaming the government is one." You see, there were secret police who would arrest, torture and kill people. They did this on the orders of Salazar and later on Caetano. My father worked at the airport and knew a lot of people on the police force.

Before the Revolution we also had to live with the war in Africa. It started in the early 60s with the sea-jacking or high-jacking of a Portuguese ship in Santa Maria. Young men were drafted and they had to go fight in the provinces. One of my uncles went to Angola, another to Mozambique,

and a cousin went to Guinea-Bissau. Prior to and during the war, they were called "overseas colonies," then Salazar changed them to "overseas provinces." This change in language now made them "internal problems." of no interest to the world communities. Salazar would proudly say, "We are proudly alone," which means everybody is against us. The United Nations did not support Portugal in its wars, but the Americans, who often support dictators, sided with Portugal.

We had a neighbor, this old lady, her son was sent to Mozambique and we lived through it like she was a member of our family. She and her husband could not read or write so my mother used to read his letters to them and write letters back. She would come once or twice a week and dictate.

Many soldiers died. It was always a big party when the soldiers returned. When I was growing up, I knew I had to go and fight in these wars. Unless you were smart enough or had some godfather to help you get out of it, you had to go. I thought I would probably be killed by a land mine or something. I should also say that while this was going on, the Portuguese were also building beautiful cities in Africa like Luanda, the capital of Angola, and Maputo, the capital of Mozambique.

In March 1974 there was a mutiny in the Army barracks on the mainland, but that was crushed. On April 25 we noticed the national radio only played classical music all day. We didn't know what was going on. We switched to a private station from another island and learned there was a coup on the mainland. Remember, we lived in the Azores, the forgotten part of Portugal, and were always left in the dark. With the Revolution, we began a very big change.

People could talk freely on the streets and on May 1, International Workers Day, officials of the socialist and communist party came back from exile and they had this big rally in Lisbon with thousands of people, something never seen in Portugal. These juntas began forming and we wondered—What's going to happen next? Then they named a civilian prime minister and parties started to organize with different ideologies. Leninists, Maoists, Marxists. My grandfather, reacting against the Revolution, became more fascist than ever. We knew that the war in Africa would stop, the colonies would gain their independence and the soldiers were going to come home.

The Experiment in Democracy

I was now thirteen or fourteen and began moving in a socialist direction, equality for everybody. People became more involved in decision-making. One year after the Revolution, we had the first election. Deputies were elected to write a new constitution so everyone was involved in that. After it was revised a few times, it took a socialist turn. All the old establishment was thrown and new people came forward and took over. As people became politically conscious, there was movement for the independence of the Azores. Everybody in my family was against it except my aunt. After a while, it was like a counter-revolution and all the pro-independence people went after the communists. That soon stopped.

Many of my family members became involved in politics. A cousin was eventually elected to the city council of my home town, then when the mayor resigned, he became the new mayor. Now he is an assemblyman for the local parliament in the Azores. There were clashes within the family because everybody believed in a different party. We had some pretty big arguments and discussions at night. Some family members even wanted Salazar's ideas to come back because things didn't go that well for them after the Revolution.

Thirteen years of war in Africa had drained the economy of Portugal and that reality hit everybody. The cost of living began to go up and salaries did not. Sometimes we went without basic goods like sugar and propane gas. People had to find alternative ways of cooking. The new right to strike, now guaranteed by the constitution, affected my family and psychologically it was a big thing. My grandfather, almost seventy, had to go on strike for the first time, which put a financial strain on my parents and grandparents.

Portugal had been very stratified by classes—the rich, middle-class and poor. Everybody now had opportunity to go for the same jobs. The "godfather" system was eliminated. The Revolution

was also good for the church because it gave them freedom to say what ever they wanted. Salazar had been in close touch with the church. The priests were pressured to preach against the communists, socialists and everybody else.

People wanted the war in Africa to end, which it did, but they didn't want to see the colonies go. Everybody said they were given away the wrong way. Portugal pulled out her troops and the three different parties in Angola began fighting among themselves for control. And it's still going on. Portuguese people who had settled in Africa started coming back. My uncle who had fought in Angola, then began a business there, stayed until the last minute, then had to leave.

In education, I feel that my generation was used as guinea pigs with all the experiments. There was chaos in the school the year of the Revolution and nobody flunked. It was a free ride. In Lisbon, they look abroad to America and Europe to see which systems worked best. I went to school and never knew what was going to happen. They created all these new subjects of study and schooling became mandatory to ninth grade or age sixteen.

Another thing we felt was the opening to eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China. People started learning about Russia, and Portugal established diplomatic relations with Cuba and China. Portugal became a showcase for democracy and freedom and became respected in the United Nations. We felt good about that.

The Revolution brought dramatic changes to the Azores. Previously, the only thing we were good for was the American Air Base in Terceira, especially its importance during the '73 Israeli-Arab War. Now there was not just a political awakening but also a cultural awakening. Things became more available like music and different newspapers. People learned more and became better educated. Only the rich could attain that before. TV came in 1975 and changed everybody's life. Every household in the Azores bought a TV set and people became TV addicts like me.

Also, this might seem strange but one of the big things was the free access to pornography. After so many years of repression, films were coming into the country and shown in major theaters. And there was now access to certain books and authors.

Exodus and New Experience

My parents started thinking about emigrating in '74 when they visited Rhode Island to see my cousin ordained as a priest. In 1980 we made the trip. The whole family was excited but me. Immigration always seem to be the wrong thing to do. I didn't think it was right. You should stay in your country and you know...it's very tough to leave everybody, pick up and start all over. The time was bad for me. I was close to graduating from high school in Portugal. The house wasn't ours but we watched it being closed down and our furniture sold. It was tough to see your things going out the door.

It was a very cold day in February when we arrived at Logan [Airport, Boston], gray with snow on the ground. It was pretty scary. We had thirteen suitcases and everybody had two handbags except me. I had three of them. I always have to carry more. In a huge plastic bag I carried a little wooden chair I had since I was little. I still have it.

We drove to New Bedford where a friend of my mother owned a three-decker. This would be our new home. Everything was strange. We just had to wait and see what was going to happen. We lived on Rockland Street, down by St. James Church. My sisters and I were sent to high school. I was in the bilingual program, except for English class.

That same week we were sent to the Portuguese Library to get cards so we could start taking out books. Right next door is the Immigrants Assistance Center and the director came from my mother's home town. He told my parents I should go to CETA [Comprehensive Employment Training Act] and they could probably get me a job. I worked at the Portuguese Library until I graduated from high school a year and a half later.

Every time I was exposed to something great in the United States, I found some way to compare it to Portugal and told everybody it was better over there. It's the attitude—my country, Portugal is better than any other country.

At first the feeling of isolation here is overwhelming. You don't know anybody, you don't know the city, you don't know how to get anywhere. You're basically left on your own and have to make the best of it. As I look back, the word that comes to mind is "difficult." In Portugal we were middle-class. It took a while here for my father to get a job and we had very little money. My mother got a job sooner. Also, it was the first time I experienced discrimination. You see, in my country I was the master. Then, in the U.S., I was just an immigrant.

Life Changes in America

Coming to America was most difficult for my father. He had never worked in a factory; he had an office job in the Azores and a very large group of friends. Over there we were part of the middle-class. In the American factory he could not find people at his intellectual level. He still reads a lot. We have books everywhere. And reading helps him cope with the difficulties of being here. He has made some friends but not like the friends he left. He got used to watching TV a lot which he never did in the old country. He had other things to do.

It was easier for my mother because a lot of her relatives were here. My father had nobody. My mother still had a hard time and became very defensive about everything. She had to fight for the things she needed. For her, adapting to this country was like a big battle, at least in the beginning. She never worked outside the home and had to go to work in the factory. It was difficult for her to learn the language and tough when she had to go to the Immigrants Assistance Center. My father understands English and can speak a little but not much. My mother does better. For my parents, language is the toughest thing.

My parents work alongside mostly Portuguese, but their bosses and supervisors were usually American. Sometimes they were Portuguese but, believe it or not, Portuguese in positions of power in a factory sometimes make life difficult for the newer Portuguese. Those who have been here for a while and know the ins and outs of the country and how things run make life difficult for the new immigrants. I think it's because this new group of immigrants arriving in the 1980s were people with more education, people who wanted to do different things, not work in factories, but get educated and get better jobs. So there was a lot of resentment in the community.

My mother once told me that Portuguese women who work with her don't understand why the four of us, my brother and two sisters, went to college instead of going to work and buying a house. I think people came here to find the American Dream: to make money, get the material stuff, buy the house, get the car and go back to the old country to visit. They don't understand the new people who want to do more with their lives.

In the beginning, my parents relied a lot on their kids. We would translate for them, fill out their papers, take care of bills, go to the doctor, go places with them when they needed somebody to speak their language. When I was working part-time in high school, I gave my paycheck to my father and that was the end of it. It was needed to help support the family. After I graduated from college, I still felt obligated to live at home a couple more years and help out. When you get to the U.S., you don't have a gold mine and you have to work a lot. It's a sobering thought that things are not easy in America.

In Portugal, my father was always the decision-maker but here, decision-making is a family process. We all talk about how things are going to be done. When my father had to buy a car, we all decided. It would be a family car and everybody was going to help pay for it. Moving from one house to another was another joint decision. And so it was when my parents went to Montreal to visit my uncle.

We were Americans on the outside, but as soon as you stepped into our house, you were in Portugal. We spoke only Portuguese. Everything in the house breathed Portuguese, the food,

the smells, the knickknacks, the books. We watched Portuguese TV, listened to Portuguese radio. The house was like little Portugal. And very Azorean! We talked a lot about the people who were still there.

Certain forces out there want you to erase everything, all your customs, your culture and become part of this melting pot. All these ethnic groups are trying to keep their customs. One of my professors called it cultural pluralism and I think he's right. At the house we try to keep the traditions very alive.

Another New World: College

The main reason my parents wanted us to emigrate was so we could have a college education. In September '81, eighteen months after I arrived, I was accepted at UMass Amherst in a minority program. That was the only way I could go. My SAT scores were very low because of my English. I could speak it but imperfectly. Those four years of college are probably what made me get into the culture of American society. My roommate was a real jerk. He said that since my parents were working in factories, why wasn't I working in a factory, too? It probably blocked my reaction because it was not an easy thing to deal with.

It was important for me to be accepted by other students at school. You're different. You speak with an accent and have a European point of view. I also couldn't understand American humor at all and couldn't relate to certain conversations. The other guys thought I was dumb, a jerk. The most frustrating thing is when nobody knows what you are saying because you are not pronouncing the words right. I remember I was trying to tell this woman something to do with cooking and I couldn't find the right word for "pan." It took half an hour to come up with something she would understand, which was frustrating and embarrassing. Eventually things got better.

I grew in those four years and made some very good friends. Some Americans are very cold, they're not open and don't like to get close to people. In Portuguese culture, Latin culture, there's very close contact, a lot of touching. People stay very close to each other. That doesn't happen in American culture. There is a lot of space between two people and that makes it difficult to build a relationship. It seems like a lot of people are afraid of getting close.

In college, I thought I was going to major in sociology and even took some courses. But then, I got that American idea that I needed to make money and be somebody. I said, well, sociology will not take me there so I decided to major in business administration. But then, I wanted something a little more creative so I took marketing. It's business but it's creative. I always liked history but society is designed in such a way that money is everything. I thought at the time the most important thing was to get a degree so I could get lots of money. Now I realize I was wrong.

At UMass Amherst I developed a sensibility for art, especially classical music, mostly through public radio and I got a job working for a nonprofit arts organization. Money was always a problem. I got some scholarships, some grants and had to work. In my senior year I was working sixty hours a week besides my school work and that was crazy. Saturdays I was a bum and couldn't get up until 5 p.m. So I understood what it meant to always struggle for money.

Between Two Cultures

Sometimes I have the feeling that I just got off the plane yesterday and it's mind-boggling that ten years have gone by. I have been exposed to so many things I would have missed in Portugal. That has been very good. Over the years we have become more Americanized. We watch American television. I like sitcoms and American music, but not rock and roll. In ways, we have become like every American family, ordering things from catalogues, having a check book, using credit cards. So I'm very American and at the same time very Portuguese.

I don't like to divide Portuguese friends from American friends, but sometimes I do. With Americans there are certain things you cannot say because they would not understand, it's very Portuguese. But when I'm among Portuguese people, I can act American. They understand perfectly

because they are part of the understanding.

My brother, he's not Portuguese anymore. He came when he was twelve and he's become part of this culture. He doesn't remember the people and place back there. My sisters and I still remember a lot. So much depends on the age you come. My brother also speaks better English and has almost no accent compared to me and my sisters. He doesn't like Portuguese music, he likes rock and roll. He doesn't read any books in Portuguese as my sisters and I do. Every time there is a Portuguese event, we have drag him to it.

If you listen to all the ideas in my house, you might think that together we could make a very good socialist part with all these liberal ideas. But my father actually became more conservative in response to the difficulties of living in the country. And you know, that's funny, the dynamics of the family—we are more open to certain things. I call myself, my sisters and brother Kennedy liberals.

At this moment I would not like to go back to Portugal—I like being in America. I am also fascinated by American stuff, by Americans. Not American history, that's 200 years old, not enough time. But by people dynamics in this culture. It's my home even though I'm an outsider.

Empowering the Portuguese Community

New Bedford and Fall River are old industrial towns that have seen better days, and they have a lot of immigrants. I think "Americans" see the Portuguese as the source of many problems. On the other hand, the Portuguese community doesn't help itself. It is made up of people from all different parts of Portugal so they're divided and they fight among themselves.

The earlier immigrants are so Americanized, they have become very selfish and do not treat the new people well. They think the newcomers should suffer (as they did) before they get somewhere. Immigrants are very jealous of other immigrants who make something of themselves. They don't understand that having an education is probably more important than anything else.

Many who came to this country thirty, forty, fifty years ago stagnated. They didn't improve with the times and they still think Portugal is like it was in 1955 or 1960 and that's not true anymore. For people like us who have gone through a revolution, we saw Portugal come out of the dark ages into the twentieth century and we have brought that over and tried to evolve with the times.

People around here don't see big and they need to. The Portuguese have a responsibility to make better things for this community. Getting involved with Portuguese things is way of keeping in touch with the culture of the Old Country. It's like an umbilical cord, keeping the connection.

The early immigrants lives most of their lives under fascism in Portugal. They got exposed to democracy, but didn't participate because they didn't know the language. Now we need to get politically involved instead of being a passive community and taking what comes. We need more officials of Portuguese descent and more representation on community agencies.

I think the Salazar influence, "We are proudly alone," still lives in many older immigrants and we lack the feeling of building a community together. The new immigrants are trying to change that and make a difference.

With Permission

The Portuguese Spinner: An American Story

Marsha L. McCabe and Joseph D. Thomas, Editors

Spinner Publications, Inc. pp. 81-87

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New England CONNECTIONS 2007

Azorean Ancestors: Making the Connection

(Part 5)

António Borges de Sousa

The Borges originate in Bragança. Along with his wife, Isabel Barbosa, António was the first Borges to emigrate to São Miguel (about 1520). His descendants are documented in Rodrigo Rodrigues's *Genealogias de S. Miguel e Santa Maria*, pp. 327 and more extensively in Marquês da Praia e de Monforte's endnote-cited work. In 1523 he was knighted into the Order of Christ by King João III and granted a coat of arms. Named after his father, he was the grandson of Pedro Borges and Maria de Sousa. The elder António was a nobleman, whose wife was Catarina de Gamboa. Isabel Barbosa was the granddaughter of Ruy Lopes Barbosa, a noble knight and the great granddaughter of Ruy Esteves Barbosa and Filipa da Silva, residents of Portugal's Douro-Minho Region.¹

Manuel Borges

was also a first-of-family settler in the Azores. The son of Braz Dias of Guimarães, his business acumen made him fabulously wealthy, Margarida Fernandes, who married him around 1545, was from Seville, Spain.

Their son, Gaspar, enlarged and consolidated the family fortune. He married D. Ana de Medeiros Araújo, granddaughter Lopo Anes de Araújo and Beatriz Rodrigues Medeiros. By the time eighty-year-old Gaspar died in 1623, he had entailed several estates for his descendants.²

The Rego Baldaias

Sometimes a name, or combination of names, is so distinctive that it is carried through many generations, making genealogical research less daunting. Azorean-Americans surnamed Rego Baldaias can trace their ancestry to Gonçalo do Rego and his first wife, Maria Baldaia. He and several sons arrived on São Miguel from Porto during the captaincy of João Rodriguez de Câmara (1497-1502). Maria Baldaia had died on the mainland; on the island he married Isabel Pires.³ In Rodrigues's cited work, their descendants are extensively traced in pp. 363-446; in Carlos Machado's *Genealogias Micaelenses*, pp. 209-210 and 443-445. Their descendants on Terceira are found in Eduardo de Campos Azevedo Soares's *Nobiliário da Ilha Terceira* §2 n^a 11, and in Vitorino and Gonçalo Nemésio's *Ums Família do Ramo Grande, Ilha Terceira*. Among the terceirense is the renowned novelist and poet, author of *Mau Tempo no Canal* and *Sapateia Açoreana*.⁴

This story's author, while walking though a Fall River cemetery, came upon a tombstone dedicated to the memory of John Rego Baldaia. He knew nothing of the man, but knew who one of his ancestors was.

The Pereiras of the Azores

Pereira, one Portugal's more common surnames, has no single origin. In English, it translates as "pear tree" and is thought by many to have been assumed by many Jews when forced to convert to Catholicism in the reign of D. Manuel I. Many Pereiras in the Azores lack a common ancestor, but some have connected to the most notable and ancient Pereiras.

These Pereiras go back to D. Mendo, brother of the last king of the Lombards, who came to the Iberian Peninsula in 740 and married into the royal family of Leon. D. Gonçalo Rodrigues, a seventh-generation descendant, who served Portugal's second king, D. Sancho I, was the first to settle in Portugal.⁵ Gonçalo's son, Rui Gonsalves de Pereira, was the first to assume the surname. Many Azorean Pereiras descend from Rui's grandson, Gonçalo Pereira and his mistress, Marinha Vasques. Those of Rui Vaz, created 1st Count of Feira by D. Afonso V, settled primarily in Faial, Flores, São Miguel and Terceira.⁶ Their descent is documented in *Pereiras Titulares e Titulares Pereira*, by the Marquês de Abrantes e Fontes. Also invaluable is Miguel de Figuerido Cortereal's *Os Pereiras da Casa de Feira que se Fixaram-se nos Açores*. For tracing the ancestry back to the Lombards, read Felgueiras Gayer's *Nobiliário de Famílias de Portugal*.

8. APGHS Newsletter, Vol. XVII, No. 1. (2006)

The main ancestors of the Azorean Pereiras who descend from the ancient Perreiras are:

D. Jorge Pereira, grandson of the 2nd Conde de Feira, with his wife and children, settled in Ponta Delgada and later in Flores.

João Garcia Pereira, with lineage back to the first count, fled from a murder charge and settle in Faial during the fifteenth century. The descendants of son Gaspar in Faial and Terceira include the Viscondes de Nossa Senhora das Mercês; descendants of son João, including the Viscondes and Condes de Botelho, settled in São Miguel.⁷

Fernão Camelo Pereira and his nephews settled primarily in Feteiras, São Miguel, and can trace ancestry back to D. Rui Gonsalves. Their descendants are found primarily on São Miguel and Terceira. Documentation may be found on pages 509 and 225-226 in Machado's work and in *Nobilario da Ilha Terceira* and *Familias de Povoação*.

Other Pereiras

As noted at the beginning, there are many Pereiras that do not seem to be connected to the noble Pereiras. Among them are the descendants of the brothers António and João Mendes Pereira, who came to São Miguel around 1518. Frutuoso says they were natives of Guimarães, sons of Fernão Mendes and grandsons of Afonso Mendes. The grandfather served the Prince-Archbishop of Braga and had distinguished himself in the dynastic war with Castile. António's wife, Isabel Fernandes, appears to have been of Jewish origin. He died in 1569; brother João died around 1573. His wife was Guiomar Botelho, a great granddaughter of Gonçalo Vaz Botelho, *O Grande*.⁸

António and João's descendants are documented in *Genealogias de S. Miguel e Santa Maria*, pp. 143-148. People named Mendes Pereira with Azorean roots are probably descended from one of the brothers.

Endnotes:

¹ Marquês da Praia e de Monforte, *Apontamentos Histórico-Genealógicos sobre a Família Borges-Coutinho de Medeiros e Dias*, p. 52.

² *Ibid* ., p.39

³ Rodrigo Rodrigues, *Genealogias de S. Miguel e Santa Maria* pp. 363 & 429.

⁴ Vitorino and Gonçalo Nemésio, *Uma Família do Ramo Grande, Ilha Terceira*, A.C.XIII-XIV.

⁵ Felgueiras Gaio, *Nobilário da famílias de Portugal* : Pereiras §1N °8.

⁶ Marques de Abrantes, *Pereiras Titulares e Titulares Pereiras*

⁷ *Ibid* .,

⁸ Rodrigues, *Ibid* , §1 n °6.

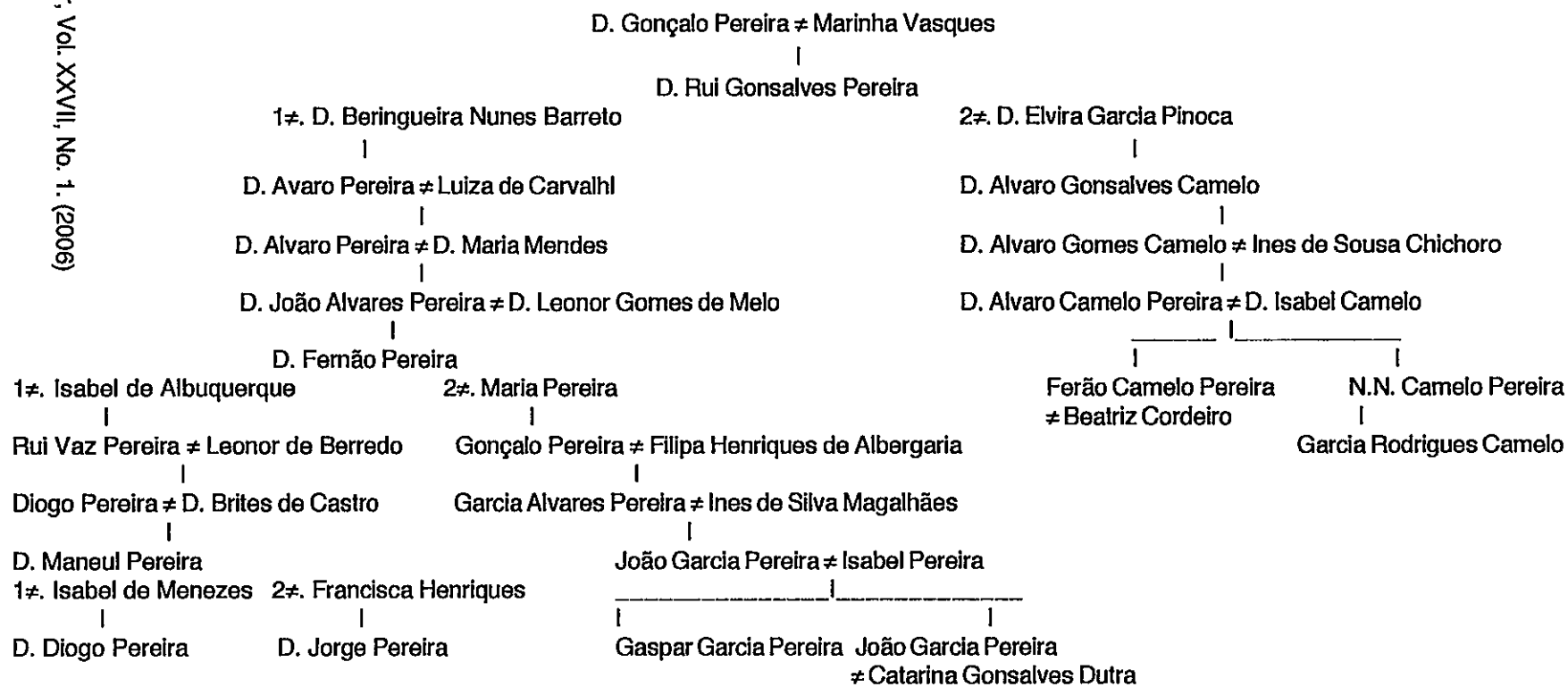
continued on p.10.

News

The Society has changed its business year—see p.11. Having its year from July 1—June 30 created confusion about the time to re-new membership. Printing the expiration year on the mailing label helped, but didn't end the confusion. Those not Life Members (this is not a pitch) received a six-month membership extension. However, for the -05s who chose not to re-new, this will be their last issue.

Azorean Folk Customs , by Cecilia Emilio Cardoza (\$12.95 + \$3.25 shipping), is available from the Portuguese Historical Center, San Diego, Calif. Web site: <http://www.phcsd.org>; phone: 619-223-8893. One-half of the book's profit will go to a scholarship for Portuguese-descended students.

The many branches of the main trunk of the Azorean Pereiras with lineage back to the ancient Perieias are:



Submitted by John M. Raposo of Massachusetts

American-Portuguese Genealogical and Historical Society, Inc.

The Society's year is January 1—December 31

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Regular members are those who have submitted pedigree charts; their known ancestors are in the summer-issue Surname Roster, but the SR does not name the place of marriage and death. Members wanting their charts (with that additional information printed) printed in a Bulletin Board may do so. Permission granted confers permission to print the home address—phone number and e-mail address remain optional.

Life membership dues are kept in a separate account. When it reaches \$1,000 certificates of deposit are purchased.

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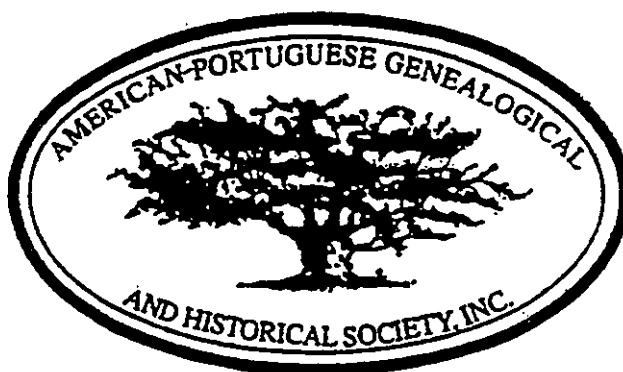
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|---|--------------|------------------|
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| 4. <i>Portuguese Pride and Pleasure</i> , by Carmelina R. Borroz, 59 pages | | 5.00 |
| 5. <i>The Mary P. Mesquita: Rundown at Sea</i> , [Gloucester, Mass.], by Cecile Pimentel, 85 pp. | | 16.95 |
| 6. <i>St. John's Cemetery [New Bedford, Mass] Gravestone Inscriptions</i>
by Gil and Pat Amaral, 230 pp. | | 29.95 |
| 7. <i>Portuguese Bermudians: An Early History and Reference Guide, 1849-1949</i> ,
by Patricia M. Mudd, 702 pp. | | 29.95 |
| 8. <i>The Forgotten Portuguese</i> , by Manuel Mira, 383 pp. | | 29.95 |
| 9. <i>Portuguese Spinner: An American Story</i> , ed. by McCabe & Thomas, 288 pp. | | 29.95 |

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