



MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
FOLK & TRADITIONAL ARTS PROGRAM

## AUDIO TAPE LOG

Accession No.: LO-01-01 Date(s): March 28, 2001

Fieldworker(s): Laura Orleans

Interviewee(s): Aniceto Gilmette, Peggy Gilmette

Event: --

Place of Recording: home of Mr. and Mrs. Gilmette

Recording Equipment: Sony TC-D5-M Microphone(s): RE 508

Recorded in: mono Tape Brand and Format: Cassette, 60 minutes

Amount Tape Used: Cassette: 1 DAT: ABS time:

Related Accession Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief summary of tape contents: a chronicle of Mr. Gilmette's career in the Merchant Marine and information about his model ships and how he makes them

Counter/ABS	Contents
001	Introduction
007	Family background. Born in Brava, Cape Verde in the village of Cabo Djuan (sp?). Born in 1916. Nickname is Che Che (pronounced Shay Shay).
021	Attended school through the age of 12. Then went to work on family farm.
031	Father lived in United States and came back to Cape Verde every six years. Father died on board a ship in 1920.
038	Mother had two sets of twins. Aniceto has a twin sister.
044	Father was Marcalele Gilmette. Mother was also Gilmete (spelled with one T). Mother was born in the US.
055	Describes family farm.
058	Grandfather was a whalemán. Describes how bad the pay was for the whalemén. Consequently (because he didn't have enough money to support a family) he sent his children who had been born in the US to the old country.
081	Left Brava at the age of 19 travelled alone. Describes travel route: Cape Verde to Lisbon (Portugal) to Liverpool (England) to Ireland to New York via steamer. Brother was living in New York.
095	Arrived in May and shipped out in June, coming first to visit relatives in New Bedford (an Uncle).
101	First job was to wait on the tables for the crew. Describes his duties. Worked at that job for three years and then brother got him a job with Exxon as a cook. Brother left the ship to visit the old country, but he stayed on for 13 months and then took a vacation of several weeks.
136	Talks about strike in 1939.
150	Took a job on an excursion boat as a cook.

- 161 Decided to return to the company because he could earn more money and would spend less since he would be out at sea. Tells anecdote about getting paid by both jobs on the same day.
- 177 Took job with Standard Oil from 1939 to 1944. Describes how company sprayed the boat black after Pearl Harbor was attacked to keep it from being targeted. Tells about how his brother was working coal boats in New England at the time and convinced Aniceto to get out of the ship because it was too dangerous during the war. Tells anecdote about getting out of his commitment to his job on the tanker.
- 207 Takes a job as chief cook on a coal boat for four years until 1944.
- 217 Returned to New York and signed on another tanker with Standard Oil, but while waiting to depart a friend convinced him to join him working in the office on a Gulf Oil tanker bound for the Persian Gulf. But didn't like the stove, it was too small. So they agreed to pay him subsistence and he didn't have to work as cook. His friend is injured on board ship and cannot make the trip. His replacement was Spanish speaking and everyone is very nice to him. But Aniceto wants to leave this ship after two trips. Gets out by telling them that his wife is very ill. And later tells them that he is ill. Many stories about getting out of duty.
- 346 Begins to tell about model making. Returns to Exxon tanker which runs between the Caribbean and Australia. "When you finish giving the supper, its just like daylight here, see. Because the time here, every day the clocks run back or go ahead one hour. I say hey you can't play cards or anything like that, you'll get sick of that. I say there's no television, no radio things like that. I says, I gotta do something. So one sailor come in, I says hey you, I'd like to have piece of wood. He says, cook, no wood on this ship. Then I don't know, one day he come back with 2x4, 2x4 he says hey I got a piece of wood for you. I say oh that's good. So I take that piece of wood. Every day I start shaping out. And what I was shaping out, everyone was interested. And after supper I sit down in the room where I worked and when I put it away, they say oh come on do some more, do some more, very interesting. I say, that's enough for today. I says that's enough for today, I say tomorrow. And everynight I,

End of Side One

- 001 Backtracks to talk about ship that is bound for the Persian Gulf and then to Long Beach California. Tells about travelling back home to the east coast by train with the model he made on board the ship.
- 015 "I even had a piece of turkey tendon for the leg. I make because there's no wood and I put it in the model to finish it."
- 018 This model was called Baron Hill.
- 023 Began making models at the age of 14 using shingles and corn husks. "We put a mast we put corn husk like that. We didn't have, we didn't put that in the ocean or anything like that. You know there's puddles on the ground. You got a wind, you put it like that, oh that ship goes!" Used to make boats for the other kids. Later used balsa wood which he wood cut from trees on the island and let them dry out.
- 036 "We had a old man lived in my neighborhood. He was old. He couldn't even see right. But he used to make the whaling ships and make the whaling ship that sailed from here, the old country to New Bedford. His son used to sell it. I think he even has one in the museum. His son used to sell them maybe for 10, 15 dollars, send money over there. I used to watch him, see." His name was Joao Barros. He used to make the crew for the ship and paint the ships. Aniceto and his friends used to watch him. Describes how he and his friends would watch the

- man at work, trying to put the models together with his poor eyesight and how they would whistle and he would yell, "You kids get out of here!" Only his son was allowed to help him.
- 055 After coming to the United States, Aniceto started making his own models on board the oil tankers during the war using a paring knife: "paring knife, potato knife, nobody believes that, potato knife."
- 060 Made other models while on board tankers. Tells of giving one of his models to one of his friends who got drunk and gave it away to someone else.
- 076 Today, uses pine primarily, scrap wood which he glues together.
- 080 Does everything from memory. Does not sketch. "I just see the ship, I come and I put it together" Describes the process of starting a new model, shaping the hull. Describes how the shape of the tankers was modified during the war (WWII) so as to make the ships faster in the water.
- 100 Describes process of building a model. Tells about making a cruise ship from a photograph.
- 111 In addition to pine, uses wooden coffee stirrers for planking, tongue depressers, toothpicks.
- 119 Describes the rigging and how he innovated it by burning the ends of the nylon so that it won't come apart.
- 129 Uses certain type of necklaces for anchor chain.
- 134 Was unable to find figures so made them himself.
- 143 Once finished the ships are either painted or varnished. The polyurethane shows off the workmanship.
- 151 Tells about some of the tools he now has: drill and drill press. Used to drill all of the holes manually.
- 158 Tells about how much he loves to make the models and how quickly the time passes.
- 162 "Everyone I make, if I make one today I'll be proud of it, the next one is coming a little better, the next one coming a little more better. I keep going like that. But I love them all. I love them all."
- 169 Has made about thirteen or fourteen models in his lifetime.
- 173 Tells about friends who have seen his work and how impressed they are.
- 185 Wife Peggy tells about some of the recognition he has received lately. Talks about Exxon Mobil Annuance Club of which they are both board members. Majority of these retirees were Cape Verdeans and nearly 100% of them actually shipped out as opposed to working in an office (onshore).
- 193 "When they came over to visit some of the members to see the boats, they just, they were in a state of awe." (Peggy Gilmette)
- 195 90% of the Exxon Annuance Club is Cape Verdean, primarily from Brava.
- 205 Discussion of some things Che Che could do as far as demonstrations, exhibitions.
- 208 Tells how surprised he was to find out how much people sell models which he considers to be much less well made: "In Europe like Spain, places like that, they make those model ships, old men. And the one day, they display that they win the prize. I see some they send them over here. They sell them in the street there. They for sale. One day I get in there, I see the price of those things I says 'What! I don't believe it!' There not so like mine. They're just thrown together. Over a thousand dollars! Next time when I go there, they're all gone! I says, this is something."
- 219 Neither of Che Che's sons have taken up the craft. Both are retired from the armed forces. Names three granddaughters.

236 Hoping that photographs of Che Che's models will be featured "The Lamp," the  
Exxon magazine.

245 Talks about how much patience is required to make the models: "I don't work on  
those ships every day. I work, when I sit down to work, I don't stop. If I don't feel  
good, I don't touch it." "And when he feels good, look out! You can't get him.  
Banging on this floor is my way of communicating with him to come on upstairs"  
(Peggy)

254 Exhibited models in a club in Newport. They people insisted on insuring the  
model for \$30,000.00. This was a great shock to Che Che.

276 Models also displayed at Exxon Mobil Annuance Club. And years ago the model  
made with the turkey bones was displayed in Saltmarshes Department store  
downtown.

293 Eventually Che Che was promoted to Chief Steward. He served in this position  
for 24 years. Tells about all of the men who worked under him. During the War  
there were ten men working under him. After the War there were 7-8 (chief cook,  
second cook, galley men, waiters, men who made up the rooms).

309 When he was on the ships for a long period of time, they would be on board for  
three months and off for a month (with pay). During the time off he would come  
home to New Bedford. If they spent a longer period of time on board then they  
would have a longer period of time ashore. He spent the time off travelling,  
making models, etc.

319 Retired in 1972 after 37 years. Has been retired almost 30 years.

323 Tells about some of the changes in the merchant marine. They used to have much  
larger crews (46 men, now 20 men). The ships today are over 1000 feet long.  
They can't even come into Boston Harbor because there is not enough water to  
dock. They have to discharge some of the cargo outside. They do this all with  
computers today. In the past, this was all done manually. "Years ago they used to  
have maybe about three or four men on the deck work the, the have the valve.  
Big valve like that and men would work. And when the tanks coming to full.  
The do like that. They have give a turn. The man says, 'One, two turn! They  
give two turns. When the tanks come in they had things they watch like that and  
they shut it off. But no, not today."

357 Peggy talks about the role of the male cooks trained in the merchant marine in  
preparing meals at the Cape Verdean church (Our Lady of the Assumption).  
"Also recognition should be given to, not only my husband, but to many of the  
retirees that did the cooking in the church kitchen, Our Lady of the Assumption.  
Because they kept that church going for many a year with--Cape Verdeans were  
great at that time that when we had a, someone died, after the funeral there would  
be a big breakfast downstairs. And people would come together and prepare that  
and he spent a lot of time doing that with his friends. I also did a lot of time you  
know in the kitchen. Nowadays you're not seeing too much of that. Nowadays  
you're seeing it being done in a restaurant and a lot of young folks have gotten  
away from that. Young folks don't know how to make Cafong."

371 Che Che did make some Cape Verdean food on the ships.

382 End of tape.