

The Vieira Family

by Barbara Kanellopoulos

Margaret Russell has vividly traced Teaticket Park's connection to the region's Portuguese heritage. That connection has a personal meaning for State Representative David Vieira. He spent much of his childhood and adolescence at Joe's Driving Range, riding around in a golf cart with his grandfather Joe, listening to family stories and talking to older relatives and neighbors. Their stories told of loss as well as gain. Those who emigrated from the Azores were prospering in their new country, but in their hearts lingered the memory of their first homes, once so familiar and dear. "There's a Portuguese word, *saudade*, which can't be accurately translated," David said. "It expresses a kind of yearning, a longing for that earliest home. It's a theme you find in Portuguese literature and in Fado music. *Saudade* is the subtext of Azorean emigration everywhere."

For many, like David's great grandfather Manuel Vieira who emigrated in 1907, that longing was never satisfied. They never returned. "I'm third generation," David said, "but I have this mystic sense of *saudade*, a feeling that I had to go there. I knew that someday I would."

To be formally invited to visit San Miguel, his great grandfather's birthplace, was beyond David's expectation, but on June 4th, 2013, such an invitation came. It was from Vasco Cordeiro, President of the Autonomous Region of the Azores. He was in Boston at the State House as the guest and keynote speaker for the Day of Portugal celebration hosted by the Portuguese American Legislative Caucus. He invited a delegation which included David to visit the Azores to find ways to strengthen the long-

standing economic and cultural relations between the two countries. David was thrilled. "It was the chance I'd been waiting for," he said.

The delegation arrived on May 23rd, 2013. They stayed for four days, touring the Lajes American Air Base and meeting the American and Portuguese military commands. They also met several mayors and directors of cultural institutions. Since then, projects have been initiated linking the Research Institute of the University of the Azores and the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth in oceanography, conservation, environmental sustainability, and agriculture. Student exchanges are being planned.

The delegation's itinerary did not include Maia, Manuel Vieira's birthplace. One rainy night David found himself on a bus passing through the village. He tried to take pictures with his cell phone through the rain-streaked window without much success. "At least," he said, "I managed to plant my footprints on my great grandfather's island."

Representative Vieira is currently working on cultural exchanges that will bring together Azorean artists and musicians and their counterparts in Falmouth for the Day of Portugal celebrations. It's not unlikely that some of those celebrations will take place in Teaticket Park.

About the Author

Barbara Kanellopoulos lives in Falmouth with her husband Christos. They have a son, Paul Kanellopoulos, a daughter, Sia Karplus, and five grandchildren.