

Jose Domingo Lopes: Deixou-nos ontem na ilha Brava



BRAVA E COMUNIDADE CHORAM O VELHO LOBO DO MAR

<https://youtu.be/NxSZzXSibv0>

Deixou-nos ontem na ilha Brava, José Domingos Lopes, aos 80 anos de idade.

José Domingos foi um emigrante nos Estados Unidos onde trabalhou na marinha mercante, por muitos anos antes de regressar à terra natal.

Formado na Engenharia Naval cumpriu uma velha promessa: a de fazer o regresso à Djabraba no próprio barco que construiu de quilha no quintal da sua casa em Brockton.

Na altura, ainda nos anos 90, recebeu-nos na armação daquele que viria a ser o histórico barco, para compartilhar connosco as suas aventuras pelos quatro cantos do mundo.

Anos depois cumpre a aventura da derradeira travessia do Atlântico rumo ao seu berço onde foi deputado da Nação e só não terá sido Presidente da Câmara por ter lhe faltado alguns trâmites por cumprir na inscrição como concorrente à Câmara da Brava.

Seu iate ainda serviu, nas horas de aperto, como a tábua de salvação para a falta de barco que se registava na ligação Fogo-Brava.

E um dia, cansado com algumas promessas e revoltado, afundou o navio algures numa baía local.

Cantor de voz de tenor e poli-instrumentista chegou a fazer dueto com a cantora Gardénia Benrós no clássico tema “Força di Cretcheu”.

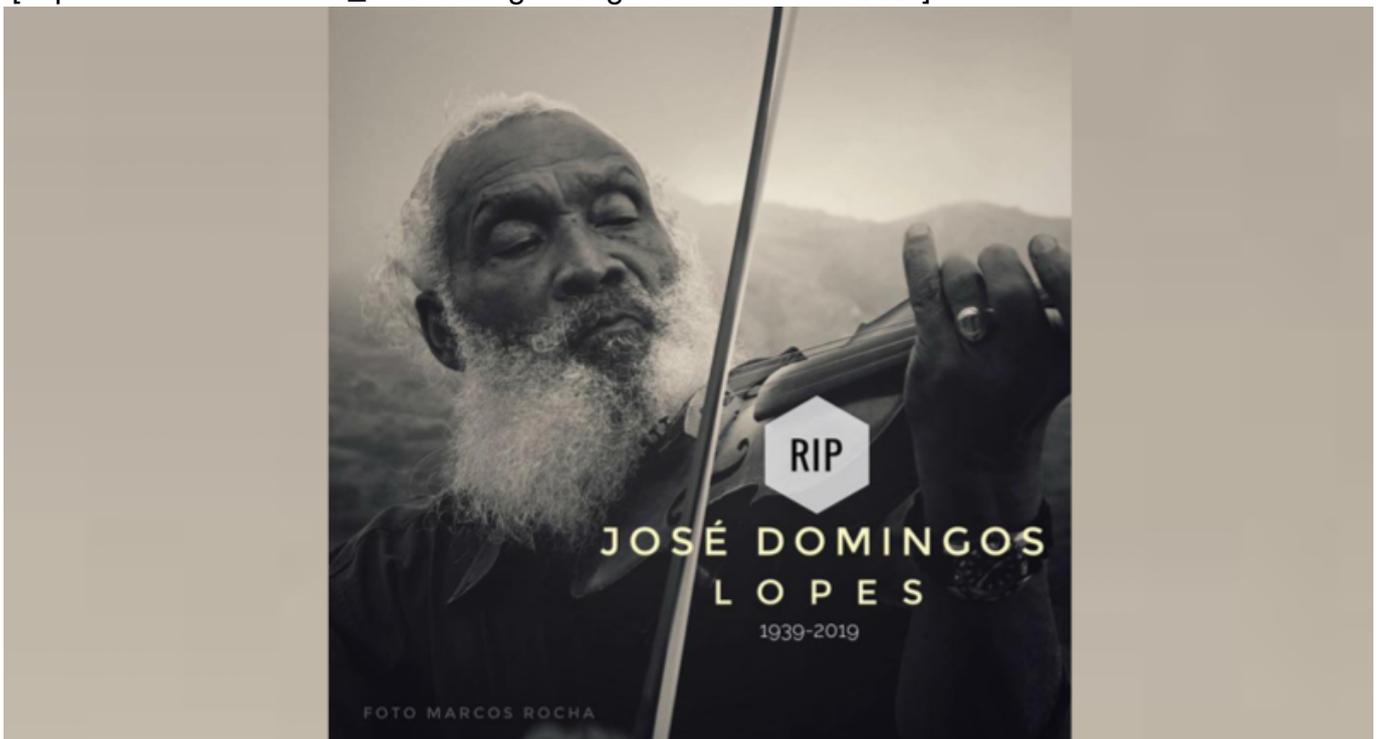
Deixa muitos amigos que choram a eterna partida do Velho Lobo do Mar!

por Valdir Albee's

Foto, cortesia do colega Marcos Rocha da RTC.

Over the long-distance telephone line Jose Domingo Lopes sounds like a man fulfilled.

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Jose Domingo Lopes
1939-2019[/caption]

Sitting in the house of his grandparents on the island of Brava Cape Verde Mr. Lopes can draw a measure of satisfaction from his life. As a merchant seaman he circled the globe nine times. He's an accomplished musician who can sing and play the accordion violin and guitar. He's a proud father and grandfather.

Most recently he fulfilled a life-long dream of sailing the boat he built with his own hands from

New Bedford to Brava. He and a crew of three took about five weeks to make the trip with stops in the Azores and the Canary Islands.

“It’s a dream that was fulfilled. Not a night goes by where I don’t thank God for my good fortune” Mr. Lopes said. “Sometimes I have to pinch myself. I thank God that I have had the opportunities that I have had.”

Mr. Lopes spent 24 years painstakingly building a 76-foot cutter called Senhora Do Monte out of rare woods with the intention of sailing it back to Cape Verde.

The boat is named for the parish on Brava where he was born and where he now intends to retire.

When he finally pulled the Senhora Do Monte into Brava he was met by hundreds of well-wishers who lit off fireworks and held a huge feast in his honor.

Mr. Lopes 64 was once planning to take the adventure on his own but was eventually convinced that his boat was too large for one man to handle. So he was joined on his grand adventure by the father-son team of Dheofilo Furtado 59 and Tony Furtado 32 both of New Bedford; and Manuel Palomo a 27-year-old Cuban.

And Mr. Lopes had lots of help from friends here in New Bedford before he left. Robert “Bobby” Gomes helped build the ship’s mast and Alfred Rezendes worked on the boat almost every day. Other friends brought food and offered encouragement.

“He personifies the very meaning of courage and determination” said Ms. Fernandes a friend of Mr. Lopes. “The sum of the man borders on genius. He is certain to go down in history books of Cape Verde as one of her greatest mariners.”

In April Ms. Fernandes organized a send-off for Mr. Lopes at the Unitarian Memorial Church in Fairhaven. Many of his friends came to wish him well.

The trip itself was rather smooth Mr. Lopes said. There was one stormy night between the Cape Verdean islands of San Vincente and Brava and there was a close call with a freighter almost running them over. Several other freighters came uncomfortably close.

But mostly there were sunny days with good wind he said.

“We’d wake up every day and say ‘What are we going to eat today?’” he said. The elder Mr.

Furtado wrote poetry during the entire trip which he would recite during quiet times. Mr. Lopes would play his violin and sing.

On one stop in the Azores an entire village turned out to greet them. Two pigs were slaughtered for a feast and several women in the village washed their clothes and bedding.

A documentary on Mr. Lopes' preparations for his journey called "Romance with the Sea" can be seen on Wednesday nights at 9 p.m. on cable Channel 95 New Bedford Public Access.

The documentary was filmed by A.C.C.E.S.S. Art Productions and was co-directed by Claudia Belleau and Thomas Grace. "It's really a beautiful story and we were lucky to be there" Ms. Belleau said.

Now that he's back in the village where he was born Mr. Lopes says it is like paradise except for the fact that people there are as poor as when he left the island decades ago.

"Getting to America is the dream of every Cape Verdean" he said. "But this is a beautiful place. I come here and my blood pressure drops."

In America his accomplishments were recognized but at the end of the day "I was just another Joe." In a village where everyone knows everyone else his accomplishments are the stuff of legend.

"To me it's a paradise" he said. "No one goes by without saying hello."

And he's left wondering what he can next accomplish.

"Maybe I'll charter the boat maybe I'll even sail back to the United States" he said.

More than anything else though Jose Domingo Lopes plans to enjoy his life.

"Here to get old and die is a wonderful thing" he said.

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