[00:00:04]

[MUSIC] You are listening to Tell Me Your Story, where we connect to HLS staff on a personal level. [MUSIC] Hello, everyone. This is a Edgar Kley Filho from HLS Human Resources department. My pronouns are he, him, his. Today, we are talking to Alexander Gonsalves from Facilities Management Office, who will tell us about his life, how long he's in this position at HLS, and the work he does. Thank you for joining us, Alex, and please tell me your story.

[00:00:41]

Thank you for having me, Edgar. It's nice to be here. Like Edgar said, my name is Alex. I use he, him, his pronouns. I'm 27 years old. I grew up on the South Shore. My father is from Roxbury. My mother is from Pembroke on the South Shore. I have always lived on the South Shore. Most of my life, I lived in Whitman until recently as of last week actually. I moved to Halifax, Mass.

[00:01:11]

I don't think I have been in Halifax or Pembroke. How far driving or commuting from there?

[00:01:18]

I take commuter rail actually.

[00:01:19]

You do?

[00:01:19]

Yeah. It's about hour-and-a-half door to door.

[00:01:22]

An hour-and-a half.

[00:01:23]

Yeah. I usually leave by 6:30 to get here at 8:00.

[00:01:27]

Your entire family is from Massachusetts?

[00:01:30]

Yeah. We're from Massachusetts.

[00:01:31]

Through generations already or?

[00:01:33]

Yeah.

[00:01:34]

Because I noticed Gonsalves assuming that's a Portuguese.

[00:01:39]

Yeah. It's actually Cape Verde. My father's side of the family is from Cape Verde ancestry. My mother's side is Irish and Polish.

[00:01:48]

Wow.

[00:01:49]

Interesting.

[00:01:51]

Yes. Any chance that you kept the Cape Verde and the Portuguese with you or not?

[00:01:56]

I wish I did, but I can't say so.

[00:01:58]

[LAUGHTER] Yeah.

[00:01:59]

One of my biggest regrets in life is [OVERLAPPING]

[00:02:02]

Same with me. I always tell people because on our end, on our side, we had the German and Italian. Never learned. As far as I know, my parents, mom from the Italian side, dad from the German side. None of them, and I don't remember if any of the kids or their brothers and sisters. I know that mom's cousins used to speak Italian with my grandma when they were visiting, but we never learned as well. So born and raised in Massachusetts.

[00:02:38]

Yeah. South Shore, Mass.

[00:02:39]

You are only child or you have other siblings?

[00:02:42]

I have one brother.

[00:02:42]

One brother?

[00:02:43]

He is three years younger than me.

[00:02:46]

We're pretty close. We've always been close growing up.

[00:02:48]

That's nice.

[00:02:49]

Both of our parents were working a lot, so we spent a lot of time, just the two of us making sure everything was all set, getting dinners together, and stuff like that.

[00:02:59]

I think it gets more difficult when go over, I would say, four because in our house we were six. I was more part of the five. My sister older than me died when she was very young. I didn't have a chance to meet her. But we were always five, so that is always depend on who is younger, who is older. That is a little bit of those attentions, but the good brotherhood conversations, and teasing, and all that stuff. It's interesting. There's a saying that how close you are, I think, is a good thing. How was growing up in Pembroke?

[00:03:42]

I grew up in Whitman. My mother was Pembroke, but I grew up in Whitman.

[00:03:46]

Okay.

[00:03:47]

I was there for the first 25 years of my life, and it was quiet. I guess quiet would be the best way to describe it. It's a small suburb on the South Shore. It's not really a ton to do, which looking back is good for a childhood as a parent because not a lot for the kids to get into, but being a kid at that age are like, wow, I really just want to go to a movie theater.

[00:04:11]

Yeah.

[00:04:11]

I want to go to the beach or do something fun.

[00:04:14]

I really don't know where the town is.

[00:04:16]

It's about 20 minutes from the beach.

[00:04:18]

Wow, that's great.

[00:04:19]

Yeah. It's close to [OVERLAPPING]

[00:04:21]

Would you bike to the beach?

[00:04:22]

Yeah, we could do that.

[00:04:24]

That's awesome. Is there a creeks or [OVERLAPPING]

[00:04:30]

Actually, the area is full of cranberry bogs.

[00:04:32]

Really?

[00:04:32]

That's the thing in there. They grow cranberries all over the South Shore.

[00:04:38]

You had a group of friends. I'm going back on my own way here, that's why I'm projecting stuff. Because when we were kids, we have a group of friends, neighbors, and my God, we would go everywhere around and I keep thinking how rich my childhood that time. Because the only thing that mom would demand was when we came back from the school, make sure that you do your homework, then you would play from after that until around 5:00-ish, almost six o'clock, never after sundown, but we'd be free to go wherever we wanted to. We would use to go play in creeks nearby, not a rivers, but shallow creeks and streams like that. It was such a cool thing to do and I keep thinking later when we get older we never thought about snakes, never thought about any kind of, although in that region I don't remember any really serious animals that would be a problem for us, but snakes for sure. But it was such a good time for us. Did you do the same with your friends or playing with neighborhood?

[00:05:49]

Our house growing up was like the spot where all the friends would come over and hang out. Everyone would come over after school or on the weekend. We'd have sleepovers. People would bring video games or snacks that they wanted to eat. We'd get pizza.

[00:06:02]

That's nice.

[00:06:02]

Just hanging out at our place.

[00:06:05]

Twenty-seven years old, you're talking about the late '90s?

[00:06:09]

Yeah, 1995 I was born.

[00:06:14]

The biggest part of your life is studying there. Going to school, easy-peasy?

[00:06:18]

Yeah. The towns all near where I live are very small towns, so my high school was actually two towns put together because there wasn't enough kids to have its own high school, so a lot of.

[00:06:31]

Tension?

[00:06:32]

A lot of tension between the schools. I remember being in middle school. Elementary school and middle school is just Whitman.

[00:06:40]

Yeah.

[00:06:40]

Then once we went to high school, it's Hanson and there was so much stress that first day of high school where it's like we're going to have a whole new batch of kids, nobody knows anybody. For us, that was the first time that ever happened because you go all the way through the grades with the same kids.

[00:06:56]

With the same friends and the same classmates.

[00:06:58]

Yeah, same with the kids. Then once we did high school, double that.

[00:07:00]

That's really cool.

[00:07:02]

Then what happened? High school is always for everyone that we talk about. Some people say that they had the worst time. Some people say that they have the best time. How was for you, and having two different towns together?

[00:07:21]

I actually had a really great time in high school. I look back on it very positively. I know that's not the case for a lot of people, but I enjoyed my high school years. I was a very nerdy kid, I guess you'd say. I was super into school. I was into getting good grades. I just really always tried to do well in school. That's followed me all the way up till now. But I was always the kid that everyone got along with. I never really had any negative interactions. I was always friendly enough with anybody to make sure that right things we right.

[00:07:56]

So you were not in conflict with what they show in movies from the '80s, or that stuff?

[00:08:04]

Classic 6.

[00:08:05]

The Greek classic situation. That's good. How was going to college?

[00:08:13]

College was a big change for me in the sense of it was really the first time in my life where I left the South Shore. I went to college at UMass Boston, which is in Dorchester.

[00:08:24]

Yeah.

[00:08:26]

I lived most of my life just on the South Shore. Every here and there, we'd take a trip into Boston, but that would be like a grant experience to us. Going to college in the city, that's where I first experienced city life really.

[00:08:40]

How many of your friends from all the way up through high school were in the same college with you or none?

[00:08:48]

Only one.

[00:08:49]

Really.

[00:08:49]

We weren't even that close in high school. We just formed a relationship because hey, we both go to UMass Boston.

[00:08:55]

From all your friends, just one that was not even the closest one was with you?

[00:09:00]

Yeah.

[00:09:01]

Was that challenging in a way?

[00:09:03]

It was very challenging.

[00:09:05]

Because it feels like you have such a rich community environment with you even considering the two towns together for high school, but felt like your own place, your only space there. and then you go for a different place with completely different group of folks there. Was strange or how did you feel about this?

[00:09:29]

When I first started, it was very hard for me. I had a tough time because I consider myself a relatively shy person in general. I like meeting new people and making new friends, but it can be hard for me at first. When I first started college, I was in a place where I literally only knew one person and everything else was up to me to form new connections, because everybody else went separate ways and did their own thing.

[00:09:57]

People come from different places. Well, right and quality depends on where you are. There'll be students, whether is from other towns in the state or even from different states, or international students as well. UMass Boston would be I think massive, big.

[00:10:15]

UMass Boston has a very big international presence. That's another interesting thing. Coming from a typical suburban sell short town, it was very Caucasian, there wasn't a lot of racial diversity. Then going to UMass Boston, it was totally different. I met so many different people from so many different areas.

[00:10:37]

That's a cool point as well.

[00:10:38]

It's where I really enjoy traveling. I enjoy seeing new places. My wife is actually from the Czech Republic. I enjoy seeing and learning all different customs and traditions. Going to college is really the start of that because that's some of my first experiences of really getting to know people who did the same way as I did.

[00:11:01]

Opening up to new ideas or horizons in terms of where you came from, what place that you were used to but then branches out for a different experience there. How many years have you stayed there?

[00:11:16]

I was there for four years.

[00:11:17]

Four years?

[00:11:17]

Yeah.

[00:11:18]

Did you live in dorms or you had to commute still?

[00:11:22]

I Commuted.

[00:11:23]

You didn't.

[00:11:24]

I took the commuter rail.

[00:11:26]

For all four years, you didn't have to remain in dorms for one year or whatever.

[00:11:31]

It's different now, but at the time at UMass Boston, they didn't have dorms. It was all a commuter school or you could sign up for housing that was an apartment-type thing that was outside this campus.

[00:11:41]

Off-campus housing?

[00:11:42]

Yeah, like Harvard has here. But there was no official UMass Boston dorms. They just very recently built them, but they didn't exist back then.

[00:11:50]

Would that be still the same, an hour or an hour and a half to get there?

[00:11:54]

Yeah.

[00:11:56]

I won't say every day, but majority of the time that you have classes, you have to go back and forth.

[00:12:02]

I was pretty good with scheduling when I came. UMass Boston, since they didn't have dorms, they were very flexible with how you planned your classes, so I only actually came in Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Tuesdays and Thursdays, I didn't have any classes, so I stayed home.

[00:12:17]

So you could study and still prepare for. That's really nice. That helped a little bit with the entire impact of the change in terms of leaving high school and going to college because we still could go back and afford to stay over.

[00:12:33]

I still had time at home. I could still go see my friends.

[00:12:35]

I think if you stayed in dorm, would be a little bit even more difficult at the beginning.

[00:12:40]

I definitely think there's pros and cons. I definitely miss having that true college dorm experience. But like you were saying, it did help transition because a lot of what I knew was still at least part of my life. I didn't have to make a full change.

[00:12:57]

Wow, that sounds really lovely. You mentioned your wife. When did you meet your wife?

[00:13:04]

We met in 2019.

[00:13:08]

She was also in college?

[00:13:10]

This is after college. I graduated in 2018.

[00:13:13]

Before you get to that then, you graduate in 2018, did you go straight to work somewhere or what were your plans after graduation?

[00:13:24]

I actually started working while I was in college. 2015, I had my first job and it was actually on Harvard property but it wasn't a Harvard employee. I worked for an outside vendor called GCA.

[00:13:39]

GCA.

[00:13:41]

We handled mail services over at the science labs, Northwest Labs. My dad, who also worked for Harvard, knew somebody that was looking for summer help. He was like, hey, if you have anybody that's looking to make some extra money there in the summer, let me know. I was like, cool, I'd love to make some extra money.

[00:14:01]

That would be our college's summer job.

[00:14:04]

That was going to be what I would do in the summer in between my college job. I actually came here as I'm sure you know, Law School has the summer dorm movements.

[00:14:13]

Yes.

[00:14:14]

I was one of the people who would help deliver the packages up to the dorm rooms.

[00:14:19]

Working for this company at Harvard.

[00:14:21]

Yeah.

[00:14:24]

Well now, I always say our main room dorm is mail room because when I started in Facilities, we had separate mail rooms. You had one specific just for four dorms that used to sit in Facilities and the mailboxes for the dorms just to be in each Gropius is complex. They have their own mailboxes there, and then you'd go there.

[00:14:49]

I remember seeing them on the Hastings walls.

[00:14:52]

The Gropius I think Ames, Dane. I don't know if Shaw has, but I think they would. They used to have there lots on the wall there, which used to be very cool. Then you have the campus mail room that was Pound Hall, I think was. Before the whole complex here was changed, we used to have the Pound Hall loading dock. I think the main room wasn't in that area there. Then they moved everything to WCC. Then they put them together, then all these one mail room for everything that you have to do. When we started we started already in WCC. Because ti was 2016, 17 had already changed.

[00:15:36]

Yeah, it was already in WCC. I actually had a relatively interesting journey of how I went from contractor to Harvard employee. Like I said, I started doing summers for GCA. They would pick me up whatever shifts I could take. I would fill in for any of their full-time staff. They were on vacation or whatnot, I'd fill in for their hours. Then in my second college year, 2015, I started to take more of a full-time job position. Like I mentioned previously, I would only be in class Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, so I started picking up shifts Tuesdays and Thursdays.

[00:16:14]

Full time.

[00:16:15]

Yeah. I would get some money while I was in school. I did that for a few years just back-and-forth, doing college. [OVERLAPPING].

[00:16:25]

Would you come just to HLS or any other?

[00:16:28]

Any school. I was at Kenedy School, I was at Science Center.

[00:16:31]

Cool.

[00:16:31]

Yeah. I've been all over this place

[00:16:33]

You have the chance to be in different campuses as well, different Harvard schools as well?

[00:16:37]

Yeah.

[00:16:37]

Nice.

[00:16:37]

Kennedy School, Science Center, here.

[00:16:40]

Same system?

[00:16:41]

Kinf of. Close.

[00:16:43]

Okay.

[00:16:44]

Difference's based on where you are. But a lot of the same methods apply.

[00:16:47]

Curious because I know ours in a certain way. But would Kennedy and Business, if you went there to have the same dorms and campus administration staff or just one or the other?

[00:17:03]

The big thing for like Kennedy School or Business School, they don't do office delivers like we do here. It's mostly a student center for kids to come in and get their packages, who are staying in the dorms.

[00:17:15]

Really?

[00:17:15]

Faculty can come in and pick up stuff, but they don't traditionally get delivered.

[00:17:20]

No distribution?

[00:17:21]

Yeah.

[00:17:22]

That was a central location for mailroom.

[00:17:25]

Yeah.

[00:17:25]

Everyone in the community staff, faculty, and students go to that place, to a post office situation to pick up and send away their mail.

[00:17:39]

Right. They broke down by school. So Kennedy School had a mailroom. Business School had a mailroom. Science Center had a mailroom and based on what you are going to school for, you would report to one of those locations.

[00:17:51]

Interesting.

[00:17:52]

Like for example, the Science Centers for all the freshman in Harvard Yard, all their stuff goes to the Science Center.

[00:17:57]

Yeah. That would be for FAS as well, right?

[00:18:02]

Yes.

[00:18:03]

Then Kennedy and Business would have their own private situation. You were working in this rotation sometimes one school or the other and then you started working full-time?

[00:18:17]

Yeah.

[00:18:18]

That happened here at HLS? [OVERLAPPING]

[00:18:20]

Then what happened was someone who worked in the mailroom, Jerry, I don't know if you remember him, he had gone out on long-term disability. So Michael Ryan, who was the manager of alarm at the time, called me up and was like, Hey, you're already familiar with the campus. You already know how we handle mail here. Would you like to fill in for Jerry? I was like, Sure, that'd be great. I was still a contractor at the time, but I was working strictly in Jerry's position, delivering only to HLS, doing everything that Jerry did at the time. Then when they determined that Jerry was not going to be able to come back to work, Michael Ryan offered me the position. [OVERLAPPING] I became a part of Harvard Law School employee in the mailroom.

[00:19:01]

Nice. That's a really great opportunity.

[00:19:04]

Yeah. That was 2019.

[00:19:06]

Convenient because you already knew the system. You were already working here.

[00:19:08]

It was a great transition for me.

[00:19:10]

Yeah.

[00:19:10]

Because like he had said, I already knew all the delivery routes because I was spending time here anyway.

[00:19:16]

Yeah. That is a big volume of mail coming in and out for the school when you think about the entire scope, right? Faculty, staff, and students as well. Then what happened while you were working? How long did you stay working there?

[00:19:35]

I was in the mailroom from 2019 - 2021.

[00:19:39]

Oh, yeah? Two years down.

[00:19:40]

Yeah. I don't know if you remember Sean. He wasn't the facilities for an office for a long time and he decided to move. So there was an open position available in facilities department.

[00:19:53]

I'm blanking on Sean's last name.

[00:19:55]

Martin.

[00:19:56]

Martin. For God's sake, yeah. Yes, Sean and I was going to say Sean who? Sean Martin. Yeah. I remember Sean.

[00:20:03]

Yeah. I was spending a lot of time in Facilities anyway because the mailroom is a branch of facilities.

[00:20:10]

Yeah.

[00:20:10]

I was already friendly with Kenny, I was friendly with Marcus, and they're like, hey, we have an open position for a 35 hours a week. If you'd be interested, you might want to go for it. [LAUGHTER] I was like, yeah, that sounds like a pretty cool change.

[00:20:24]

Yes.

[00:20:24]

Because I've been doing mail for years now and I was ready for something different.

[00:20:29]

Yeah. Then you make a transition and went to work for our front desk [OVERLAPPING].

[00:20:34]

Front, yeah. In the front office at facilities and I've been there since.

[00:20:37]

Was difficult transition or not? Was okay transition? You felt like, [NOISE]. Of course that is a different in terms of what you are doing in mailroom to what you're going to do there. But was easy way to catch up and figure out?

[00:20:54]

I would say coming from the mailroom actually gave me a lot of knowledge that helped me at the beginning because when I see a lot of new people start for Harvard Law School, a lot of the most confusing stuff is just knowing the buildings and knowing where things are.

[00:21:08]

Exactly.

[00:21:09]

I already had all of that knowledge coming from the mailroom because I was walking the whole campus every day.

[00:21:14]

Yeah.

[00:21:15]

Coming into the facilities office, we get calls from all kinds of people, all kinds of departments, so I already had that background knowledge.

[00:21:22]

It's always very helpful when you have that kind of knowledge of the campus. In your case, you'd be delivering mail to all departments, all buildings. I think when there is a call coming or someone have a request, depends on where they are, I think clicks very fast.

[00:21:47]

Yeah.

[00:21:47]

Because for other folks, if they come with no knowledge about what our campus are in most of the times, they won't have a chance to be going through every department to see where they are located, it change a little bit. It's more challenging, I believe.

[00:22:02]

Yeah, for sure.

[00:22:03]

It's funny because we had the same beginning here. I was not different way because I wasn't landscape first. Then you start at facilities. I knew the outside area well [LAUGHTER] where the building were located, but inside and all departments took a while for me to get used to. But it is a different thing whatever we were doing until you get used to the new system and the way that everything is done. But I think in your case, being the mailroom helped a lot having a sense of how the community is and what to expect and how to figure out weight in terms of relationships and how you even behave, right?

[00:22:51]

Right. It was nice to just, because like you said in the mailroom, I go everywhere. People already knew me.

[00:22:57]

Yeah.

[00:22:58]

I didn't have as much of that fears like, hey, today is my first day. I don't know anybody. [OVERLAPPING] I already knew a lot of the population at the time.

[00:23:05]

Given the expectations, sometimes we start a new job and feeling like, what to expect from me. I think when you are comfortable with the environment, makes a difference and it helps you out in a [OVERLAPPING] good way.

[00:23:22]

For sure, yeah. As you know, the facilities is a pretty tight-knit department. A lot of working between each other, a lot of communicating. It was good for me to come in and I already knew most of the people that worked for facilities.

[00:23:35]

Yeah.

[00:23:35]

It definitely helped me building relationships.

[00:23:38]

Depends a lot on you too and how much you want to get involved and how much you want to take in and how much you want to be part of the challenge. Because you're right.

[00:23:51]

If you are in the front desk it depends on why you are doing that. You are going to be dealing with all of them one way or the other. They'll be call's coming from John A or for Gene or for Russell or John Holleran or Matt McConnell, Jeff, Marcus or the guys that used to be working there, I think, changed quite a lot. I don't know. The other folks that used to be from contractors that also used to sit there. But one way or another, we'll be asking someone or calling them on the radio to figure out what to do and even mail room they're a loading dock. You like the transition you felt like was a nice addition to what you were planning for your career?

[00:24:36]

Yeah. I love it. I enjoyed it a lot. It's been a great change for me and I definitely love that it's something that I. Because I was hesitant at first do it because I was at a crossroads in my life. I just had got married. My wife was pregnant, we had our first son on the way.

[00:24:53]

Before you got your proceeded?

[00:24:55]

Yeah.

[00:24:55]

Oh, yeah.

[00:24:56]

I didn't want to rock the boat so to say, I need to rock the boat.

[00:25:01]

If you think about all those before you get a new challenge and you don't know how much you have to invest on that one and you have more to do at home as well. I understand that probably would be something to consider, but was a good transition and it was everything expectations or even the doubts that you had in terms of how to conciliate home and work worked well for you.

[00:25:27]

Yeah, it's definitely been a learning process, but we've got it figured out now. We're in good shape.

[00:25:33]

Yeah. Any changes since we started in Facilities and what you are doing in terms off with your role and how you are involved in everything there?

[00:25:43]

Yeah, so I my title is Building Services Coordinator and essentially whatever problems occur on campus, either through students or through staff, they're going to either send an email or call us to report the problem. Then it's up to us to figure out, Hey, there's a problem over here. It's a water leak let me send trades out to take a look at it. We distribute and send the proper person to handle the proper problem. Kenny and I make the joke a lot that half our job is just knowing who does walk around campus.

[00:26:21]

Sometime to know who is in oh my God, on-call depends on what it is. Because one thing that's a lot of people, it's true there's more than staff. I think staff already got used to it unless they are new ones just coming in. But, we have 24/7 system. That when after five or off hours we call weekends and holidays. If you call, it is going to be transferred for the control center, for Harvard control center and they're going to be dispatching the person that whether it's a plumber electrician or each VAC person, whoever they are going to be sending to take care of that call anytime during the day or night. It's interesting that a lot of people don't know that. It's just that wait until that recording happens in Facilities if it's after five or off hours, just to get that information and be transferred to the Control Center. But you're right from desk needs to be [LAUGHTER] who is in today or are we going to call and who is closer. Because there are always some emergencies that happen. I remember my time, there was such a strong storm, rain that start getting in Areeda. Then everybody stops everything that they're doing and go straight to that place to figure out is interesting and it depends on what it is and the challenge that become. Now you know that you are in a good place to work with Kenny. [LAUGHTER] Kenny Pacheco. Is interesting Kenny you also had a transition. He was in the dinosaurs when I was in Facilities and came to mailroom to help summer jobs as well because when Danny stops it closes for after graduation until they come back for orientation. All those folks need to figure out if they have a place until they come back. Again, Kenny was like that as well. He came to work for summer, a job for the mailroom and used to do some stuff for us in facilities when you have extra work to offer there. That's how we got to know him and still there, right?

[00:28:46]

Yeah. Kenny has actually been really helpful in my transition to where I am now because I actually went to him for a lot of advice because like you said, he had a lot of similar experience that I had in terms of transitioning. He was actually the one that told me about the position in the first place. He definitely helped out a lot to get to where I am now.

[00:29:05]

That's part is nice. When you can see in other folks who are working around you and give, there are opportunities and they know enough to know that you would, in terms of professional development, that's a good addition there for your life. When people can see that and help you to reach that goal, that's really helpful. I think that's a great thing and I'm glad that he was a good mentor in a way for everything that you were doing there. What in terms of plans for the future, you should think about going back to school or right now [OVERLAPPING] is enough.

[00:29:49]

It's something I've tossed back-and-forth between at this current time, two little kids at home. It's talking up most of my free time.

[00:29:57]

Yeah.

[00:29:58]

I might go on for my Master's in the future, but right now I'm just in the process.

[00:30:04]

If you're trying, which area would you try in terms of a masters?

[00:30:10]

Actually it's funny because when I went to undergrad for Psychology and Criminal Justice.

[00:30:15]

You did?

[00:30:16]

Now I'm working in facilities which is totally different avenue of work. But I've actually found that I really enjoy this type of work. I think [OVERLAPPING].

[00:30:26]

Where you are right now?

[00:30:27]

Yeah.

[00:30:27]

Really?

[00:30:28]

Yeah. Which I never thought I would. Growing up, I never even thought of facilities as a career for me.

[00:30:33]

That's really interesting.

[00:30:35]

But since I've been here and since I've done the work and now that I've been here over a year now I've seen the full school season.

[00:30:42]

Yeah.

[00:30:43]

It's just it's really fun for me just to experience a lot of different things.

[00:30:46]

But where would you go? Because when I think about Facilities and maintenance kind of a thing would go much into technical area or you would go to demonstration part of like dealing with facilities. Would you go for HVAC or Trades or whatever that area to work with. Or you go to try to take John A or John Holland's job in the future?

[00:31:09]

I think I would stick more on the management side of things.

[00:31:12]

Management?

[00:31:12]

I'm not cut out to do the physical labor that those jobs require.

[00:31:17]

[LAUGHTER] I would not go there either. Say I did my landscape when the time was okay. But no, thank you. I can try different thing that's what it be.

[00:31:28]

It's just a different way to derive. The physical labor is going to impact your body in your physical ability much more. The management is going to impact your psych much more than your mental health and everything because it is a lot of stress there. They know that you have to figure out as well. But I would still be interested in work with the management area more than anything else. But it's interesting that you change the focus as well just by experiencing that, which is a cool thing. Sometimes I keep thinking, when you are young and you say, I want to do this when I, is a vision that you just imagine or project based on assumptions. But if you have a chance to work somewhere else like you did, that vision might change because you have experienced that provoked that change in your life, which is really cool. Now let's go back. When did you have a chance, or when did meeting your wife happened?

[00:32:37]

That was right before COVID actually, we met in November of 2019 and then COVID started shortly after that. We had met, we were together for a few months and then COVID hit and that changed everything.

[00:32:54]

Yes.

[00:32:55]

We had a very interesting beginning of our relationship because a lot of it was spent separated because you couldn't spend a lot of time together. We couldn't really go out on traditional dates because everything was closed down. A lot of our early time together was spent through FaceTimes.

[00:33:15]

Wow.

[00:33:16]

Just hanging out in any way we could spend time together until things started to lighten up a little bit more and we could actually go out.

[00:33:23]

That's very challenging.

[00:33:25]

Yeah.

[00:33:25]

That's our good task for relationship [LAUGHTER] because it is not the regular way. I think when you start getting to know someone we try to invest more. We spend more time to get to know each other and that thing. You had to know each other almost remotely most of the time. You've said that your wife is from Czech Republic.

[00:33:48]

She was born there and she came here in 2019 as an Au Pair.

[00:33:54]

She was working here as well?

[00:33:58]

She's a nurse back home, but when she came here, she came here as an Au Pair which, you go to school and you stay with a family and you watch their kids for work. It's a work-study type of thing.

[00:34:11]

Yes.

[00:34:12]

I met her while she was in the process of doing her Au Pair. We just hit it off. We've really enjoyed spending time together. Like I said, we didn't get to spend a lot of time physically together, but we both knew, hey, if this is an easy way out, [LAUGHTER] if it's not clicking, it's easy to say, hey, this isn't working out.

[00:34:35]

Exactly.

[00:34:36]

But we both really felt strongly for each other and it definitely helped us to cement our relationship moving forward.

[00:34:43]

If it's not working, you just say my computer is in bad shape. [LAUGHTER] I'm having such a bad connection right now. I'm so sorry. That's how they think they would answer, okay. That's really lovely, sorry, because it is interesting and I wonder how difficult it was for her to be far from home facing this entire situation that was challenging when you are situation that you have all these structured debates of everything settled for you is already was challenging, was scary in many ways.

[00:35:19]

Yeah.

[00:35:19]

For her being far from home in a completely different environment with everything shutting down. It might have been even scarier more than you expect it to be.

[00:35:31]

For sure. I think about that a lot. How strong of a woman she was just to make it through COVID in a country that you essentially know nothing about. It was her first time ever being in the United States was right before COVID hit. She had to learn how to survive with COVID on top of what is it like to live in the United States.

[00:35:54]

I assume that she didn't have any family member around here.

[00:35:57]

She came by herself.

[00:35:58]

Wow. That might have been really difficult. How is the cultural differences?

[00:36:08]

It's funny.

[00:36:08]

[LAUGHTER] If you can say, I can say a lot because my interaction with the American being from Brazil, being Latino, and having de-connection here because I came on my own as well, the cultural differences are huge and you have to read to work through them and to understand each other. If you can say something about that.

[00:36:31]

It's funny actually. There are very different kinds of people there. [LAUGHTER] They like to call themselves the heart of Europe. They don't want to be considered anything other than the heart of Europe. I remember on one of our first dates we actually went to the Outback. When you sit down, you get the little bread to start. I just remember her looking at that and being like, I didn't order this. Why is this here? [LAUGHTER] I was like, no, don't worry about it. It's free bread, it's part of the experience [LAUGHTER] and she just couldn't wrap their head around the idea that you would go out somewhere and they give you something.

[00:37:04]

It's funny.

[00:37:06]

Czech Republic, they like to drink. It's very a big passion for them, there per capita, they actually drink the most of any country in the world.

[00:37:15]

Really?

[00:37:17]

It's so common there that when you go out to a restaurant, beer is free, but water is not.[LAUGHTER] That's how much they drink there.

[00:37:25]

That's amazing. Beer is free and water is not you have to pay.

[00:37:29]

You have to pay money for water.

[00:37:30]

That's something that my brother would definitely enjoy a lot because he used to say if I had to drink water it make me sick. But those are very interesting facts about Czech Republic that I would never guess. Have you been there?

[00:37:45]

I actually just went there this past Christmas for the first time.

[00:37:47]

It was the first time that you met her family?

[00:37:49]

First time ever.

[00:37:51]

How was it?

[00:37:51]

It was a great experience. I enjoyed being there a lot because like I said earlier, I spent a lot of my life in the same place Massachusetts, so I didn't really get to experience a lot of different lifestyles. Leaving this country and going to Czech Republic, we spent two weeks there and just seeing how they lived life there it was just such a truly eye-opening experience.

[00:38:13]

Must be beautiful, I have never been I just see pictures and such, but must be a beautiful country is that right?

[00:38:20]

It's great. It's very different than here because it's in Europe, so it's such an old country. They have a lot of history, a lot of castles, a lot of things that you can go see, when they talk about the beginning of the United States, you're talking 1776.

[00:38:36]

But when you're right there, you have been all right back like the origin of humanity.

[00:38:42]

Our ancestors, their tribes were in this cave here and we are all here talking about like 1500s. [LAUGHTER] That's history. Now, I believe. I had a chance to visit a few countries in Europe, my grandfather on my dad's side from Germany, I went to the town that he was born and drove around to see some other place, I went to Belgium. It's just incredible to see those cousins and the history that they have in those places that goes way behind and everything that you understand of history, you're just reading books and stuff, it is fascinating. How does she deal with the culture here? Is she more okay with everything or it's just some shocks?

[00:39:30]

[LAUGHTER] It took her a while to get used to the American way of doing things. In Czech Republic, they're very connected, a lot of things they do is with other people. In the United States, it's more individualized, so it was a tough transition to her to go to a place and have nobody interact with her, have no one even respond that she came in the door because she came from a small village in Czech Republic where you knew every single person in town, you'd go into a place and you knew everyone who was going to be there, and then come into a relatively bigger city in the Boston area.

[00:40:09]

She likes that kind of environment?

[00:40:11]

She does.

[00:40:12]

Here's the difference. Also, it's funny because when you were describing how her community was in her hometown, it's very much what community would be in my hometown in Brazil. Because in my mom's house, my dad used to know the entire neighborhood, everybody, he would talk to everyone. My mom, in a way, would know quite a lot of few people too. Our house would have 30-50 people almost every weekend, family and friends coming. I was always tired of that, I felt like, can't we have just some dinner? When I came here, it's a completely different change, that's why I tease and joke that the pandemic was built for me, for people like me. I love that. Stay home watching TV, [LAUGHTER] you don't have to see people. If I can do that for a long period, oh, I am built for that thing, sign me in. Sometimes having too much people to deal with, it's tiring, or drains my energy a lot. I am introverted in a way when I get to know people that is more, but it's interesting that she felt that. What about the kids? You said that you have two.

[00:41:35]

We have our oldest son, AJ, he just turned two in June, and our youngest is three months old now.

[00:41:44]

The older one, AJ?

[00:41:46]

Yeah.

[00:41:46]

And the younger?

[00:41:47]

Arlo.

[00:41:48]

Arlo?

[00:41:48]

Yeah.

[00:41:51]

Are they going to be learning your wife's language?

[00:41:55]

Yeah. She speaks to them in Czech at home

[00:41:58]

She speak with them in Czech?

[00:41:59]

Yes.

[00:41:59]

That's awesome. It's such a great [OVERLAPPING].

[00:42:02]

It's funny. It's something that almost I'm more passionate about than she is, I'm like, you've got to make sure.

[00:42:07]

Oh, yes, please.

[00:42:07]

That they connect because a lot of her family doesn't speak English, so the only way they will ever be able fully interact [OVERLAPPING].

[00:42:14]

For their future too. It's such an important thing to have at least one more language in your background for professional career development and everything, to be connect with other parts of the world as well. If she's there and she can teach them, and while they are young and still they are 7-10 years old, they are going to be totally fine. It is a great addition. Are you learning? [LAUGHTER]

[00:42:42]

I know enough to survive if I was dropped there.

[00:42:47]

Exactly.

[00:42:47]

But not as much as I probably should.

[00:42:49]

It's funny because Brian, we are together for, 2005, it's going to be 20 years already. 2022, so we were 18. He believes he's fluent in Portuguese. He tell everybody, I am fluente. I feel like, are you really? Because sometimes they are all together and they start speaking fast, then he comes, what did they say? Then I'll say, it's about time that you speak this language for God's sake. I am speaking yours, I'm fine. It's too recent, I'll give you. Like Brian's 18 years of a completely, I won't to say complete failure because it's not fair. [LAUGHTER] He speaks. He figure out like my family, my nephew and niece and the kids came, and they had a great time, they communicate. He finds his Duolingo or whatever, Google Translate and figure out a way to communicate. But I think it is an important thing for independence as well. So if you learn a little bit, then slowly you keep building. But I understand as well, we were just talking about this yesterday in another recording. When you were in a different country, like when I came here, your wife came here, she is immersed in this culture. Everything around her own TV is English. Then it's almost, not forcing, but it's natural that you are going to pick up faster. You on the other hand, if you try to learn Czech, nothing else around you will remind you of that language, so it will be more difficult, it will be more complicated, so you take time. But for the kids at home, if she keeps talking to them, it would be easy for them to pick up.

[00:44:42]

That's what we really try to enforce at home. If they're at home, she speaks to them in Czech, and when they go out, or we're hanging out outside of the house, we speak in English, so they get a good.

[00:44:52]

At school, it would be in English.

[00:44:53]

Exposure to both once they start school.

[00:44:56]

It is great if they can because I think it's such an important thing if she keeps insisting on that.

[00:45:02]

I know I feel bad. Like I said, we went to Czech Republic for the first time. An interesting thing in Czech Republic is, English used to not be a language they require, they actually learned German. Then after World War II, German was no longer a required language to them and it switched to English, so a lot of the older population knows nothing in English, and then the younger population are fluent in English. I can interact with her siblings, but her mother or grandmother, they know nothing.

[00:45:32]

But they would speak in German?

[00:45:34]

They can speak German. They traditionally [OVERLAPPING].

[00:45:36]

So they have the Czech as their [OVERLAPPING].

[00:45:37]

Czech is their national language, and then German was the second language that they learned. Which I notice in certain places in Europe, for example, Belgium, they speak more French and then the English as well. In Germany, a lot of people, I think I had no problem whatsoever with the English there, they can speak in German, but when necessary, they speak English with you. I don't think I had any problem whatsoever. Well, there was one small town that we went to ordering a salad, and that was challenging to figure out what we were trying to say there. What about now that I said salad? What about food? Your wife cooks or trying to do Czech food for you or?

[00:46:33]

My wife is a great cook and I always like to say that she saved me because I'm a horrible cook. [LAUGHTER] It's great that she can cook because my kids are never making without her. But yeah, she brought a lot of recipes with her when she came here. It's a lot of food that someone like me from Massachusetts my whole life never even heard of it. There's just so many different things that she can make and she really tries to at least a few times a week make a Czech meal on top of an American dish.

[00:47:04]

Which is good.

[00:47:05]

Chains, do you enjoy it?

[00:47:06]

I do. I enjoy a lot. I love to eat in general. I just enjoy.

[00:47:10]

But I think you had because Boston, there is such a diverse cuisine. From different influences from different countries and people who come here. Can you notice a difference in terms of what we would eat, like whether it is the American food or Mexican or Brazilian or whatever it is that you had experienced here before and completely different for the Czech?

[00:47:35]

Completely different. Actually, it's funny when we were getting to know each other. There was certain foods that to me were commonplace that she had never had before. She never didn't even know what a mozzarella stick was. She never heard of it.

[00:47:48]

Really.

[00:47:49]

They don't do fried food there. It's just not. [OVERLAPPING]

[00:47:51]

Not fried food? Wow. That's really interesting.

[00:47:56]

Actually, one of the most interesting things to me is flour. To me flour is flour. But in Czech Republic they have flour different kinds of flour, depending on what it is you're making.

[00:48:07]

Wow.

[00:48:08]

I was like and if she can tell right away if something's made with the wrong flour because it's a totally different taste there.

[00:48:14]

Interesting.

[00:48:15]

To me, that blew my mind because you buy flour at Stop and Shop and you make whatever you want to make.

[00:48:21]

I don't know if that would be a compliment perhaps because someone that doesn't cook at all. [LAUGHTER] Sorry Alex. Is this flour or corn starch? [LAUGHTER] What do you think is good? [LAUGHTER] It's pretty good. I will eat? I just want to make sure that I know my flour here. Then she's probably looking just saying what? [LAUGHTER] You just know, flour, but whatever different kind of a flour you don't know. But it's nice to see.

[00:48:50]

No. It's awesome. Going out to eat in Czech Republic is not really a thing people do. They go out maybe once or twice a year. Everything else made from scratch at home.

[00:49:01]

Exactly like us.

[00:49:02]

Family is cooking all day to make something.

[00:49:05]

For us Alex the same thing. Whether well. I would say that in a big chunk of our family, I would say, is the price. Is extremely expensive for you to go to a restaurant like people go here. Somehow here is very common. I got used to it. Sometimes if I don't want to cook, I would say let's order a pizza. Let's go here to eat or go there and there's always something available for you to do. But there, for them is taking money out of their pockets and is a way to get together. If someone say, hey, why don't you come home and then someone is going to be grilling something and someone is going to be preparing rice and beans. Someone brings a different dish. Do you know whether it's a salad or sometime mayonnaise or whatever. Then you have a group of people and there'll be always music involved and soon you have drinking and then music. It is an entertaining thing, but in a more economical, affordable way to get together and eat together. Whether if you go to a restaurant is. I could count how many times throughout our lives we went to a place to eat. Like a just really serious celebrations or something special. Never a big deal going out. Brian noticed that much more because there's always, we can eat at home and then go somewhere, see something, visit something mall or whatever. But food in general is much part of the family gathering than anything else. I'm glad that you're saying that it's the same there. It's interesting to see that these like you said are made from scratch. Is still a common thing and she's bringing here.

[00:50:58]

I'm glad she brings it here because I think it's important. For me as well as our children.

[00:51:02]

To the kids, yes.

[00:51:04]

To experience life because they live here in the United States, but I still want there Czech heritage to be important to them.

[00:51:13]

Your visit that was pleasant with everybody welcoming.

[00:51:18]

It was a great time.

[00:51:19]

That's really nice.

[00:51:19]

We're excited to go back. We're thinking maybe we'll go back for Christmas this year. We'll see.

[00:51:23]

Wow.

[00:51:23]

We don't know how flying with two little kids is going to go. We're debating right now, but.

[00:51:29]

How old?

[00:51:31]

Two and three months.

[00:51:32]

Oh three months. That one would need a little bit more time. [LAUGHTER] The two would be started getting a little bit better. I remember when my nephew came and it was two-and-a-half trying to figure out. Finds us because he's so used to Brazilian food to find what he wants to eat here was a nightmare. He was not a very patient kid as well, like to wait, no. But I see. But going there for Christmas would be a cool thing.

[00:52:01]

Actually let me share you their Christmas tradition. I remember when I was going to Czech Republic, everyone in the facilities office was like, there's no way you're actually going to do that. [LAUGHTER] Their traditional Czech meal for Christmas is carp. You have carp, the fish, at the beginning of December, you get a live carp and he lives in your bathtub for the entirety of December. You take a bath with them, you shower with them. Then the day before Christmas, you kill the carp, cook it up, and that's your Christmas meal. [LAUGHTER]

[00:52:35]

Wow.

[00:52:36]

When she first told me, I [OVERLAPPING] full on thought it was a joke. But she sent me pictures and I saw it firsthand. They really have live carp living in the bathtubs. [LAUGHTER]

[00:52:47]

Until, again.

[00:52:48]

Until it's time for Christmas.

[00:52:49]

Carp is a fish that they're going to use it for Christmas?

[00:52:52]

Yeah.

[00:52:52]

It's so interesting these cultural facts that are really interesting. Anyways, Alex, I think that's a wrap up for us. It was lovely. I really enjoyed our conversation. We already started. Your wife is coming for the event today?

[00:53:10]

Yeah. She'll be here today for the picnic.

[00:53:12]

Awesome. You can have a chance to get to meet them. Thank you very much. I think is a cool story. I was curious to know because I think is nice. I watched your transition too. Being from the mailroon and going to Facilities and having your career development here. I think is a really nice way to show your story. Now, even more with Aldi, what you brought to your personal life which is wonderful addition to that. Thank you very much for us having to participate in this humble project to here about our podcast. I hope you enjoy.

[00:53:50]

I had a great time again, thank you for having me. [OVERLAPPING]

[00:53:52]

Awesome. That's really good. For everybody home, I will see you soon in our next story. Bye. [MUSIC].