


# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A DECO DOWAGER



By JUDITH S. BERSON, Ed.D.





THE LIFE AND  
TIMES OF A  
DECO  
DOWAGER:  
THE EDISON  
HOTEL

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This book  
is dedicated to  
Steven Zvi Levinson,  
the wind beneath  
my wings.





*Judith S. Berson, Ed.D.*

THE LIFE  
AND TIMES  
of A  
DECO  
DOWAGER:  
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# SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY MEDITERRANEAN STYLE

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When the "new" Edison Hotel opened in 1935 on the Ocean at Tenth Street, it was advertised as "the place where Southern hospitality prevails...a gracious and spacious perfectly located hotel...including tropical patio... restaurant...solarium and recreation room... open all year."

The hotel was designed by Henry Hohauser, one of the most prominent of the South Beach architects in the 1930s and 1940s. Affectionately known as the "father of the Miami Beach Art Deco Design Movement," Hohauser designed and built over 300 hotels, apartment buildings, theaters and private homes. According to Miami historian Paul George, the Edison was considered Hohauser's last great work before he began to design in the Moderne style.

Graced with arches and bold columns, the Edison

faces the often photographed monolithic date/temperature sign. The Edison was built by Morris Zarrow, a Russian immigrant who had settled in Albany, New York. A tailor by trade, Zarrow made his money owning a hardware store and taxi company before he decided to become a Florida developer. He purchased a 50-foot lot on the corner of Ocean Drive and 10th street in 1932 for \$10,000. Originally built as a 67-room hotel, the rooms on the mezzanine level were later converted to offices, leaving 60 rooms available for guests. In 1956 a swimming pool was added for the joint use of guests of the Edison and the Breakwater Hotel next door.

The Edison Hotel was renovated in 1987, and again in 1999, resulting in a hotel that now offers guests a wonderful mixture of the old and the new.







*The original postcard depicting an artist's rendering to advertise the "New" Edison Hotel.*

The Edison has served as a home away from home for a wide range of guests including vacationing families, elderly retirees, World War II soldiers, and the hip crowd that enjoys today's Ocean Drive nightlife. Between 1942 and 1945, the Edison joined other South Beach hotels that

were converted to military usage for U.S. troops trained before going overseas. Later the hotel resumed providing tropical vacations for snowbirds looking to escape cold winters in the Northeast. The same lobby where soldiers sipped rum and cokes in the 1940s, became a retirement haven


for senior citizens in the 1980s. Most of the retirees were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who settled in New York and then migrated to South Florida to enjoy the year-round warm weather.

In 1997 the lobby, patio and outdoor mezzanine became

*“Architecture is frozen music.”*

—Schelling





home to the Official All Star Café featuring cutting-edge video technology, a display of sports memorabilia, and nightly entertainment in the indoor and outdoor dining areas and bars. Hotel guests in the late 1990s never knew when they might spot one of the Café's super star partners such as Pat Riley, Monica Seles, Tiger Woods, Andre Agassi, or Shaquille O'Neal. Often Miami Heat players such as Alonzo Mourning would also stop by.

Standing majestically in the epi-center of the Historic Art Deco District, the Edison provides one of the most picturesque settings in South Beach. Its location on Ocean Drive and 10th Street (renamed Barbara Capitan Way in honor of the woman who saved the Deco hotels), the Edison is right in the midst of many internationally famed nightclubs, restaurants, art galleries, fashionable shops and recreational activities.

### **The Edison's Architecture**

Henry Hohausler, who is accredited with bringing modernism to Miami Beach, was 37 years old when he

arrived from New York City in 1932. After graduating from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, he worked for his cousin William Hohausler in a large architectural office in New York. His passion for the modern movement was inspired by the work of Cezanne, Seurat, van Gogh and Gauguin exhibited in the newly opened Museum of Modern Art in 1929.

Hohausler was influenced by such notable New York skyscrapers as the Chanin and Chrysler buildings.

According to his wife Grace, most of his South Beach clients were wealthy Jewish bankers and real estate developers who had been his associates in New York. They had begun investing in the post-Depression boom by developing resorts in the Catskills and were now attracted to the financial promise of the "million dollar sandbar."

In 1993, Hohausler and L. Murray Dixon were listed as "foremost among Miami's Art Deco architects" in the Miami-Herald's List of 100.

It is interesting that Hohausler's work received the most notoriety when a

former Miami Beach City Commissioner demolished his New Yorker Hotel in 1980, before the District received its historic designation.

The Edison enjoys the advantage of an excellent location in the heart of what is now the “cabaret district.” It has one of the largest indoor lobby/dining rooms on Ocean Drive, an outdoor stage suitable for live entertainment, and a dining mezzanine overlooking a swimming pool and the beach. Yet, with the exception of Gerry Sanchez, most developers and preservationists overlooked the Hotel Edison because it was not considered “true Deco.” During Sanchez’ ownership, it became the first large-scale restoration project to explore the Mediterranean Revival style, an amalgam of Italian and Moorish styles.

The restoration highlighted the architectural detailing that had become a Hohauser specialty: a three-story spiraled column topped by an arch, the dentil roof line and the arcaded front porch. Sanchez, who prided himself on being



*“The architect must be a prophet . . . a prophet in the true sense of the term . . . if he can’t see at least ten years ahead don’t call him an architect.”*

*—Frank Lloyd Wright*



unique, planted mermaids and seahorses in the bottom of the hotel's swimming pool. He paid \$15,000 for an underwater mural of a dreamlike marine scene. Titled "Gerry's Pool," the mural even included a tiny portrait of Sanchez himself in a little seashell.

Henry Hohauser, one of the most prolific of the Beach architects, was considered master of both the Moderne and the Mediterranean styles. He designed over 300 movie theatres, residences, apartment buildings and hotels before his death in 1964.



*View of Hotel Edison from the Beach in the 1930s.*

*Opposite:  
Edison Hotel in 1998,  
sporting its newly  
restored façade.*

# EARLY MIAMI BEACH

## The New Jersey Connection

When Henry Lum of New Jersey sailed to Miami Beach from Key West in 1870, he found three coconut trees growing on a small strip of land. He had a grand dream. He believed he could establish a commercial enterprise by replanting the mangroves with coconut trees. Two other men from New Jersey, Ezra Osborn and Nathan T. Field, also became excited and decided to invest in Lum's idea. In the next few years hundreds of thousands of coconut plants were shipped from Trinidad and planted. Unfortunately rabbits, rats and sandstorms destroyed the plants before they could grow. John Collins, another New Jersey man who decided to invest in the new venture, came to Miami in 1896 to check on his investment. Although he was disappointed in the failure of



*Cars on the beach in front of the Hotel Edison.  
Top Right: The entrance to Miami Beach was directly  
across from the Hotel Edison (photos courtesy of the  
Romer Collection)*





the coconut project, he saw great potential in the beach and bought out his partners. He was convinced that the land would be valuable for growing avocados and for building residences.



At that time the only way to travel to Collins' land was by ferry. At the suggestion of his son-in-law, Thomas Pancoast, Collins proposed the building of a bridge across Biscayne Bay, but he met opposition from the county commission. In an attempt to change their minds, he drove his car to the ferry dock and demanded that his car be ferried across. It was obvious that the ferry could not transport a car and the bridge was finally approved. With financial help from Carl Fisher, the Collins Bridge, a two-mile wooden span, was opened on June 12, 1913. A parade of automobiles, horse-drawn carriages, bicycles and baby carts traversed the rattling boards. According to Miami historian Arva Moore Parks, the Collins Bridge not only brought fame to its owner; it was the first practical thing done to make Miami Beach the most famous playground in the world.







# BETWEEN THE WARS



*During the 1920s and 1930s Miami Beach continued its growth as a vacation destination for Northerners escaping the cold winters. Most businesses and hotels closed during the summer months and the busy streets became deserted. All that changed when the U.S. entered WWII.*

# THE WWII YEARS

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In 1942, the U.S. Army Air Corps moved its Officer Candidate School and basic training center to Miami Beach, taking over most of the relatively new hotels. Thousands of cadets (including the author's father) went through their

military training on the beach and golf courses, and soldiers returning from combat were sent to Miami Beach hotels for their rest periods. One report stated that one of every four officers and one of every five enlisted men received



at least part of their training at Miami Beach. By the end of the war approximately 188 hotels and over 100



apartment buildings had been acquired for military use. According to City records, the Hotel Edison was converted to military usage on April 18, 1942.

Many of the servicemen who "got sand in their shoes," packed up their families and moved to Miami Beach after the war, and others became loyal visitors, a critical factor in Miami's post-war boom.

*Bottom: Troops marching near Pvt. Dudley Berson's Hotel Sheldon 'barracks' on Washington Avenue and 7th Street in May 1943, just five blocks from the Hotel Edison.*

*Left: Pausing by the Collins Canal, Private Berson takes a moment to reflect on what might be to come.*

*(Photos courtesy of the Berson Family Collection)*



# REBIRTH OF THE DECO DISTRICT

Several events changed the fate of South Beach. The first is when it was accepted into the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and received national attention as the first Art Deco District anywhere and the largest and youngest twentieth-century district to attain such a designation.

Another milestone was the opening of the Café Cardozo, a 20-seat eatery on the front porch of the Cardozo Hotel. It immediately attracted a new crowd of young people who came to enjoy a step back in time to the Miami Beach of the 1930s.

Current Edison Hotel partners Steven Levinson and Judith Berson were among the Café "regulars" who still become nostalgic when recalling *Deco Delights*, a café specialty. These sinful desserts consisted of homemade brownies topped with vanilla ice cream and whipped cream.

The Cardozo Hotel, now owned by Emilio and Gloria Estefan, also designed by Henry Hohausser, was the site of the first Art Deco Festival in 1978 and was the setting for *A Hole in the*



...most developers and preservationists overlooked the Hotel Edison because it was not considered "true Deco." Under Sanchez' tutelage, it became the first large-scale restoration to explore the Mediterranean Revival style.

Head, Frank Capra's 1959 movie starring Frank Sinatra and Edward G. Robinson.

After years of neglect, one by one the hotels of South Beach (SoBe) were restored to again provide a vacation paradise for travelers from all over the globe. Between 1984 and 1988, Michael Mann's hit TV show *Miami Vice* brought Miami Beach into living rooms throughout the country, and later, the world. The region was seen as a hip, happening, exciting place with the District's graphic architecture flaunted in glorious pastel colors with cool musical sounds.

Leonard Horowitz, a local designer, began to urge hotel owners to deviate from the existing whites and drab tones by painting their buildings in colors that would highlight their architectural details and geometric forms. One by one, the

hotels began to accept Horowitz' advice and take on the vibrant pastel colors that have come to symbolize South Beach's Art Deco District. Eleventh Street is now named in honor of Horowitz to recognize his contribution to the distinctive color schemes of the District.

Government programs provided financial incentives to owners willing to renovate and repaint the facades of their buildings. The area began to lose its reputation as a subtropical sandbar overrun with senior citizens. The retirees sitting on front porches throughout South Beach were viewed as part of the landscape.

According to Barbara Capitman, "the journey from slum to paradise for the District took only ten years, starting with nothing more than fresh paint and a dream."

One of the early developers who invested in Art Deco buildings was Gerry Sanchez, who was considered by many to be "the first true restoration expert." Sanchez soon owned eight hotels, including the Hotel Edison.



*Like the building, the hotel logo has gone through several transformations. The original logo is pictured on page 26.*



# POTENTIAL REALIZED



*Judiith Berson and Pat Riley  
at Official All Star Café  
grand opening*



*Steven Levinson with Planet  
Hollywood CEO Robert Earl  
at All Star groundbreaking.*

About a month after the negotiation of the lease with Planet Hollywood was secured, the new partners planned a gala event.

A ground-breaking for the All Star Café took place in March with Planet Hollywood CEO Robert Earl, Andre Agassi, Monica Seles, and new partner Pat Riley on hand for the event.

The grand opening of the multi-million dollar sports theme restaurant and entertainment extravaganza followed in July. Ocean Drive was closed to accommodate the red carpet upon which partners, city officials, hotel owners and guests made their grand entrance to attend the

mega event and be seen by the crowds of onlookers. Among the sports stars on hand were Shaquille O'Neal, Pat Riley, Tiger Woods, Sugar Ray Leonard, and Wayne Gretzky.

Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the Hotel Edison is one of many shining examples of a new life for a South Beach Deco Dowager. On Memorial Day Weekend 1999, the crowd at the All Star Café broke all occupancy records.

Pat Riley has hosted several benefit events at the All Star Café on behalf of such worthy programs as the Children's Home Society and 100 Black Men of South Florida. Current Hotel





Edison partners Steve Levinson and Judith Berson sponsored an event to raise money for the Miami Beach Design Preservation and Planning Department to stimulate awareness of the need for building owners to maintain the historic integrity of their South Beach properties.

Under the management of the Levinsons and their Dutch partners, the Edison Hotel is enjoying a rebirth to coincide with the renaissance of Miami Beach. In time for Labor Day Weekend 1999, the renovation of 20 additional rooms was completed and there was 100 percent occupancy in the hotel. Berson and Levinson and

their Dutch partner purchased another historic hotel on Washington Avenue to provide additional rooms for visitors to South Beach. After renovation, the former Royal Hotel will provide 42 hotel suites with kitchenettes to accommodate those who prefer a more tranquil neighborhood for long-term stays.

The partners and staff of the Hotel Edison look forward to the new millennium, and providing hospitality for visitors of all ages who wish to experience the excitement of the Art Deco district and relive the life and times of a Deco Dowager.



# FASCINATING FACTS

## 1930s

After completing the construction of the Edison, developer Morris Zarrow could not get his certificate of occupancy from John J. Farrey, the City's building inspector, because Hohauser had designed the building without a fire escape.

Zarrow had to buy the adjoining lot (where the swimming pool is now) to accommodate the addition—making it a very expensive fire escape! Zarrow never ran the hotel and the first lessee chose the name “Edison,” paying the owners of the Edison Hotel in New York City for the use of the name.

When hotel rooms were only \$3 a night, Franklin Jeffries started working at the Edison Hotel as a front desk clerk. Four years later, he stole \$1,500 and skipped town on a grand theft felony charge. Although Jeffries had started a new life on the West Coast and later became a wealthy man, his

youthful indiscretion continued to bother him. Fifty years later, without the knowledge of his family, Jeffries retained an attorney who contacted Janet Reno, U.S. Prosecutor for Dade County at the time, in an effort to make restitution.

According to Bernard Zarrow, son of the Edison's developer, the grandparents of Carolyn Kennedy Schlossberg's husband Edwin, spent their winters at the Edison. Mr. Schlossberg was known for always carrying a pocket filled with silver dollars and giving them out to all the pretty girls!

## 1950s

Composer Gian Carlo Menotti produced a folk opera on the Arena Stage at the Hotel Edison. He featured singer and sociologist Zelma Watson George, who went directly from The Edison to Broadway where she broke the color barrier by being the first black woman to take a white role.

## 1980s

The Tropics International Restaurant opened in the last weekend of 1986 with a dozen former gang members among the 40 employees. Owner and musician Arthur Barron was supporting Project Gain, a jobs program to afford a second chance to troubled teens.

When Pope John Paul visited Miami in 1987, owner Gerry Sanchez hosted a seafood buffet dinner at the Edison to welcome Nicaraguan Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo and eight other Latin American prelates who traveled to Miami for the Papal visit.

According to Lee Stappenbeck, a former hotel manager, Nestor Torres got his start at the Tropics and actor Woody Harrelson was a guest in the Edison Hotel.

A patron convinced the valet parking attendant at the Edison that he was a friend of the owner of a 1987 red Porsche 911 con-





vertible and had the owner's permission to pick up the car. The 'friend' who drove off in the sportscar turned out to be a thief.

Gerry Sanchez, the Edison's owner, who was reported to have invested over \$24 million in South Beach during 1986, was a flamboyant developer who collected Deco hotels as if he were playing a real-life game of Monopoly.<sup>®</sup> At one time or other, in addition to his stake in the Edison, he owned the Whitehart, Waldorf Towers, Cameo, Betsy Ross, and had an interest in the Breakwater.

In August of 1987, after foreclosing on the property, First Nationwide, a California lender, apologized for a 'bank error.'

Thomas Salom purchased the Edison on behalf of his Unified Investors Group, Inc. for \$3.37 million in 1988 with Sanchez taking back a third mortgage. Only months after the sale was finalized, Sanchez foreclosed against Unified and took back the hotel.

After years of disputes with the landlord over the excessive noise from what some

called the Beach's "loudest and wildest" restaurant, in 1989, jazzman Arthur Barron and his wife Charlotte sublet their Tropics International Restaurant back to the Edison and went to live in Hong Kong.

### 1990s

After filing for bankruptcy protection in 1991, the Tropics closed for business in 1992.

The Kaye family (Karpawich) and Eugene J. Howard, a local attorney, purchased the Edison under the corporate name Ocean Edison Inc., on the steps of the Dade County Courthouse for \$4.4 million. The Kayes also owned and operated The Clevelander on the northwest corner of Ocean Drive and 10th Street. When the Kayes ran the hotel, they remodeled the front and changed the lobby restaurant to the Texas Steakhouse and Sushi Bar.

Steven Z. Levinson, Judith Berson and their Dutch partners purchased the hotel from the Kayes. Soon thereafter, planning began to return the front of the hotel to historic accuracy and the



*The lobby restaurant as it appeared in 1997 as the Texas Steakhouse and Sushi Bar.*

hotel and restaurant were leased to another group of Dutch investors.

Levinson negotiated a long term lease with Planet Hollywood to take over the lobby restaurant and bar, and outside bar and terrace.

In March 1999, the hotel operators defaulted on their lease and the Levinson group took over the operation of the hotel, celebrating the millennium with 100 percent occupancy.



# THE NEW EDISON



Room photo by Peter Berzon

*Every effort has been made to preserve the Hohauser design style while at the same time providing guests with pristine accommodations. One gets the feeling of stepping back in time and experiencing the place for the first time.*





# How This Book Led To A World War II Miami Beach Veterans Reunion



ven though I have been a resident of Miami Beach for 25 years, I had grown up in New Jersey and, like many transplanted residents, I knew very little about its history. My knowledge of Miami Beach was limited to the depiction of Charles Grodin's honeymoon at the Fontainebleau Hilton in 'The Heartbreak Kid.'

During the 1980s, while a major revival of the Art Deco District was going on, my attention was elsewhere. All that changed when my husband and I became partners in the Edison Hotel and I decided to write this book about the hotel's history. My original intent was to gather some interesting facts and print pamphlets for the hotel's guest rooms. Thus began the research phase of this project.

*The Initial cap is the original logo for the hotel in use just prior to World War II.*





Photos by Dan Rubien



*The Edison Hotel and beach scenes (as seen from the Cleverlander Hotel) haven't changed much since the boys in uniform got sand in their shoes. More than 60 years later, it's still a beautiful view!*

The Internet provided a wealth of information and leads, including Miami Herald archives where I searched for any articles that mentioned the Edison. I quickly found that the hotel's architect was Henry Hohausser, one of the most prolific of the South Beach architects of the Art Deco era, and I learned the names of a few of the hotel's previous owners. In this way I began to piece together the history of the Edison Hotel contained in this volume.

After visiting local branches of the Miami-Dade Public Library, I continued my research at the main branch where there is an extensive archive on microfilm and the Romer Collection of historic photographs. My visit there yielded articles from early newspapers and copies of original photos of the Edison Hotel in the 1930s, which I immediately purchased to include in my publication and display in the hotel. A Herald article by Allison Klein recalled the World War II years when most of the South Beach hotels and apartment buildings were taken over by the military for housing and training headquarters. Thousands of men, including matinee-idol Clark Gable, invaded Miami Beach and took over 70,000 hotel rooms.

By the time the war ended one-fourth of all Army Air Force officers and one-fifth of the enlisted men had been trained at Miami Beach. Klein described a pre-millennium reunion being



planned by a group of the vets who had been stationed in Miami Beach. Forrest Clark was quoted in the article as saying he remembered drinking rum and Cokes at the Edison Hotel. I was able to locate Clark and learned that he had actually been stationed in the Edison before being shipped overseas. In 1998 he and his wife returned to celebrate their

wedding anniversary and stayed in the same room that had served as his barracks more than 50 years earlier. In an email message Clark shared the following poignant memory:

*On my final night of WWII training in Miami Beach I walked down to stand in front of the Edison Hotel and to say a farewell to the beach. There as I stood before the hotel on Ocean Drive I could look out over the beach at the moonlit water of the ocean beyond. I*

*thought of soft gentle things as I knew we were about to go into a hellish war that would carry me many miles away around the world into battle.*

Our ensuing correspondence reminded me that my own father had also been stationed in Miami Beach, although my mother could not recall the name of his hotel/barracks. When she died last year, my nephew Jordan inherited the family photo collection. On a visit home to New Jersey, we searched through hundreds of photographs until we hit pay dirt. In a well-worn photo album we discovered a carefully prepared chronicle of my father's army days in Florida. My mother had lovingly collected photos of their early life attaching each photo with photo corners (so we could still read the inscriptions on the backs). There, in my mother's beautiful penmanship, she had inscribed in white ink on the black pages the following humorous caption "And so they were

*Reunion signage was placed around the hotel in recognition and celebration of the returning soldiers.*



married, and honeymooned in Gainesville, Las Vegas [NM], and Miami courtesy of the U.S. Army Air Corps.'

This was how I discovered that the hotel that had served as my late father's 'barracks' in May of 1943 was the Sheldon, located only a few blocks from the Edison on the corner of Washington Avenue and 7th Street. Fortunately for me, he had sent home one photo of troops marching in formation in front of his barracks, one in front of the old stores and restaurants on the 600 block of Washington Avenue, and another of him in uniform posing on a bridge over the Dade Boulevard Canal. According to local historian Howard Kleinberg, 300 hotels and apartment buildings were used by the military. Carolyn Klepser, a historical researcher, estimates that nearly 200 are still in existence.



*World War II veterans can enjoy the same hotel that was once their barracks without the uncertainties that haunted their dreams of that era.*

While I was searching for Hotel Edison anecdotes, I learned that the WWII veterans reunion committee was in desperate need of local support and a headquarter hotel. Their wish was immediately a reality. I offered discounted rooms at the Edison, agreed to help them arrange a welcome reception, told them I would assist in contacting city officials, and asked my nephew to compile a tape of the music of the period to be piped into the Edison lobby during the reunion. Thanks to assistance from Bruce Singer of the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce and a long list of willing committee members, we accomplished their dream. "SAND IN OUR BOOTS: Reliving the Memories of 1942-1945 Miami Beach" was held December 3-7, 1999, to honor the WWII Vets and the City that opened its doors and hearts during those bleak years. The Chamber created a website for the reunion and participating WWII hotels and buildings displayed banners to welcome the returning vets. Over 50 vets and as many guests enjoyed a dinner, luncheon, ceremonies, entertainment, followed by a parade on Pearl Harbor Day.





Forrest Clark, a retired journalist, and the driving force behind the reunion, eloquently described its significance:

*Miami Beach is the place where we left youth and innocence behind and departed on the bloodiest war of history.*

*Miami Beach is the place where sunshine and ocean left a bright spot in our minds as we carried on the battle in the blood and sand of the South Pacific, in the deadly skies over Europe and Japan, in the arctic cold of the Aleutian Islands and on the beaches of Normandy.*

*The meaning of all this is that never again should youth be asked to give up its life of dreams and ambition to fight in wars. The meaning is that men and women of peace must triumph or we will forever be in the cycle of war and death.*

*Miami Beach is a symbol of this hope, this dream for 1000 years of peace.*

*That is what Miami Beach means to us. It does not mean merely bright sunlight, pastel colored buildings, art deco designs, warm ocean water and tropical breezes. It does not mean only Collins Avenue, Lincoln Road and Ocean Drive, the models and the discos.*

*It means we return to pledge our faith in the triumph of youth over death.*

*It should be a place of renewal, rebirth and rededication to the ideals of peace, harmony and compassion.*

I cannot think of a more fitting tribute to my father's memory than for this daughter of a WWII Miami Beach Vet to have organized a weekend of activities to welcome the Veterans returning for the reunion. Had my father lived longer than his 46 brief years, he would have celebrated his 78th birthday this year. It is still hard for me to believe that the young men who 'got sand in their shoes' during that dreadful period of our nation's history survived, and are now elderly men in their 70s and 80s. For many the reunion may have been their last visit to South Beach. But they were here in all their glory, several with their children, to be welcomed by Miami Beach as returning heroes in a manner befitting their contribution to world freedom.

Thanks to the incredible press coverage of the historic return of the veterans, the citizens of South Florida were reminded of the vital role Miami Beach served during World War II.

*Portions of this chapter are excerpted from Discovering a Deco Dowager by Dr. Judith Berson published by Folks Online.com, an e-magazine ©1999.*





*Below: Author Judith Berson proudly parades visiting WWII vets past the Edison Hotel on one of the balmy December reunion days. Some of the vets had not enjoyed such a warm December day since they were stationed here so many years ago.*

*Right: Some of the Vets brought their children to enjoy the celebration.*



## Bibliography

This history of the Hotel Edison was compiled from the Miami Beach Historic Properties Database of the City of Miami Beach Planning and Zoning Department, the Miami-Dade Historic Preservation Division, the Historical Society of South Florida, the Miami-Dade Public Library Gleason Waite Romer collection and interviews conducted by the author. Many thanks to the following who assisted me during the laborious process of completing this volume: Kenneth Koonce of the Miami-Dade Public Library, Paul George of the South Florida Historical Society, William Cary of the City of Miami Beach Planning Department. Carolyn Klepser, architectural historian, and Bernard Zarrow, son of the Edison's developer.

In addition to the following books and articles, I based this history on papers, photographs, scrapbooks, and

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*Partners Steven Levinson and  
Judith Berson signing the  
papers to purchase the  
Edison Hotel (1996)*



JUDITH BERSON has lived in South Florida for 25 years. She and her husband Steven Z. Levinson (pictured with her above) live on Miami Beach just a short distance from the hotel.

She holds a doctorate degree from Florida International University in Adult Education and is retired from Broward Community College where she was Associate Vice President Student Affairs for Assessment and Student Financial Services. In addition to her new duties as Vice President for Operations of the Edison Hotel, she is a frequent speaker and writer, and president of Educational Empowerment Institute.

She is the author of *Earn While You Learn* and *How to Add Hours to Your Day Using ESP (Establishing Goals and Objectives, Setting Deadlines, and Prioritizing Tasks)*.

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There are many reasons to appreciate Miami Beach. The sand, the sun, the water and the beautiful year-round weather are its natural resources. While these qualities alone have attracted so many visitors and residents in its relatively short history, what truly gives the city its unique appeal is its architectural achievements.

Miami Beach has been recognized as possessing the most significant concentration of Art Deco style architecture in the world.

This recognition has served to revitalize not just the structure of its buildings but the spirit of its citizens as well. A great community effort and commitment was necessary to restore the city, and the citizens rose to meet that challenge.

This book serves to document one of the revitalized South Beach structures—the Edison Hotel. The story of this hotel symbolizes the history of the Art Deco District.

The author likens the Edison to a phoenix that has risen again to bare itself in its most colorful plumage—and in so doing, a spirit is revealed that is even brighter and more beautiful than ever before.

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