

Interview Subject: Lynne Elster

Date of Recording: 6-9-12

Location: MDPL office, Art Deco Welcome Center

Date of Birth: 6-2-44

Lynne grew up on the Beach. Her father was a nightclub impresario. She experienced Miami Beach's booming nightlife as a child, accompanying her parents to places where children normally weren't allowed.

Father was in the nightclub/bar business in New York. She talks about hanging out with her parents and brother to the nightspots. The Riot Room, Don Rickles worked for her father. Was privy to a life that some felt was "inappropriate" but for her "it was a grand experience."

Rich or poor, people shared cabanas at the Fontainebleau.

Father owned a weekly newspaper, *The Miami Mirror*. Larry King, before he was famous, wrote a column for it. They often ate out at places that advertised in the paper in exchange. The paper was delivered to all hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs.

The Embers, owned by Walter Kaplan, was a popular, high-end place, as was the Chandlers. The Dream Bar was owned by organized crime. When this group owned a place everybody knew you had to behave yourself there. It was understood.

The most famous place her father was associated with was the Peppermint Lounge, which was the "in" nightclub for dancing and drinking, on par with the famous Studio 54 in New York. He father managed it. They had four bands. The waitresses danced the Twist.

Lynne talks about the night scene in Miami Beach, in its heyday in the late 40's -50's. The music was mostly Latin and lots of people took dance lessons from dance teachers. She and her brother learned the rumba.

She talks about the sense of community, everybody knew everybody. If your child was sick and you had to take him to the doctor and you couldn't pay, you owed the doctor or he waived the fee. She worked for a pediatrician and they used to save the free samples of medicine for the families they knew had trouble paying their bills.

Beach High School in her time had students from very wealthy families. The kids drove Corvettes or Maseratis to school. Some of the rich kids had attitudes that were harmful, and some people are still bitter from being excluded by them.

Being a "Beach kid" was a real identity. No matter what your age if you grew up on the Beach, you were a Beach kid.

Lynne volunteered all her life. She was on the Citizens Advisory Committee for Miami Dade County Public Schools and worked a lot with Beach schools. She talks about the caliber of Beach High teachers.

Her former husband was a labor attorney and you didn't cross a picket line ever.

She talks about how the police knew how to run the Beach. It was orderly. The presence of gangsters gave added protection.

There were prostitutes everywhere but they didn't look like streetwalkers. They were well dressed and blended in, except the bar men knew who they were. They were discreet. A place known for prostitutes was the Bonfire nightclub.

She talks about restrictions against Jews. She couldn't get a job in certain banks because she was Jewish. She wonders if maybe it still quietly exists around Bal Harbor because you never see any for rent signs.