

Interview Subject: Seymour Gelber, Father of Dan Gelber

Date Recorded: 7/7/13

Location: 781 Fairway Drive, Miami Beach

Date of Birth: 9/1/19

NARRATIVE: Seymour Gelber is a sitting Judge, worked in political administration on the state level and after retiring, late in life became a 3-term mayor of Miami Beach.

First time he ever saw Miami Beach was on a weekend pass from a top secret radar school in Orlando during WW2. He was overwhelmed. Cleanest city he'd ever seen. He talks about how he came back after the war and got established working for a furniture store.

Thought of going into social work. Went to University of Miami and was talked into going into Law School.

Met his wife at Normandy School on the Beach.

Served in attorney general's office for state of Fla. Got a PhD from Florida State University in education.

Didn't like the practice of law. Became a government worker so he never tried a case. Worked on political campaigns. Joe Eaton. Eventually became a judge. Child support enforcement. Most all career in government was as a lawyer and administrator.

Decided to run for Mayor of Miami Beach. Alex Daoud had been mayor. Conducted investigation of corruption. Then ran for mayor. It was a hard, harsh campaign. I never thought I had the personality or the gift of gab to be a politician. It was a fun job. I'm not here looking for friends. I have enough friends. If you have a ticket, you'll pay it. He introduced term limits. Turnover in public office is very healthy.

Had earned the reputation as a corrupt city. Corruption is still pretty bad all over. Talks about corruption as inevitable in government.

The reputation of Miami, with its previous mayor sitting in jail, was as low as it could get. Tried to accomplish things to improve life on Miami Beach. Hired Michael Aller to be responsible for improving quality of tourist services.

Talks about negotiations with Loew's to get a new hotel built on the Beach.

Talks about the tourism boycott against Miami-Dade because of the snub against Nelson Mandela and how he resolved the situation that was costing them \$8 million a year in lost revenue. He never got to see him. The Federation was kind of chicken about it, supporting the people who were mad at Mandela.

Talks about counseling Dan when he first got his driver's license about how to behave if he got stopped by a cop.

Discusses his political views and Dan's and how they differ.

He talks about his father and uncles involvement in union politics.

Florida legislature is the worst set of people I've ever seen together.