

**Interview Subject: Dennis Wilhelm**

**Date Recorded: 1-13-12**

**Location: 2655 Pine Tree Drive**

**Date of Birth: 12-8-49**

Dennis is from Cincinnati, which was center of the Arts and Crafts movement, which he collected. He then got interested in Art Deco objects. By the time he moved to Miami, he had 5,000 pieces of Fiestaware [dishes popular during the 30's and 40's]. He saw an ad in the Miami Herald about preserving the Art Deco in Miami Beach. A professor in college had rallied everyone around preserving the Art Deco railroad terminal in Cincinnati.

He went to the meeting and met Barbara Capitman. He tells how he got "reeled in" by Barbara. There was a big rally to save the Cinema Theater. That how Mike Kinerk got involved.

Describes the days when the old people occupied the front porches and nobody much was coming over except about 25 preservationists.

The biggest challenge was convincing people that something so young was historic and worth preserving. Getting the word out was a major effort.

MDPL got a Ceda grant from Carter admin to survey. MDPL and Diane Camber. Got a professional staff to do the survey work.

Barbara always carried a big bag and would give away anything that she thought would promote the cause.

1984-89 Miami Vice came and brought a lot of attention.

In 1981 Leonard Horowitz and Barbara took a three-month trip around the country to see what other Art Deco areas ought to be preserved.

His family worked for the railroad, had rail passes, and traveled a lot on the railroad. Loved the 30's and the artifacts from that time.

He and Mike lived in Coconut Grove and when they started going over to South Beach their friends and neighbors thought they were nuts.

Tells about the development of Art Deco weekend, lectures, and film series. Was the creative director for 10 years. Became a grant writer for MDPL for educational exhibits.

Barbara used to tell them that some day the streets would be lined with people and street cafes and they never believed it. It did happen very slowly. In 1992, turning point came with the Today Show spending a week.

Leonard Horowitz on the tour with Barbara in 81, saw a lot of colorful terra cotta glazed tiles in the Deco architecture and that influenced his wanting to colorize the buildings. The first building of prominence he treated with color was Friedman's Bakery. He went on to do all of Tony Goldman's properties.

Horowitz grew up in New York and went to design school. Dennis has Leonard's archive. We have 80 boxes of Barbara's material. Kinerk-Wilhelm archive is 200 boxes. Saved every invitation and every button.

Two color palettes, one for Art Deco and another for Mediterranean Revival (earth tones)

Looking back, it was hard work but a lot of fun.

First view of the district was "kind of eerie, like a ghost town." It was very old world. Butchers, etc.

Light fixture restoration night before Moon over Miami Ball.

Cab Calloway came to the ball and remembered when he used to come to Miami Beach to perform and couldn't stay in a hotel on the Beach.