

**Interview Subject: Mitchell "Micky" Wolfson**

**Date Recorded: 2-15-13**

**Location: Wolfson Study Center, 21 S.E. First Avenue, Miami**

**Date of Birth: 9-30-39**

Micky Wolfson is the son of Mitchell Wolfson, the founder of the Wometco communications empire and former mayor of Miami Beach. Micky is an art collector and founder of the Wolfsonian Museum.

Born in Miami Beach. Lived out the war in Asheville, North Carolina where he was placed for safekeeping and lived out his youth. Father was mayor at the time and volunteered for military service even though he was older.

Motive for creating the Wolfsonian was to create something in a place he had always heard about but not experienced growing up. Sense of nostalgia and having missed something.

Came back to Miami in late 40's. He travelled by train with his family's black help. He had to sit in the black cars with them.

Dr. Wieberg, Oxford Academy, examined him to see if he had learning impairments. Lawrenceville School, went away at 12 and stayed until he was 18. Had a wonderful time. Spent a lot of time in New York. Talks about seeing plays. Starting going to Europe for summer with parents. Only came to Beach on holidays. He had only a few friends in neighborhood.

Since he spent time here with his parents, he knew a lot old timers, professional classes: the lawyers, the city managers.

His father was very interested in reform and persuasion. He thought he could do that as a politician. So when he came back [from the war] he became interested in television, the 9th station in the country and the first to editorialize like a newspaper. His ambition was to reform and persuade. He was a great humanist who wanted to help build the city.

Deathbed counsel and request from his father: never sell Wometco to a Yankee. Tells the story. He made the promise and his father died. His father was born in Key West and he had seen all the great local companies go to the North. And it's the same today. The paper's gone. McArthur Dairies. Sold to people not with their first loyalty to the place.

Tells about the selling of Wometco and the "sign" he received.

Talks about his parents, their personalities and how they met. Talks about their relationship. Unconventional people. They had a wonderful life.

Most of the old families came from the South and their brothers were already established, came here because they could create opportunities.

His academic interests at Princeton and then School for International Studies, Johns Hopkins, then worked for State Department.

Talks about his involvement with Barbara Capitman and historic preservation.

I'm a snob. I like people who are intelligent and like adventure.

His parents were progressives but I was born to rebel. I was left to my own devices. I did what I wanted. With this museum too. I was criticized. There wasn't much of an audience, an audience of one. But it has grown.

Museum is the good and the bad. We're not to judge.

He expounds on his philosophy of collecting and tells stories about some of his acquisitions. He claims to have never "lost" anything he wanted because he is ruthless.