

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas describes her experiences of swimming in Miami Beach and Coral Gables*

Interviewer: Do you remember spending a great deal of time out of doors when you were a child?

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Well, not in the very cold weather, my dear! (laughs)*

Interviewer: Oh yes.

MSD: I was no great athlete. In the winter, at college, before we, snowshoeing or skiing was fashionable. We snowshoed a lot; I snowshoed a lot in the snow, and I was brought up in small sailing boats and canoes and all that. So I was very much interested in water, and lakes as well as the ocean and the rivers, and I learned to swim very early, but of course developed swimming down here. That was once one of the great attractions for me here was the swimming in Miami Beach when it was still just subtle really, it was just filled and there were hardly any houses on it. We'd go over from Miami either on the old Collins Bridge, the old wooden bridge, or you'd go over in a little bit of a steamboat to the beach and cross over the beach on a boardwalk to the wonderful swimming beach, in the South Beach, which has always been one of the best beaches anywhere around; there aren't any undertows. And then eventually, the beach up where the Roney Plaza is now, that was the Fisher, the Fisher Pavilion, well it was called a pavilion, I've forgotten its name. Well, anyway, you could walk up and down the beaches in bathing suits and a gang of us would go over, perhaps early in the morning before dawn, and go swimming and have a fire on the beach and cook breakfast. Or we would do it in the evening and run up and down the beaches and swim and all that. So the open air, you see, so once that open beach business all summer long was simply wonderful. You didn't mind the hot weather because you were in and out of the salt waters so much, and then later down here we have this lovely little Tahiti Beach that George Merrick had built when he built Coral Gables, and that, you see, was near the house, so you'd swim. Oh, we'd go swimming, groups of us, three-four times a week down there. And all Sunday mornings with parties and picnics and all that. So the swimming and the beaches were a very important part of our lives, a very pleasant part, that so many people now don't know anything about at all, which is so silly. That was a great thing, the swimming.