



Stuart Blumberg Interview

Kathy Hersh: Today is September 3rd 2015 my name Kathy Hersh I am about to interview Stuart Blumberg at the St. Moritz Hotel in Miami Beach for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project. Let's start out by talking about since this is really focused on the Beach, your earliest association with beach. You came here as child.

Stuart Blumberg: I came here at age of nine years old. Parents moved down here basically for my father's health reasons. My mother moved with us kicking and screaming all the way down here because she didn't want to leave New York. She didn't want to leave her friends, lifetime friends. But we came here, my brother, and I, and my parents and we settled here right after the war. The first person I met, a young fellow by the name of Marty Shapiro, is still my friend. In the beginning we lived in a hotel called the Essex House, which is still here. That's where I spent my years until I went away to college. Living in the Essex House and going to Central Beach Elementary and Ida Fisher Junior High School, then Beach High, all within walking distance of my home, and it was incredible experience.

Growing up here - Thomas Wolfe says you can never go back again and you can't. I'm a firm believer of progress, but when I look back at growing up in South Beach, which has now become a marketing, media thing, South Beach is like heaven, then it was pure white sand on the beach, no tall buildings. If you dated a girl above Lincoln Road you had a real serious problem because you couldn't afford to take her out. Growing up here, the old cliché, it was the age of Camelot and that's what it was.

Kathy Hersh: If you took a girl out on a date and she didn't live above what might...

[Cross talk]

Stuart Blumberg: My first date was a triple date with three couples. We were in sixth grade. [Laughing] I remember going on a bus, the six of us, and we went to a restaurant that is no longer there called Piccolos, which is on Second Street on Collins area. I had the bread sticks. My late father had previously called the owners and said he was going to pay the check. The six of us got off the bus and we went to dinner, then we got back on the bus and our parents picked us up [Laughing] wherever we got off the bus. That was my first dating experience. However, I didn't date at all in junior high and high school. I had to be fixed up for a date for my senior prom.

Kathy Hersh: Why was that?

Stuart Blumberg: I always was shy about wearing glasses. I always thought that I would be rejected because I wore glasses, even though I was voted most spirit at Beach High, all that energy I let out on behalf of the school, and I was just reticent to go up and ask a girl to go out on a date. Until my prom, when I got fixed up with probably with the most beautiful girl in the school, and that was my first dating experience that I could really say it was a date.

Kathy Hersh: So Piccolos, that was a pretty famous place.

Stuart Blumberg: Yes, it is an Italian food restaurant, with an outdoor patio and indoors and a big lobster tank in the front, and family owned. The family was a terrific family for years until it was closed. We were persistent costumers because the food was great. They did open up a branch on 23rd Street on Collins Avenue, which was fairly successful. Those days of those type of family restaurants are gone. What South Beach has become, which is a destination, there is no longer a Miami Beach destination. You either come to South Beach, or you go to Mid Beach or you go to North Beach. Miami Beach is not what it used to be as far as a destination. The reality of it is, South Beach is terrific. The late Tony Goldman and what he created down there and all those things just amazing. Nobody saw it coming, nobody. Now that it's there and it's become part of this fabric of this community, how do you preserve it? How do you make it up to date? I think the city is going through some real challenges now. Ocean Drive is not what Ocean Drive was back ten years ago, Lincoln Road.

Kathy Hersh: [Talking to someone in the background] Carl? Okay this is good stuff. How do we try to create a picture if you can for the young people who come to South Beach but they have no idea what it used be like, and it was kind of like a small town?

Stuart Blumberg: They're not interested in what it used to be. The difficulty, the transition of Miami Beach, which I have always said has reinvented itself at least three times, and each reinvention is a different model. The first time around it was major hotels, Ben Novack built the Fontainebleau, then Mufson built the Eden Roc, and then of course Bob Tisch, his brother, Larry, built the Americana. That was the age of hotels. Then the hotels went, Fontainebleau went broke and that world got smaller. The jet plane flew over us and went to other places and we didn't keep up with the times. Back in '86, when Time Magazine said "paradise lost," we were no longer in anybody's mind as a destination. We reinvented ourselves as we're here. The senior citizens called it God's waiting room was South Beach until Miami Vice. Miami Vice came and wow, we reinvented ourselves. Now we were hip. We were a hip community. Things were marvelous and it was great.

Then came Hurricane Andrew and then came all sorts of things, bad weather, this and that, German tourists being murdered in '93. When all of that passed, we reinvented ourselves again with Tony Goldman and the South Beach resurrection, and Craig Robins and all of those people. We are now in that third reinvention of a city. I think it will

wind up being fourth at some point in time because you have to keep moving along.

Lincoln Road cannot remain what it was originally when it first got exciting. The landlords have raised the rents incredibly on Lincoln Road. Eclectic shops, stores and restaurants are being squeezed out. You're now getting major brands, Ross, Nike and all those major stores are now coming. It's lost, in my opinion, it's lost its charm. Ocean Drive, which was, wow, Ocean Drive. Let's face it is now being legislated. You can't drink at a certain time. You can't walk at a certain time. You can't have the umbrellas at a certain time. Why mess around with success? But success breathes sometimes a little greed, sometimes a little lack of vision. I think the city is going to enter into another dimension of reinventing itself.

Kathy Hersh: Would you care to predict what that might look like?

Stuart Blumberg: Not a clue because from my industry and my career, the hotel business is booming. I have seen hotels boom in my career and I have also seen them crash. It could take anything, an airline strike, a 9/11, a recession. It's a fragile industry. It rises and falls with demand. You can over-build. You can less demand. People are finding it cheaper now to go to Europe than to come here. It's a cycle business that used to happen. Those who will say to me, "There is no end to our success," aren't visionary people. The industry has changed and gone from a personal service industry where management knew its customers and knew them by name to a bottom line profit making industry.

I think if I had to start my career over again, it wouldn't be in a hotel business. I started based on customer service, I knew my guests. I knew my employees by name. I didn't have a computer. I don't knock progress. I don't knock technology but you run a business, restaurant or hotel, you have to service the customer. You have to know but it's no longer there. You're a name and you're a number. I think that's wrong.

Kathy Hersh: What is going to happen when Cuba opens up?

Stuart Blumberg: Nothing.

Kathy Hersh: It's not going to affect the business?

Stuart Blumberg: It's an overreaction. Reality, that question was raised maybe 40 years ago, 35 years ago when everybody said, "Oh my God, Disney is opening up in Orlando. We're going to go under." I was one of those, I don't want to say I am a visionary but I said, "Wait a minute. How do we take advantage of that opening up?" "Well, what do you mean?" I wasn't the only one. What we did was we packaged Orlando. We said, "Hey, come to Miami Beach. Stay here three days. We'll put you on a bus, pick you five o'clock at the morning. You'll go up to Disney, stay the whole day have a great time. The bus comes back and you will enjoy it. If you want to stay there, we'll package it. Three nights in Miami Beach, two nights in Orlando, and you're back. We were

extremely successful. Cuba is this generation's Orlando. I don't see American tourists going to Havana for more than four days, maybe three at the most. It's a wonderful place to go. I went there when I was senior at high school. It's great, but package it. In other words, give me four nights or three nights in Miami and give me three nights in Havana and send me home, because most people vacation seven days. That's the norm. If the overreaction of "Oh my God, what's going to happen?" is to me an overreaction.

Nassau, which has got major hotels in gaming never took away any customers from us and that's a little shorter air ride than Cuba. You want to go visit Havana and see an old castle and all of those things, so you go for three days and you stay here four.

I am not sure those visionaries are around anymore in my business. I believe what they're doing immediately overreact. How we do combat back Cuba? Don't do it. Don't waste your time. Figure out how to take advantage of it.

Kathy Hersh: Let's talk about the hey-day in the '50s and you would have been a young man working in the industry then, correct?

Stuart Blumberg: What happened was, as most young fellas, coming out South Beach and going to college you really had little money. I always kid people today. I went to the University of Florida. I had a C average and it was \$75 tuition. Now there are 52,000 students at Gainesville and you can't get in. I had to work my way through my college years. They were opening up the Americana Hotel. I went and applied for a summer job as a bellman. I got the job. I was put into the initial purple uniform, which made us look like I can't even use the word, but money was great. You kept all your tips and more important to me was, Robert Tisch, Bob Tisch took a liking to me.

Kathy Hersh: Will you say who Bob Tisch is?

[Cross talk]

Stuart Blumberg: Bob Tisch and his brother, Larry, who were hotel people in Catskill Mountains in New York, this was their first hotel venture into the Miami market. As I look back on it, Bob was 29 years old. I was 17. He wasn't that much than I was, and he and his brother built the Americana Hotel, which followed the opening of the Fontainebleau and followed the opening of the Eden Roc. I had this great summer job. Bob Tisch came to me one day and he said, "You know, if you ever are thinking about a career in hotels or hospitality, keep in touch with me, because I think you've got terrific potential." I thought that was great at that time. Jonathan Tisch, who was now the chamber of the board of Loews was a little fella running around the lobby...etc.

So I said okay, when I got ready to graduate college I had a choice of going to law school with my fraternity brothers or continue to travel around the country for my college fraternity. I chose to continue to travel. I didn't want to let go of party time and all that good stuff, but

after two years I figured that's enough and I will come back. I came back and rather than going to the law school, I went to the hotel business and the chamber of commerce. That's how my career started. What was odd about it is that each step of a way that I was in the business, I used to get either a note or phone call from Robert Tisch, saying, "Keep up the good work. Keep it going." I thought that was marvelous. I started as a desk clerk in motel row, working for my wife's uncle and proceeded from there to jump from a desk clerk in a motel to the general manager of the Hilton Plaza Hotel, which opened in December of '67.

Kathy Hersh: That was quite a leap.

Stuart Blumberg: How I made the leap is a story that has some negative situations, not involving me but other people who were involved. Needless to say, I was given the opportunity to go from the public relations director of this hotel to the general manager. I decided at that point I better learn this business. I spent three years while the hotel was owned by the same people, 22 hours a day, seven days a week. I was never home even though I lived 10 minutes away. My daughter went from the age of two to the age of five. I never saw her, but I wanted to learn every facet of the business, how do you pour the drinks, how you don't pour the drinks, how to mess around giving a client one ounce instead of an ounce and a half, how the maître de's used to play around with the tip money, how you could sign an American Express voucher that had a carbon copy in the old days, pocket the cash and use the carbon. I learned every trick of the charade. It was a wonderful learning experience because it gave me a whole insight into the hotel industry that I couldn't get if I studied it in school, or went to Cornell, or anything else. All of that, each step of the way, I would get a note from Bob. I went from when the Hilton was sold went back into the motel area business, and then proceeded to go to work for developer here in the community by the name of Tibor Hollo. I worked for Tibor for eight years. During the time I was there he bought the Eden Roc hotel.

Kathy Hersh: Tibor Hollo, Can you spell the name for me?

Stuart Blumberg: T-I-B-O-R-H-O-L-L-O.

Kathy Hersh: You were just leaving Tibor Hollo at the Eden Roc and moving over with Steven...

[Cross talk]

Stuart Blumberg: I was with Steven Muss to be the owner's rep at the Fontainebleau, which he owned and I was his eyes and ears between ownership and management. All the things I have learned over the process was coming to fruition because I was able to go into every department and everything in the hotel, and analyze it, and give him all of the information he needed. I did that until '91 when my good friend, Eric Jacobs, who was a member of the board of directors of the Miami Beach Hotels Association came to me and said, "Why don't you take

over our hotel association? You're the perfect guy." I said, "You know what? At this stage of my career I was in my 50s, I said why not? I don't want to work on a property anymore, I am not going to be the general manager of the hotel anymore." In '91, I took over the Miami Beach Hotel Association. In '94, I merged it with Miami Hotel Association, which created what is currently in place, the Miami Beach Hotel Association. What makes it odd is that the gentleman who was head of the Miami Association was my dear friend, Sherman William, who I met as a kid when he was a desk clerk in a hotel Miami Beach.

So we came full circle, Sherman and I and we merged the two groups into one and the rest as far as the association is really history. It became a really powerful organization, legislated by the state and everything else. But in '94 when we merged it, I was also approached by the dean of the school of hospitality in FIU Anthony Marshall, and he suggested to me that with all the experience I've had and the background, why don't I teach hospitality and hotels at FIU? I said to him, "You're out of your mind." I said, "I don't have a teaching degree, I don't have any of the stuff, the prerequisites that are part of this deal." He said, "Stu, let me tell you something. What you bring to the table is experience." I said, "Okay what you want me to do?" He said, "I'm going to give you three hours every Friday morning and you're going to teach your own class." I said, "Great, do you got any text books?" "No you don't have text books." I replied, "What you want me to do?" "Figure it out."

And I did it for 12 years and what I did was because you mentioned in previous questions on what is expectations now in the industry from when I started to what it is today, I taught out of two things. I taught out of my experience and I taught out of the morning newspaper. There were no textbooks. There were no tests. Nobody had to do anything except create a conversation in class. What did you read today in the paper that will impact your life as a hotel person? "We never had read the paper before." "Really? Read it now and we're going to discuss it, i.e. something happened to the airline headed to Miami. Did that impact that your hotel? Let's discuss it." For 12 years we talked about it. The expectation of the younger people in these universities especially in hospitality was if I get my degree I can manage the Fontainebleau. "Well you can't." "What do you mean I can't?" "You're going to have to start at the front desk." "No, I'm not. Why would I have to start at the front desk?" "Because that's the progression." "Oh, nobody ever told me that." If you wanted to in food and beverage you have to start in the kitchen. "I don't want to start in the kitchen."

I discovered two things, expectations in my industry were over-stated. The students that were coming out of the high schools in Miami Dade County couldn't handle college. They couldn't write. They couldn't converse. They couldn't create a dialogue. They certainly didn't read the newspapers. For 12 years I had this class. It was unique. I tried to get it as part of the curriculum and the university and the other professors rejected it, because they hadn't read the morning

newspaper and saw the impact. I did that until I realized that it was becoming more and more difficult for me to teach because there were Internet and social media. We didn't need to buy the newspaper. We could do it online and stuff like that so I said, "No more." I continued at the hotel association and at the convention center and other areas of the community. I kept myself involved in all levels including the state. I kept, at some point in 2008-I guess it was, I said to some people, "How do you know that it is time to retire?"

And the answer I got was, "You'll know." It was in April of 2009 I woke up one morning and I said, "That's it." I didn't tell my wife, didn't tell my daughter. I went to three people, my financial guy, and I said to him, "Can I afford to retire?" He said, "Well, if you live a lifestyle you are accustomed to...etc. yes, absolutely." Then I went to two friends of mine, one Don Lefton, and Don Lefton up to this day is still a mentor and a friend. I said, "Donny, can I retire?" He said, "Stu, have you accomplished everything you want to accomplish in this community and in this industry?" I said, "Yes, I have." He said, "So, retire."

I went to personal friend Parker Thomson, an attorney in the community who said, "I don't think you should because maybe you will maybe miss your platform being the president of such and such... if you don't think that is going to hurt you go ahead." So, Father's Day in '09, I took my wife and daughter to dinner and I said, "I've got news for you. I am going to retire." The first thing my wife said, God bless her, was, "You are not coming to Publix with me." [Laughing] My daughter said, "You're what?" December 10th of that year, at a luncheon, I retired.

I have remained active from a distance. A lot has changed in Miami Beach, a lot has changed at the state level regarding my industry. It is not like what it used to be. I do get frustrated sometimes as to, "God, if I was there I'd do this and I'd do that and I'd do this." Then I calm down and drink an orange juice. I have spent some time writing letters to the Miami Herald expressing my thoughts on things that I have experience with. It strikes a lot of nerves in the community because of the outbid pieces. I am very friendly with Michael Putney. He is a good friend and we think alike. From that standpoint here we are, sitting in the lobby of the St. Moritz, which is full-circle for me because it is part of the Lowe's Hotel next door, which was built in '98 of which I had a part of that action of helping the Tisch family build this hotel, which took me back to '56 when I first met Robert Tisch. Sitting here with you have come full circle for me in being able to reach closure on my relationship with the Loews people, and the Loews organization, and the family. I don't miss this business. I don't look in the rearview mirror. I have not been in touch with the hotel association since I left. I was a founder of the bureau. I have not been in contact with them. Am I busy? Yes, I am mentally busy, not physically. I read six newspapers a day. I try to understand what's going on in the world around me. I follow all the local legislation regarding hotels, and convention centers, and everything else knowing full well that I can't do a thing about it but I want to know what's going on.

A lot of people still call me and ask my opinion and I give to them. I'm not shy. What's happening now with the hotel convention center, I would have handled in much different way. I am very content. Like I said, I don't miss the day-to-day. I miss some of the people who are no longer here. I miss Bob Tisch. I miss Sherman Winn. I miss Tony Goldman. These were people who were part of an era that created what all the younger generation is now enjoying. They think they woke one morning and South Beach was here, and the hotels were successful and it didn't take a lot of hard work.

Kathy Hersh: Tell us more about Tony Goldman because he was a person that strikes me as kind of like yourself in that he had his finger on the pulse and so he kind of knew instinctively what would go?

Stuart Blumberg: Tony Goldman was a visionary and Tony from day one went head to head with me. I was not a big fan of preservation, to the contrary. I was an opponent of preservation. I always felt that preservation to me is like being in embalmed, keeping everything the same way when I was growing up as a kid. My concern about preservation was from Lincoln Road to 23rd street. I always felt that, that particular area shouldn't have designation because it needed new hotel inventory to support the Convention Center. Tony's vision was totally different. No, it should all be historic and they were successful in creating all these historic districts. Loews was the first hotel build in 32 years in the city, after opened the last one in '67. We used to sit and talk and we used to argue. Tony was against the building of the Loews hotel. Tony's attitude was, "If I want to look up north of Ocean Drive, I don't want to see a big building blocking my view."

Unfortunately, not only did we get Loews built, or fortunately, but condos were built going north and everything else and so, his vision of open space didn't work. Tony and I came full circle when he became chairman of the convention and visitor's bureau and now he had to think globally. His world now was Miami Dade County. His world was in Ocean Drive. He prospered and he made changes that were wonderful in our industry.

Kathy Hersh: What was one of those changes?

Stuart Blumberg: Well, he modernized the approach to marketing and Tony was a marketing genius. He did things you normally, the cliché of thinking out of the box. He was out of the box. He was out of the world. He changed the colors of stationary. He changed the vision where it used to be my father's Miami Beach became girls in whatever. He made it a younger destination. He created that ambiance that was just incredible. I think I've said to his daughter and his wife, "If he were still alive, he'd be spinning in his grave as to what's happening on Ocean Drive and places like that."

Kathy Hersh: About what?

Stuart Blumberg: They may be minor to some people but shrinking the umbrellas so that the people don't get in the sun light, cutting off liquor at two o'clock in

the morning on the sidewalks, and pushing them into hotels, and taking people off the streets. That wasn't in Tony's vision. When I look at what he created in Wynwood now, which is unbelievable, that's what was in his head. Craig Robins doing the Design District that was in their head. Miami Beach doesn't have any visionaries any more. It's a political quicksand and there are no more Tony Goldman's and Craig Robins and people that have invested in Miami Beach and to its future. That's why I said to you before it is going to have to go through another reinvention. What is it going to be? I have no idea, but if you don't have visionaries that understand what is going to happen, then you will do it [wrong]. People say that the future is getting brighter and brighter but that is not my opinion. The future is totally guesswork.

I looked at my friend Jo Ann Bass from Joe's [Stone Crabs]. They have restaurants over a 101 years old. It's an institution, and yet that restaurant thrives on people coming here, and what the market bares, and everything else and she always reminds me of all these restaurants in South Beach that opens one day and closes the next, there is no plan. I look at Washington Avenue. Washington Avenue is ugly. It's an ugly street! They are talking about linking it now, which we tried to do 20 years ago, to the mainland. The City of Miami Beach residents rejected it. They said, "We don't want any connection there."

Now with all the action taken place over there, a performing art center, two museums and everything else, now they say, "How do we get there?" When you talk about traffic, let's face it, it's horrendous. Nobody had a vision. Nobody sat down and said, "Hey, before we give a building permit, how we going to get around?" No vision.

Their best example [laughs] if you go north on Washington Avenue you get to Lincoln Road, great intersection, cars are making U turns at that intersection coming into on-coming traffic south and people walking. I called the city and said, "Hey, guys, we've got a problem." "What's the problem?" "You need a U turn, a U-turn sign." "Interesting, we'll get back to you." I waited two weeks and nobody got back to me. Called the City Manager who I've known since he went to high school with my daughter. I said, "Jimmy, I'll turn it over to staff. We'll get back to you." Nothing. I went to two city commissioners and they asked me, "What's your problem?" I said, "It's not my problem. Someone is going to get killed." "We'll look into it." Today they put up the U turn sign. It took me four months to get a U turn sign. I mean when I look at that and then I say you still can't get around the city with the pumps, and the this, and the that, and the detours, and the construction but what are you building an infrastructure for? What is the plan? What's the goal? Nobody can tell you. It's government by the seat of your pants. I call it crisis management.

Kathy Hersh:

Speaking of crisis and the future, the sea level rise and the impact it's had on the beach has cost a lot of money to try to mitigate against it, and there is some talk of raising sidewalks. How would you handle that?

Stuart Blumberg: Well I'm not that knowledgeable or sophisticated enough to understand the sea level thing. I understand puddles of water. I understand all that stuff but for me to venture opinion as to money well spent and this is the way to do it, I'd be kidding myself if I said to you I could venture a response to that.

Kathy Hersh: Maybe the fourth phase is going to be Venice that they tried to make down the south.

Stuart Blumberg: I always kid everybody. I had to write a senior paper at Beach High in 1954. That was a couple of days ago [joking] and the subject that I was given was 'Is Miami Beach a residential community or tourist destination?' This was 1954. We are now September 3rd 2015, still has not been answered. Are we a tourist destination? Well, it is the only industry this city has. Or are we residential? And the clash, the constant clash, on the daily bases between the residence and the industry is monumental, and where does it fall? It falls to the City Hall and the residents go there and say, "If you don't do this, we won't vote for you." The collection of tax from the tourism industry is up over \$80 million a year now, 95 percent of it is being used for the infrastructure of the residents of this community and they still can't get together.

I watched the commission meeting yesterday where they're still discussing a band going on a pool deck creating noise so the resident next door can't sleep. Well the resident next door knew they were living next to a hotel. You're going to legislate no music in the hotel? That's a constant that will never end and it's incredible to me, just incredible. The biggest contributor of money to the tax base is tourist industry and it gets no respect.

Kathy Hersh: Do you think that's universal?

Stuart Blumberg: No, absolutely not. I look at places where I go on vacation or something or travel like Santa Monica, California. There's a tax on the bill that goes towards creating an infrastructures for tourism, and parks, and stuff like that. I go to New York. There's a tax on the bill for Javits Center renovation. You go to Atlanta, you go to New Orleans, they all understand tourism. They understand what it brings. Here you scrap and you fight to survive. The theory here is nothing is going to ever happen to the tourism industry. It'll always be here. It's true. It's always going to be here but everybody takes it for granted, that nothing will ever hurt it. When the recession came in 2007 - 2008 this whole city was in a panic. The hotels were empty. Lincoln Road was empty. Ocean Drive was empty. "What do we do? What do we do?" Well we pulled up ourselves by the bootstraps. We marketed ourselves. We did it correctly and Miami Beach says, "I told you there is nothing to worry about." If I was a city leader I would worry about this industry every day, and I try to do things to nurture it as opposed to figuring out ways to hurt it. My thesis in 1954 will never be answered.

Kathy Hersh: It is very interesting that question was posed, and that was in English class? Do you recall?

Stuart Blumberg: That was in my creative writing class. I was going to be in journalism major. When I was a senior in high school I was a string writer for Miami Daily News. There was only four high schools when I was there, there was Miami High, Miami Jackson, Miami Edison, and Miami Beach. We were the only four high schools in the community. Each one picked a writer to cover the high school sports. I was one of the four, Howard Kleinberg, who remained a dear friend of mine, an author who wrote for Miami High, a fellow by the name of John Underwood who went on to be senior editor of Sports Illustrated was the third guy. He represented Jackson and a fellow named Don Rubin who did the crossword puzzles in the back of New York Magazine for 100 years. [Joking], he represented Miami Edison, and so the four of us we met back then. I had creative writing class. I went to University of Florida to be journalism major. The first course I took I said, "You're not teaching me anything." I did this so I switched majors. That was the assignment I got in creative writing.

Kathy Hersh: What was your major, what did you switch to?

Stuart Blumberg: I was eventually going to Law school so I majored in political science, and became a political junky. I love what is going on in the country today politically watching teeth's gnashing and the Donald Trump's of the world. It is fascinating time if you are a political junky. I will be 79 in January so the things that impact your life now directly or indirectly, you are not as caught up in it. Yes, I want to make sure that my daughter has a quality of life and everything else, but local politics and national politics, the country, the world, things are going on. Yesterday 300,000 refugees are crossing from Syria and Turkey into Germany, 300,000 people, babies washed up in the shore. Does Iran get a bomb? Donald Trump running around and screaming, "Build a wall. Throw these people into the ocean."

Kathy Hersh: Have you met Donald Trump?

Stuart Blumberg: Yes.

Kathy Hersh: What was your reaction?

Stuart Blumberg: A bully.

Kathy Hersh: How long ago was it that you met him?

Stuart Blumberg: Five years ago...four years ago, a bully. But I've worked for bullies, so... [Laughing]

Kathy Hersh: There are plenty of them out there.

Stuart Blumberg: When I watch these shows, he says things that are either outrageous or people would like to say it and can't. There was a poll I watched while I was coming here. He is now at 30 percent of the Republican

Party and [Ben] Carson is 18 percent. Between the two of them, they're at half the Republican Party, national poll. Howard Dean was a lightning rod. The fellow last year Herman Cain was a lightning rod. They're all hoping that by South Carolina he fizzles out. What if he doesn't? What if he doesn't? I didn't notice today's thing: I know he was supposed to meet with Republican party they are asking that each candidate sign a loyalty pledge that they won't have a third party [candidacy]. I don't know whether he signed it or not. I doubt that he signed it. What are they going to do? That means they don't treat them fairly, and he said if you don't treat me fairly I'm going to run a third party. He's got them in knots. They have no idea what to do with him.

Kathy Hersh: I read today that the head of the Republican committee told the other candidates to be cautious about criticizing Trump, which I think is pretty significant.

Stuart Blumberg: They don't know what to do with him; it is as simple as that.

[Background speaking]

Kathy Hersh: Carl, is there any questions you like to ask that I've missed?

Carl Hersh: I was interested in your remaking of Miami Beach, I think we actually could go back to 100 years when the beach club before the causeway and Joe's first started, and I was thinking of the '26 hurricane which actually allowed for the [Art] Deco district to be created on this barren beach where so much had been destroyed. The rebuilding happened, but I wondering if you can see the arc of that trajectory and those ups and downs are taking and you have a unique perspective, you are inside that hotel business, which has been part of the beach for 100 years now. What is your perspective on looking back on that?

[Cross talk]

Stuart Blumberg: Well, what's interesting about that having moved here right after the war and everybody knows the solders used to march up and down the street and there were small hotel that existed. Living in a hotel I lived in, the two words, Art Deco, never existed. We lived in hotels in South Beach. There was no such thing as Art Deco, or hotel marketing, deco historic district, nothing. It didn't start until Barbara Capitman. She created Art Deco. Up until that point in time, there were old hotels and designed in '37, '38, '41 and '42. When Barbara started it and Tony Goldman realized the impact of combining his commercial vision with her historic vision that was the third iteration of Miami Beach. They created what is still existing today, but up until that time when the Fontainebleau was built, nobody never even saw a hotel like that. When I met my wife who was working down here, she was Morris Lapidus's secretary, when I met her. Morris had a vision. Ben Novack, rest in peace, said "I designed the curved building, Morris Lapidus never designed it." That was another story with Benji's son, may he rest in peace. Up until that time this was a sleepy town. It was a nice small tourist destination and then along came Novack. He built this

thing and we became the hotel of the year. Boom, a new hotel every year up until 1967 when I opened the Hilton Plaza was the last hotel built for 32 years.

So the era of large hotels went away and we became something that wasn't the biggest desirable. The elderly people came in and sat on Ocean Drive until Al Pachino shot them all to dead in Scarface. Then Miami Vice, and so, that arc had different emphasis in the arc. One was giant hotels. One was let's get hip. One was let's create an Art Deco historic district. Just look at that and then you look at other cities, they never had that. You either knew what Atlanta was or you knew what New Orleans was, Bourbon Street, Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco, and I look at what's happening in Downtown Miami. I once asked my friend Howard Kleinberg, what Miami would've been without the Cubans first coming here. He said, "Jacksonville." It would've been nice quite community and that was it. What they brought was tremendous work ethic and built what is now Miami but now Miami become so overbuilt, Downtown Miami, that you can't go from point A to point B. You just can't. They lack vision over there too. So those arcs only came by necessity and there were people here who picked up the arc and made it work this fourth time. I don't see those people, I just don't see them. I think they're going to destroy it. It will still be here as Miami Beach is never going away but it will reach a certain level. There are nicer beaches. There are nicer places to go.

Carl Hersh: I have one last thing and that is you talked about Goldman and his vision, and touched on Capitman. Did you know Barbara Capitman?

Stuart Blumberg: I only met Barbara once, and that was when she chained herself to the front of the Senator Hotel. A lot of us were standing across the street telling the bulldozer to keep going and take her with the hotel. I never bought into the preservation movement. I hadn't grown up in that area and looking at all these old buildings. Why do you want to preserve this? And yet when I look back on it, it was probably the best thing that ever happened, within reason. When we were thinking of getting the Loews built one of my arch-enemies Nancy Liebman, I went Nancy and said, "Nancy, there are 632 historic designated buildings in South Beach. Can you live with 630?" The answer was, "No, you can't touch that building." Ok.

The late Abe Resnick who owned the New Yorker and the Sands next door in middle of night leveled them. [Laughing] They woke up next morning and said, "Where'd the hotels go?" They were gone. That was the only way because he couldn't get the permit. That's how stringent they were. That wasn't going to work. We wanted all 632. There has got to be a little give and take. I think we are over designated in this community. There's no place you can go now that it's not historically designated. I think that's a mistake. I think there are levels of historic designation, and then there's eras of growth. Now they tell you that you can't tear your house down unless it is built in a certain time and so on. (Sighs) I wish I could be here and grow up again but I wouldn't do anything different. I wouldn't do anything different. It's been a great ride.