



Interview with Miami Beach Banker Barton Goldberg

Kathy Hersh:

My name is Kathy Hersh, and I am interviewing Barton Goldberg for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project. It is April 17th, 2015. You told me a lovely – well, interesting story about coming down on the train, coming down to Miami as a boy. Could you tell us that story again, please?

Barton Goldberg:

Surely. My dad and his brother had come down in 1940, and they fell in love with the place. They came over on vacation, basically. Later on, in late 1940 or early 1941, they decided to move down to Florida. They left my mom and I in New York, at Ozone Park, Queens, we had a house there.

They got themselves established in businesses that they were interested in, and they wanted us to come down. Well, the war broke out in December of '41, you may recall, the Second World War. My mother didn't want to take me out of school until June of '42 so I could start a new school year in Miami Beach.

We came down on the train. My mother sold the house up there, closed it, got rid of her furniture, shipped some of it down to Miami, and we got on the train in New York City to come down to Florida. In those days, nobody thought of Pullmans, really. It was a 26-hour, I think, coach to Miami.

We got on the train. We couldn't get a seat because what was happening is the government was sending all of their recruits down to training camps in Florida, so the train was full of young soldiers. At a particular time, my mother was much younger, of course. She was probably in her 30s, maybe in her late 20s, and she was very attractive. She got a seat real quick, but for this little seven-year-old kid, the soldiers weren't so prevalent to give me a seat. I sat on a suitcase down to Jacksonville. A lot of them got off in Jacksonville, and then I had a seat down to Miami.

The train at that time came right into downtown Miami, right near the Dade County Courthouse. My father was waiting there, and we came back to an apartment that he had rented in Miami Beach. That was in June of 1942.

Kathy Hersh:

What about the blackouts and things going on, on the beach?

Barton Goldberg: There were some blackouts. They were concerned about lights along the oceanfront because German submarines started patrolling in, I guess, the fall of 1942. They started torpedoing ships off the coast. The problem is, if there were lights on the shore, the ships' silhouettes stood out. That's what some of the guys told me because I was too young to understand it myself. We would see every once in a while, particularly an oil tanker when it got hit with a torpedo. My God, the flames would shoot 50, 60 feet high. Even the ships were like 10 or 15 miles out, I guess, you could see it.

Kathy Hersh: Were people anxious about that?

Barton Goldberg: Yes and no. Don't forget, I was only seven or eight years old at that time. I didn't really address those fears. To me, it was the way the times were. I just adapted to it as any young kid would. I'm sure that people were nervous about it. It seems to me we had headlights like half-covered, as I recall, on the automobiles when we used them at night.

As I said, we lived right on Miami Beach in the 500 block on 14th Street, which is right across the street from my school; we were two blocks from the ocean. Even when we were sitting on the patio, you could sometimes hear explosions out there on the water if they happened to hit a munitions ship or something like that. It didn't happen every single night, but the Germans were very effective with their submarine fleets in the early parts of the war. We didn't have any real countermeasures at that time. They were developed quickly, but at that time I guess we didn't have them.

Kathy Hersh: Some people have described debris coming up on the beach, and you would walk and see-

Barton Goldberg: Oh yeah, you found debris on the beach. I never found any body parts or anything like that, but we did find pieces of ships from time to time. You know, you'd find that even after a major hurricane, years later. There were always some ships that got caught out there, and some of them went down to the bottom.

Kathy Hersh: What was going to school like then?

Barton Goldberg: It was a whole different world. Miami Beach had its own school system then, it was not part of Dade County school system. They had their own school board. The schools on Miami Beach were run by the local Miami Beach school board. It wasn't until considerably later that they affiliated with the Dade County school system. At that time it was not Miami-Dade County, it was Dade County. The Miami was added later on.

The school system was very good. We had a lot of classes, for example, my love of classical music came from a classical music class that we had in elementary school. I started in the sixth grade there, and part of the requirements in sixth grade was to attend this classical music class. I don't think they have them anymore that I know of. I'm not that familiar with the catalogs anymore, but there were a lot of classes that today would be considered extra classes, I guess. They were part of the regular curriculum because the people that ran the beach school system.

We had two or three – four elementary schools, one junior high school and one senior high school. The junior high school, the senior high school and one elementary school were all together. I lived right across the street from them, so I didn't have far to go.

Kathy Hersh: You must have had a lot of continuity of friendship over the years.

Barton Goldberg: Oh yeah. Unfortunately, a lot of my contemporaries have passed on. Sometimes I get shocked every once in a while and I pick up the paper, and I see someone passed away that I haven't seen in a long time, and they were a contemporary but, a lot of my very close friends are all gone, they passed away in their 60s and 70s, and I'll be 82. I guess I'm just fortunate. I lived a very clean life.

[both laugh]

Barton Goldberg: My dad was like that. My dad said, "Everything in moderation." He'd drink, but in moderation. Everything was in moderation for him.

Kathy Hersh: So your dad owned a hardware store on 5th Street, was that near...

Barton Goldberg: No, he worked for a hardware store on 5th Street. He opened up his own hardware store in 1950 on Washington Avenue, between 12th and 13th Street.

Kathy Hersh: That was in the area of the Galbut family drugstore, wasn't it?

Barton Goldberg: Well, he worked for the Galbuts originally. No, the Galbut drugstore was on 5th Street and Washington Avenue, and Al Galbut, the grandfather of Russell, actually had the hardware store on 5th Street. It was called Al's Hardware. My dad met him when we first came down in '42, they became very friendly. My dad actually worked for their wholesale hardware outfit, which was Paul Galbut, Hymie Galbut's brother, Russell's father's brother, in the late 40s, I guess.

Then he decided to open up his own store. The Galbuts sold their store on 5th Street to a fellow named Stein. My dad worked there for a while, but then decided to open his own store in the middle of what was then considered the middle section of the beach, actually right near City Hall. City Hall was at 11th and Washington then.

Kathy Hersh: Was it kind of understood that most Jews, in those days, lived in the south part of the beach?

Barton Goldberg: It really wasn't, as far as I was concerned, because we lived on 14th Street. I had Jewish friends who I was in high school with who lived all over the beach in those days. This was in the late 40s and the 50s. I had friends living in the 41st Street area and the 71st Street area. There were still several hotels and apartment houses that restricted their clientele to only non-Jews. There were a couple of major hotels like that at that time, and then there was some hotels that were built later on, particularly a couple in Bal Harbor that restricted themselves to non-Jews.

Kathy Hersh: Was there any form of protest against that?

Barton Goldberg: I'm sure there were, but I wasn't that involved in it at that time, I was too young. I'm sure there was. I don't know if there was an ADL at that time, but I'm sure there was something similar to that. I really didn't get involved in it. As I grew up, we kind of spread our wings from the beach and Jews were all over Dade County. At one time, when I was active on Federation, at one time we had close to 400,000 Jews in Dade County. I think now the number is down to about 150,000.

Kathy Hersh: You said that there was a conscious effort, and you were advised to get involved on the mainland.

Barton Goldberg: Well, Rabbi Lehrman said to me, I asked him, "What do you think I should get involved in?" He said, "Well, I think that we really need more people from the beach." He wasn't even thinking of Jews so much – he may have been, but he didn't put it that way – that more of us should get involved with the activities on the mainland, and not just the people that live on the mainland, the people that live and work on the beach. I did, and I had some very interesting years. I met a lot of good friends. Unfortunately, a lot of them have passed away too. I guess the life expectancy of those of us in my generation are not as long as they are today for people that are growing up.

Kathy Hersh: So, you think it was just a matter of exposure or was there anti-Semitism in the mainstream over on the other side?

Barton Goldberg: I didn't see items of anti-Semitism when I was growing up. I'm sure it was there, and there were people who didn't care to be with Jews, just like a Jew wouldn't care to be with X, you know. I think that's prevalent in every religion. Did it manifest itself to me?

The only time I ever saw it manifested, and I think it was nothing that really had anything to do with religion, was I went to a basketball game in Fort Lauderdale. We were playing the Fort Lauderdale high school. The beach had a pretty good basketball team then, a couple of my classmates were on the team. We beat them. I came out and I found all four tires on my car slashed. I had a 1939 Buick that my father had then that I was using to go to the game. I had to call him up and say, "Dad, I've got four flat tires. What do I do?" I don't know why they did it.

Kathy Hersh: Could have just been a rivalry.

Barton Goldberg: Maybe they were just mad because we beat them. I never had anyone say to me, "I'm not going to do business with you because you're a dirty Jew," or anything like that. I've never had that happen to me. As I say, I went through the rounds, the ranks of the Florida Banker's Association, and here I was a Jew. Not only a Jew, but a Jew from Miami Beach, not from the panhandle or someplace like that. I wound up as president of the Florida Banker's Association, just like Mike Weintraub was before me, several years before me.

I never had anyone express feelings that way toward me. When I was in the service, I had people come over and look at me who had never seen a Jew before. I went on active duty as a second lieutenant and I was over at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. Before that I was at Fort Benning, Georgia, for ROTC summer camp. I had people from Tennessee come over to me, "I've never seen a Jew. Where are your horns?" It was interesting.

It wasn't that they were anti-Semitic, it just was an experience for them. They had never spent any time, there were only about – in this whole ROTC camp, I bet there wasn't a half-dozen Jewish officers-to-be in the camp, and I happened to be one of them. Instead of keeping all the University of Miami ROTC people together that summer, they spread us out through all of the companies at Fort Benning, so we met a lot more people. That was an interesting time, but I don't consider that anti-Semitic at that time.

I spent my active-duty months at the Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, and I actually wound up as trial counsel. Of course I was a lawyer then, I hadn't passed the bar, so they made me trial counsel for special courts. Of course, you didn't

have to be a J.A.G. lawyer to do that. I tried courts-martial for the time I was up there, and I never had any incidents. I'm not saying it wasn't beneath the surface, but it didn't come out to me any more than it came out to me here in all the years I've been here for what? 73 years now. I've never really had it come out directly to me where somebody made remarks like that to me.

Kathy Hersh: You've been involved in a lot.

Barton Goldberg: Maybe it's because I'm gregarious.

Kathy Hersh: Maybe it's the cowboy boots.

Barton Goldberg: Well that could be too, that amazes people. When I grew my beard in '73, that really – I was the only banker in Florida with a beard in 1973 when I grew this beard. I've had it ever since.

Kathy Hersh: You've been involved in many, many civic organizations here. What have been some of the most outstanding civic engagements you've had, campaigns for improving things or whatever?

Barton Goldberg: Well, of course, the most engaging enterprise out of all was the Miami Chamber of Commerce. When I started at the Miami Chamber of Commerce, it was a very small organization.

Kathy Hersh: Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce?

Barton Goldberg: Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce. Doc Baker, Leonard "Doc" Baker, may he rest in peace, had been the CEA or the CEO for a number of years. He was very good at what he did, but it didn't grow that much. We started growing a little bit more.

I helped get the first building built, which is not the building they're in today. We finally got one of the fellows that was active with Carl Fisher when the beach was built, he had a house there. He was an older guy, and his name escapes me right now. It'll come to me in a minute, but we got him to sell his house and lot on the corner of Meridian and Dade Boulevard to the Chamber.

Panel-Fab, at that time, was a company that made prefabricated buildings. I made a deal with the owner of Panel-Fab, and we built a prefab building, two-story building with modules on the site. That became a permanent home of the Miami Chamber of Commerce. Later on – the Panel-Fab building was only supposed to last a certain amount of time, like 20 years later they decided to build a permanent building and that's how the permanent building got built.

In fact, I think I'm still one of the founders or something. I wrote a check to help them. They ran out of money. I know what it was, they ran out of money and they didn't have money for the landscaping. I wrote them a check for the landscaping at that time in addition to what I'd given them before. Those were some interesting times.

Now, one of the most interesting times when I was chairman of the Miami Chamber of Commerce was when Steve Muss decided that we should do a revitalization of South Beach. Steve was a very good friend, he was a customer of mine from the bank. I knew his late father very well, Alexander Muss. I did a lot of business with him.

It was kind of a love-hate relationship. If you've ever met Steve Muss, that's the way it works. His father was a lot more amenable than Steve. Steve, if he had his mind set on something, he was going to go forward. Steve had his mind set on this thing, and we developed a plan to revitalize South Beach.

Kathy Hersh:

You developed it with him?

Barton Goldberg:

With Steve, we had a whole group. They used to meet every Sunday morning in the auditorium at Jefferson Bank across the street, which is now HSBC. We had a group of people representing the city, and we met for months. We hired professionals, we raised some money, got some grants from the city but not much, and we developed this plan. Then we decided we had to make a presentation to the city.

The foremost communicator at that time in the city was a great, great television guy named Ralph Renick. Ralph was a pretty good friend to most of us. I got Ralph Renick, I convinced him because I was chairman of the Chamber and chairman of this committee – well no, Steve was chairman of the committee, I was chairman of the Chamber – to do a voiceover for this plan that we wanted to present to the city commission.

We presented it to them in 1974 in the convention center in one of the rooms there, and it took off from there. That's how it moved forward. It helped South Beach to revitalize, but it never—I had a basic disagreement on the plan. The people that Steve brought in who were professionals, they wanted to extend the canal system through South Beach. A lot of us didn't like that idea at all, but there was a consensus.

Kathy Hersh:

They couldn't let go of that?

Barton Goldberg: Some of them couldn't let go, we had a consensus that enough of them wanted it, so we pushed that plan. Of course, it never came through because it was too expensive.

Kathy Hersh: Do you think that was the deal breaker?

Barton Goldberg: It wasn't a deal breaker because South Beach continued to revitalize, it just revitalized on a different basis. It revitalized more under privatization than a municipal endeavor.

At the same time, there were those of us in the banking industry that felt that the values were very undervalued down there, but there were very few banks in the area that felt that way. Jefferson National was one of them, and I was president of Jefferson National, so guess who made a lot of loans down in South Beach? When Tony Goldman came in originally and bought the Park Central, I loaned him money. When Mark Soyka came in to do the News Café. Mark was with Tony, Jefferson loaned him money.

The only other bank that did any significant financing on that was Ava Holst with Capital Bank at that time. The big mainland banks, they liked to take money off the beach in deposits, but they don't like to put money back. I would say that probably 70 percent of the loans at Jefferson Bank at that time were in Miami Beach, which was our home country and one that I felt we knew the best. That certainly helped South Beach revitalization because, I can't tell you all the financing we did down there. I can name hotel after hotel, after property after property.

At the same time, I was chairman of the Miami zoning board. The city wouldn't change the zoning on some of the hotels, particularly for the street side cafés. Well, they brought up variance requests to the zoning board. The zoning board decided it would be a good idea to have these sidewalk cafés in South Beach. That's how a lot of the sidewalk cafes came into being, on the porches, you know and down on the sidewalks. That really turned South Beach into a tourist haven and heaven. They loved it and it helped.

Now, I saw on the television yesterday that they're concerned about them being open too long, until four o'clock in the morning. They want to restrict the hours until 2:00 a.m. I don't know if that will help, if people are going to get drunk, they'll get drunk at two o'clock as opposed to four o'clock. Either way, that was very interesting, being involved. I can't tell you how many properties came before the zoning board at that particular time to get variances. It was a 20-year period, I was appointed to the board in 1971 by Jerome Greene, who was the Commissioner, and I served until 1991 on the zoning board. During the latter years, Russell Galbut and I split the chairmanship. One month he'd

be chairman, another month I would be chairman. As I say, I knew Russell before he was born.

Kathy Hersh: Did you ever have to recuse yourself in that situation?

Barton Goldberg: I did. The city attorney made a decision that as long as I didn't have a specific financial interest, even though I might've been financing somebody through the bank, it wasn't my money. As long as I disclosed it, which I did, there was no problem. I would normally disclose the fact that – I still do that today. I'm back on the zoning board. The Mayor and Joy Malakoff decided I should go back on the zoning board, so they appointed me back on the zoning board a few months ago. I still do that.

People appear before me on the zoning board, I've known their families for 50 years. I tell them, "Hey, I knew your dad when he had a store on..." – one guy came up, he had a grocery store on Washington Avenue – "I knew your dad, Hayley Goldman when he had Shoprite on 41st Street." It seems to make things a little more easy for them too.

Kathy Hersh: Also, there's a continuity of vision, I would think.

Barton Goldberg: Sure. As I told you, my son is a third generation, my father was here, me, my son. Now my grandson, Michael's son Alec is a top graduate from Beach High, he graduates this summer. He's been accepted to the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, which is not usual. A straight-A student, a top debater in the country. Michael's daughter also is a top A student, she has a year to go, and it's four generations.

We're not the only ones, there are other families in Miami Beach that have been here that long. You met with Joanne, so there's a family that goes back into the 20s.

Kathy Hersh: And we interviewed Russell Galbut also.

Barton Goldberg: The Galbut family, Bessie just passed away and I can't tell you the number of hours I spent with Bessie over the years, a very intelligent woman, Russell's mother. There were over 3,000 people at her services. The whole Hebrew Academy auditorium was filled to overflowing.

Kathy Hersh: Back to the issue of zoning. It's interesting to me that you have been on the zoning board for so long.

Barton Goldberg: I was off it for 20 years. I backed the wrong mayoral candidate in 1991, and when the new mayor came, and even though I knew him for years too but I backed the other guy, he asked me to retire from the zoning board, so I did.

Kathy Hersh: What have been the key sticky issues with zoning as you see them over the years?

Barton Goldberg: There are three big issues. One of course is density. That's probably the main issue. Another too is traffic, and the third one would be growth of the population. This is still an island, what is it, eight square miles or something like that? As you grow the buildings – and we did grow the buildings. When I came down here, there were 5,000 permanent population on Miami Beach in 1942. During the winter months it would swell to 25,000. It did during the 40s, of course the servicemen were here. There were very few tourists, there were very few places for them to stay. The Army had taken over all the oceanfront hotels.

After the Second World War, a lot of those people that were here during the time the Army was here said, "Hey, a beautiful tropical place, let's come down here." A lot of them moved down to the South Florida area. Not all of them Miami Beach, of course, but then Miami Beach started to grow. We went from 5,000 people, and we're over 100,000 permanent population today. I would say probably during the season, there's got to be another 50,000 or more that come down.

A lot of the people that have places here aren't here 12 months of the year, but the traffic is still here. That's one of the things that the current administration is addressing. Jimmy Morales, who is the city manager, has a tough job. He went to high school with my kids, so I've known Jimmy since he was a teenager. It's a tough job trying to accommodate the residents that live here, who are objecting to some of the growth because of how it affects their quality of life, and at the same time the value of the properties. Then you've got the other thing hanging out there in the distant future as the water levels rise.

Kathy Hersh: Not so distant.

Barton Goldberg: Well, it's not in my lifetime, and it's not in your lifetime. It's probably not in my kids' lifetime, but it's out there. They solved it in Holland, I'm sure we will do something to solve it in the states. We're not dummies over here. I mean, you go to Holland and those countries along the sea up there, they've solved it with dikes and stuff like that, and they're still around hundreds and hundreds of years later. There's nothing that can't be solved if the will of the people is put in back of it.

We're having a meeting, we started the Upper North Bay Road Association again. Not me, but some others were having a meeting at La Gorce Country Club on January 27th to discuss this very problem, because they want to raise the street level in North Bay Road and so forth. We're concerned

about water levels and so forth, so we're going to have a meeting with the city engineer to discuss it. That's a major problem for the future, but once again, as I say, we solve problems. We've solved so many problems in this world in just the 75 years that I've been active in it, if you will, saying that I started when I was seven.

Kathy Hersh: What have been some of those problems that have been solved?

Barton Goldberg: Well, think about poverty, a lot of poverty is gone. There's still a lot around, but a lot of it has been solved. Some illnesses have been completely evaporated. Education has gotten a lot better. The transportation levels, there's more intermingling between the various peoples in the world because of better communication and better means of transportation.

Healthcare, of course, you know I have been very active in healthcare for many years, and healthcare has just gone off the charts in what they can do that they couldn't do years ago. I see it in some of my friends, I see it some of my friends I sit with in meetings. I see it in my cousin. My first cousin lives up in Palm Coast, she'll be 94 years old next month. Still sharp as a tack, has some health problems as far as getting round with her feet and all, but she's pretty healthy for 94. Now, her chances of living to that 40 years ago if she was in her 50s or 60s, forget it. That's a lot of advances that have been made.

I think probably one of the biggest advances that we've made is communication. Communication helps solve – helps bring to the forefront a lot of problems, and then tunes people into solving those problems.

Kathy Hersh: Did you have a question, Carl?

Carl Hersh: Yeah, I was wondering, what was your relationship or what was your experience with Barbara Capitman?

Barton Goldberg: Barbara was a very interesting lady. I met Barbara when she first started getting active, and then they bought a hotel. I think I might've financed them at one time, her son Andrew. She had a vision, she was really ahead of her time there. I endorsed some of her principles.

She could be very difficult. She could be a very difficult lady, but she meant well. I always felt that her intentions were good. Andrew kind of followed in her footsteps. I think there was a daughter too, as I recall, I don't remember exactly. I remember meeting with Andrew and Barbara. I was very active then at that time. I got involved in everything,

probably more than I should have, but I'm still here so maybe it helped.

Kathy Hersh: It was pretty miraculous what happened there, because it came so close to going a totally different direction.

Barton Goldberg: Yeah, but see, a lot of it didn't happen just because of Barbara. A lot of it happened because of what I mentioned before. As bankers, we saw that it was very undervalued and that it was a tremendous – it had tremendous upsides. By financing some of them that came in that great credentials, like Tony Goldman -- I've got to mention him because Tony was a fantastic guy, but there was a bunch of others. I don't remember them all, but I probably financed three quarters of them. They had vision.

Barbara had vision too, but she didn't have the financial wherewithal that some of these fellows had that came in, or the ability to convince the financial givers to finance her. She may have come on too strong. The Tony Goldmans of the world had already been through this process in other places. Before I financed Tony Goldman, I actually traveled up to Soho to see his Green Street operation, which at that time Mark Soyka was running for him, the restaurant.

It so happened the night it was there, one of my friends turned out to be the singer, Joe Canna's wife, Nancy, who used to be a big band singer. She was putting on a show there for her friends, Diane Canna and others. I happened to be there that night, and that convinced me that Tony had a good thing going.

Kathy Hersh: Sometimes it's those little things.

Barton Goldberg: Well, he did. He did a great job with the Park Center, and then Mark Soyka opened the News Café. I've got to tell you one other story. I told you I brought my horse into the Fontainebleau to open up the Florida Banker's Convention. Before we did that, we did a video of me on my horse on the beach, inviting everybody to come down to Miami Beach for the convention. We ended up the video at the News Café, Mark set up a table outside. I got off my horse, there was a plate of oats for my horse, and lox and eggs for me. We filmed that in video outside of the News Café.

Kathy Hersh: I hope that video still around.

Barton Goldberg: I'm sorry?

Kathy Hersh: I hope that video still around.

Barton Goldberg: Oh, I've got a video of the whole thing, yeah.

Kathy Hersh: Tell us about, Miami was a hard sell at one point when there was a lot of crime going on here.

Barton Goldberg: Well, it was a different world. We had the Miami Vice era, if you will. Miami Vice made things look a lot worse than they were, in some instances. Not that they weren't bad, they were bad. We had a lot of drugs coming in through the area, there were a lot of people making a lot of money with the drugs. It turned out to violence at some times. There was very little violence here on Miami Beach in those days that I remember. The violence mainly was stationed over in the city on the other side of the bay.

One of the worst shootouts, as you know, was just memorialized recently with the FBI down in the Dadeland area, where a bunch of FBI guys got ambushed, basically, by a couple of bank robbers. That was bank robbery, it wasn't even cocaine or anything. In those days, the FBI only had handguns, and the bank robbers had automatic machine guns and shot the hell out of them, truthfully. They just dedicated the new FBI building to those two guys. I remember that vividly.

We had crime like that, but we had a lot of crime with the importation of drugs. I don't know if it's still around or not, I don't hear as much about it. I know there's still drugs around, but I don't hear as much about money laundering and things like that as you used to.

Kathy Hersh: I was just going to bring up the subject of money laundering.

Barton Goldberg: We never did it at Jefferson. I've had people come in with suitcases of money, and I said, "No way." We never did it. My father's thing, in moderation. I didn't want to grow that way.

Kathy Hersh: A lot of banks did.

Barton Goldberg: Well, it was interesting. Up in Sunny Isles – I tell a story in Miami Beach. At one time, my office as president was on the ground floor of the bank, it was all glass enclosed. This little old man with a paper bag comes in to my secretary and says, "I would like to open an account, and I'd like the president to handle it." She comes out, and I didn't know how to handle those, I had a whole bunch of people, but alright. A Jewish man comes in, a paper bag, and he says, "I would like to open an account. Here's the money, cash in this." This was before we had to report cash.

I bring some people in and they count the cash, and they say there's \$32,600 and some odd dollars, I don't remember the amount. He says, "Oh my God, that's not right." I said,

"What do you mean, it's not right?" He said "Let me call my wife. Hello? Shirley? I took the wrong bag." That's a true story.

Kathy Hersh: What do you think was in the other bag?

Barton Goldberg: About \$50,000. That was before we had to report currency transactions, and that wasn't from drugs or anything.

Kathy Hersh: Where did it come from, the mattress?

Barton Goldberg: Who knows. A lot of people may not have – I don't want to even speculate on where it came from. In those days, you didn't have to report to the government when someone came in with more than \$10,000 or something in cash. Today, the banking has gotten so restrictive that to open an account, you've got to have 16 references. My son Michael, whose office is right across the street in Gibraltar, tells me what he goes through just to open an account.

Kathy Hersh: That's amazing.

Barton Goldberg: The regulations have gotten much more restrictive on banking since I was a banker. I'm not saying it's worse or better, but it's just gotten more restrictive.

Kathy Hersh: In terms of underground economy, Miami Beach was pretty wild and woolly for a while, wasn't it?

Barton Goldberg: Miami Beach was what they considered, back in the 40s and the early 50s, an open town. Supposedly, and I don't know this personally, I know from reading – the syndicate wasn't involved in anything here, it was all local people, and it was an open town.

There was booking places in most every hotel. If you wanted to place a bet, you could, because there weren't any off-track betting facilities then. Of course you had all of the horse tracks here and the dog tracks and jai-alai, but people wanted to bet on races in other localities, and you couldn't do it at the regular racetracks. Today you can. You go up to Goshen and you can bet on a race anywhere in the country or the world. In those days you couldn't, so the bookies had little betting parlors, usually in the pool area of the hotels.

Then in the late 40s there were gambling casinos in Dade and Broward counties. There was one in Sunny Isles, there was one up in Broward County, there was Greenacres, there was one in Surfside. How do I know this? In 1949, I was working for an outfit that had a food shipping business and a chocolate business. All these little casinos had sweet tables where you could buy chocolate and stuff like that. We would deliver the chocolates to them, like three o'clock in the

morning I would go with my boss and we would deliver it. I went to each of these casinos.

Kathy Hersh: How old were you?

Barton Goldberg: Well, I was probably 12 or 13 years old then. Of course, I was born in '33, this was probably '46, '47, '48, somewhere around there

Kathy Hersh: In the middle of the night you were out delivering chocolates?

Barton Goldberg: Yeah, we knew the guys who do this very well. He was good friends of my family, he had a store on Washington Avenue, and I had nothing to worry about at that time. There were no crime things to worry about in Miami and Miami Beach at that time.

We went to these places, and that was the first time in my life, I'll never forget. I saw this craps table, I'd never seen one of my life, and it was filled up with greenbacks, I guess the night's take, they were counting it. They didn't have the counting machines and all of that, we're going back in the late 40s.

Yes, there was lawlessness. I heard, I don't know for sure, that the then-sheriff of Dade County was somebody who was able to be manipulated, and that's why some of these places weren't closed down. But there was one on the other side of the Venetian Causeway, there was one in Surfside, there was one in Sunny Isles and then there's this one called Greenacres up in Lauderdale or someplace. Then there was La Boheme – I think it was La Boheme – and Golden Beach, a beautiful mansion. That's the one I remember the table with the money.

Kathy Hersh: These people were chocoholics?

Barton Goldberg: Even today, I think most of the casinos you go in, you'll find a place where you can buy chocolate and sweets. I don't know what one has to do with the other, but we sold a lot of chocolates.

Kathy Hersh: Any other stories that are favorites in your family that you like to tell?

Barton Goldberg: Favorites in my family [chuckles], we had so many. During the Second World War when we were here, you couldn't get any people to work because everybody was in the service. A bunch of our friends had groves out in like the Kendall area today, and there was nobody to pick the fruit. Once a year or twice a year, we would go out with my dad's truck and he made up boxes, and we would pick the fruit from these

trees. If we didn't pick them, they would go bad and fall off the trees. We would ship the fruit up North to all of our relatives.

That was my first encounter with a rattlesnake. The stuff was all overgrown, the grass was probably this high around the trees. It wouldn't have been the high if somebody was taking care of the groves, but nobody was taking care of them. I heard this noise, and I look, and there's this – I was scared of snakes anyway, from the time I was a little kid. I went to a snake farm when I was three years old and I never forgot it, so I ran the other way. Oh, I could tell you stories galore.

Kathy Hersh: They let you come in and just take the fruit, because otherwise it would have rotted?

Barton Goldberg: Oh, my dad's friend, because otherwise it would have rotted on the tree.

Kathy Hersh: You sent it up north to the relatives.

Barton Goldberg: My dad had a business then where he had the ability to make these boxes, and he made boxes. Do you remember, you used to ship fruit in these big wooden cartons? He'd ship it up north. Of course, everybody up north loved it. You couldn't buy citrus because nobody was picking the stuff, it wasn't considered that important during the war effort.

We had soldiers – I'll tell you a funny story, I don't know if I told you this or not. I've met almost every president over the years except for a couple. The Bushes I never really got to know. As a kid, I lived on Drexel Avenue and 14th Street. I'm out there on the patio one day and here comes this small group of people walking up the street. One guy has got like a Panama hat on, he's walking, and I suddenly realize it's Harry Truman, then president. This is after Roosevelt had died in 1945.

Truman used to stay at the Blackstone Hotel before he did the thing in the Little White House down in Key West, and he's walking up the street. Being a young kid, I was 12 years old, "Mr. President, it's good to see you. Are you having a good walk?" He says, "Yeah, why don't you come walk with me, youngster." I walk with him up to Lincoln Road, he turned around – he walked at a fast pace, I want to tell you – turned around and walked back and dropped me off at my apartment house, and then he continued on. That was the only time with Harry Truman. A really nice person, but man, he walked fast. He was all dressed up in a Panama suit with the hat.

Kathy Hersh:

Any other encounters? Were your other encounters with the other presidents as pleasant as that?

Barton Goldberg:

Oh yeah, Bill Clinton was fantastic. Bill I met while he was President, and then later on he came down for a party at somebody's house. This was after he was President, it was a 40th birthday party, but I won't tell you who because you won't know the person. My wife and I were at the party, and we happened to be right inside the front door at one of these little high cocktail tables, we were having some hors d'oeuvres and a drink, and Clinton comes in. He still had a couple of Secret Service members, but basically him.

Well, my wife is a pretty ravishing redhead, and this was quite some time ago. She's good-looking today and she's in her 60s, but then she was really smashing. I don't know that he recognized me, I'd met him before, but he came right over to the table and chatted with us until the Secret Service man told us, "Mr. President, we have to see the other guests inside."

The one I became closest to though, probably, was Jerry Ford, who was a Republican and I was a Democrat. When I was chairman of the Beach Chamber of Commerce, Ford was running for reelection. For election, actually, when he was running. He been appointed, as you know, because he was vice president.

We had a series of economic summits around the country, and one of them was at the hotel up in Diplomat. As chairman of the Beach Chamber, I was invited to come up to share time with him and to be kind of on the stage.

We got there early, and they had a separate room and they introduced me to him along with others. We started talking about condos, because he had just bought a condo in Aspen. You may or may not recall that he was a skier and he liked that. We leave that little room, and he and I are walking together up to the dais where he's going to be introduced and I'm going up.

His Secretary of the Treasury had been my guest the night before at a Junior Achievement Banquet. I was president of the Junior Achievement in those days. The Treasurer gets up and comes over to me, and he says, "Hey, Bart, good to see you again. It was a nice affair last night." We sit down, the President gives his remarks.

After the meeting, after it's over, one of the CBS reporters who was there – a very prominent reporter, I won't mention his name – comes over to me and says, "Who are you? Are you Sheikh so-and-so, the oil guy?" The beard, and I was wearing a very fancy suit. He thought I was a Sheikh from

Saudi Arabia who was in charge of – was it Yamani or something like that was his name? I said, “No, you’ve got the wrong guy, I’m a Jewish banker from Miami Beach.” You talk about interesting experiences.

A footnote to that, less than a year later I’m attending a First National Chicago seminar in Chicago, it’s held every week around Thanksgiving time, just before Thanksgiving. I’m staying at the new Hyatt Hotel, which is Water Tower Place, the shopping center, and then above it is the hotel. I’m at a function with the First National Chicago people.

I leave the function, I come to the hotel, I get off the elevator and there’s a bar there right as you get off the elevator. There’s a bunch of people there. One of them, “It’s so good to see you, we didn’t know you were coming.” It was the Organization of Petroleum States having a function, and they thought I was the Sheikh, the same guy. Would you believe?

Kathy Hersh:

You’ve got to check this guy out.

Barton Goldberg:

It’s all Semitic, the Arabs are Semitic, so my features were very – now, if you put us side-by-side it wouldn’t look the same, but if you’re seeing him in newsreels and you suddenly see... looks the same problems. All of a sudden he’s in the building where you’re having this function. That’s just a footnote.

I’ve had a very interesting life and career. Very interesting. I’ve enjoyed every moment of it, still enjoying it. That’s why I keep this office. I need the office like a hole in the head, but I like to have an office, so I keep it. As I said, Bobby Goodman and I have been together for so many years, I’d be lost if I didn’t see him every once in a while.

Kathy Hersh:

What do you see as the future of the beach?

Barton Goldberg:

Well, I see us number one, we have to solve the problems that we have. The big one, which the mayor is concentrating on, is rising waters. It’s not just our problem; it’s a problem that affects the whole seaboard, and not just this seaboard, but all around the country. We have a lot of seaboard. We have to balance our growth with our wellness of life, is really what it comes down to.

There are other seashore towns, if you will, and I think Asbury Park was one of them, that closed off their towns and restricted admission because they wanted to preserve a quality of life. We can’t do that. A lot of people in Broward County and the north end of Dade County drive through Miami Beach because they don’t want to use the expressway system. Particularly if you’re on the expressway at eight

o'clock to 10 o'clock in the morning going towards Miami from the north, and you see the stuff is backed up from 36th Street all the way up to Golden Glades. They don't want to do that, so they come through the beach.

I sometimes can't get out on the road, and it's not Miami Beach people using the road going south. It's people using Miami Beach as a thoroughfare to come through the city. I know that. If we had a barricade and stopped these people, you'd find out, I think, that a very high percentage of them are from off the beach, but part of it is a US road so you can't stop them, A1A.

That, I think, is going to create more of a problem than the amount of residents we have here. The traffic that's generated on the beach, a lot of it – well, 41st Street, you see it on 41st Street, where did all this traffic come from? Not everybody in their apartments, leaving their apartment drive on 41st Street. I guess you saw it when you came here. You had trouble getting a parking space, I'll bet.

Kathy Hersh: Not too bad.

Barton Goldberg: You're lucky.

Carl Hersh: Your lot.

Barton Goldberg: Oh, you got in the lot, okay. I don't use the lot because I don't want to pay Jimmy Resnick and Jonathan Fried what they want to charge me, so I don't use the lot. I'm not here that often, so I find a space on the street, usually, or in the parking garage. I've got to tell you, when I had the bank here we didn't have that kind of parking problem. I helped get the city to build the parking garage, which I knew we'd need in the future, but I never realized I'd go in the parking garage and wind up parking on the roof.

A lot of it has to do with construction workers. When they construct things on Collins Avenue, there's no place to park. They park the construction workers over here and bus them over to the construction sites. I've seen that very often. That's a temporary problem, which I thought, but it seems to be going on for a long time, many years. What they're doing now is they're tearing down the old places and building new ones. You see?

Kathy Hersh: How key do you think organizations like the Miami Design Preservation League is in helping design the future of Miami Beach?

Barton Goldberg: I really don't know. I know that they're a voice, and they're sometimes a very vocal voice, but I don't know that their influence is that great, truthfully. I mean, they've been

there, and they've tried to do and have done some interesting things in the past, but I just don't think that they have that type of influence. I think money talks more than anything else.

Carl Hersh: Preservation versus development.

Barton Goldberg: Well, it's like I see all the old line mansions being torn down on North Bay Road and these modern boxes being put up. I like the old mansions. The house that I live in was built in 1938 and I've redone it twice, but I've never changed the appearance of the house, because I like that 1938 look.

I admire Dwyane Wade for what he did when he rebuilt that house, it fits into the neighborhood. Yet the house that's up the street that's been done is a box. There are other houses that are being built on North Bay Road on monster plots of land, because they bought two or three houses and tore them down, that are going to be so out of character in the neighborhood.

That wouldn't happen in Coral Gables. I don't know if it would happen in Pinecrest or not, I don't know what your zoning laws are there, but we don't seem to have the laws in effect that govern that. Maybe it's because a lot of people don't care. I care. I like the old-style houses. There's one house that was torn down that I thought was one of the most prominent houses in Miami Beach on North Bay Road, and they tore it down and built something which is not to my taste. That doesn't mean it's not to the taste of the people that built it, and I don't know how far you're supposed to go for those things. You've seen, I'm sure, the fights in the paper about the mansions on Star Island and this and that and so forth.

Kathy Hersh: It does make you wonder.

Barton Goldberg: It's not just here, by the way, it's all over the country. It's all over the country this is happening.

Kathy Hersh: It does make you wonder.

Barton Goldberg: We are a country of short-termers. You go over to Europe and places, you'll see buildings that are 300 years old. You don't see that here. Oh, and rare exceptions, you know, but by large, we seem to use up the suitability of the buildings faster, and get rid of them and put up something new as opposed to trying to retain the existing buildings.

I won't say it's right or wrong, I don't really know. I know what I like and I do know that it costs a hell of a lot more to renovate to today's standards in an existing building than to tear it down and build from scratch. I know that, because

I've been involved in financing some of those things so I know what happens. I don't know. When you talk about the Design Preservation League, I understand their goal, but it's a tough one.