Interview with Francinelee Hand

Kathy Hersh: This is Francinelee Hand, who is being interviewed by Kathy Hersh for the Miami Beach Visual Memoires project. We are in Francine's lovely home on Miami Beach, and today is October 25, 2018.

I'd like to start the conversation by talking about what drew you to Miami Beach originally.

Francinelee Hand: Well, if I was born here, there's no other way.

Interviewer: That's true. (laughs)

Hand: My father and mother were from Richmond. My father had a winter home here. The first time he brought my mother here, she said, "I will never go back to Richmond," and she never did.

Interviewer: This is Richmond, Virginia?

Hand: Yes.

Interviewer: She felt right at home, then.

Hand: Right at home.

Interviewer: You grew up here as a young person?

Hand: Yes.

Interviewer: Where did you go to school? What was it like?

Hand: I went to school on Washington Avenue on 14th Street: that little school still stands; it has been renamed, unfortunately. I say unfortunately because it was named for someone who was not a person you would consider a worthwhile human being; but it was called, at that time, Central Beach Elementary. It was called Central Beach because there was a school below 5th Street, which was South Beach Elementary, and then later they build North Beach Elementary on 41st Street.

Interviewer: So, that was the middle one.

Hand: That was the middle one.

Interviewer: You lived near there?

Hand: Yes.

Interviewer: What was your neighborhood like?

Hand: My neighborhood was what is now part of South Beach. We lived in several places, mostly on Meridian Avenue and 14th Street across the street from Flamingo Park, and that was during the war years. Our apartment overlooked Flamingo Park, and we used to watch the military drilling there.

At that time, the military was occupying many of the hotels here, and Miami Beach was a quiet little town, no highrise at all. Washington Avenue was the second-class commercial street; Lincoln Road, of course, was the premiere street. Lincoln Road was all individually owned boutiques that rivaled Madison Avenue, and then some. Very costly and very beautiful. Lincoln Road was not a pedestrian mall; there were cars up and down Lincoln Road, and 41st Street was equally elegant. If you go to 41st Street, it's still lined with royal palm, but all the shops are very pathetic. At one time, they were elegant.

Interviewer: Going uptown a little ways, people would dress up?

Hand: Oh, yes. Everyone dressed up. The only people that didn't dress up were tourists; they came to be at the beach. They came without cars, they flew, and they lived in the hotels on Ocean Drive and Collins Avenue because of the proximity to the ocean; they just came with sandals and beach cloths and very little else, but the women who lived here full-time wore high heels all the time. White gloves were not found often. Hats were not used then. The gentlemen wore suits and ties every day, and of course they were in business here.

Interviewer: What sort of elegant places did you go to?

Hand: Well, there were two most elegant places here: the premiere restaurant was Embers; it is on 22nd Street; it is now part of the Miami Beach Public Library, and it is across the street from what is now my favorite place, the Miami City Ballet Studios.

The other place of note was the Roney Plaza Hotel, now called the Roney Palace, and what made the Roney Plaza exceptional was that it was on the sea, but the building faced Collins Avenue and occupied only half of the land. The other half, between the building and the sea, was the most beautiful tropical garden with a restaurant and musicians that played every night. There was tea in the afternoon. It was just another world.

Interviewer: Why did they tear it down?

Hand: Why did they do anything? You know the reason. It's always the same reason. What's the reason?

Interviewer: Money.

Hand: Hello. That's the reason. In addition to which the Roney was the most expensive hotel; and people who lived here full-time, as did we, would say to each other, "Do you know that the Roney Plaza is charging one hundred dollars a night?" and people have said, "No!" but they were, and they were getting it.

Interviewer: Well, it's part of the cache.

Hand: It was the cache. Everything else was sort of second rate.

Interviewer: What about the cabanas? Lots of people went to cabanas there.

Hand: People who lived here and wanted beach access, other than the public beach, but wanted a pool, because no one had a pool unless you had a private home. People who lived in apartments did not have pools. Apartment buildings did not have any of the amenities that we have today. So, people who wanted a pool, and a place to have lunch outdoors, and a pretty place, rented a cabana for the season or just for the summer, and all of the hotels offered them.

Interviewer: Was your family one of those that did that?

Hand: Yes, of course. When the Fontainebleau went up, which was in the '50s, everybody had a cabana at the Fontainebleau, or the Eden Roc, but that's a scandal. You know about that scandal.

Interviewer: Tell us your version of it.

Hand: My version? Well, the men were partners, each of the two owners were partners, and they had a falling out. The gentleman who built the Fontainebleau, which was originally the home of the Firestone family, and it was a beautiful home.

Interviewer: You remember that.

Hand: Oh, yes. I was just a very little girl, but when you're a very little girl those memories are very profound. We spent almost every weekend in Havana. My father was a land speculator, and he believed that the future of South Florida was going to be Latin; and he wanted me to learn the language, which I have, and the music, and the culture, and the people. I have traveled almost all over the world, except to the most remote corners, and I have never found anything like Havana. Old Havana was without a doubt the most glamorous place I could have ever visited. People were spectacular. The women, even old and fat, had gorgeous jewelry and beautiful clothes. In those days, there were no restrictions on age, so I was in the casinos with my parents at night, and observing people, and everything was alive and colorful, and it was just magnificent. I loved it. I'll never go back. When I see pictures of things, I can't. It would break my heart to go back to Havana.

Interviewer: Those memories are very vivid.

Hand: Profoundly vivid; they influenced my whole life. This house is influenced by Havana, my clothing, my make-up, my jewelry, my attitude about music, all influenced by Cuban culture.

Interviewer: Can you dance?

Hand: Can I dance? Can I breathe? God.

Interviewer: (laughs) And the music then was replicated here on the beach.

Hand: Yes, it was.

Interviewer: Did you go to any of the night spots here and listen to Latin jazz?

Hand: There weren't any. I left here when I was 22. The Cuban refugees had started coming into Miami; they were welcomed with open arms for very good reasons. This country did not begin with the rich. The rich didn't have to leave Europe; they had it made. This country was built by people who were escaping whatever, and

that's why the Cubans came. The Cubans left unbelievable lives as doctors and professionals, and attorneys and investors, and brought their families here, and lived three families in an apartment, and worked as dishwashers to escape what they knew was coming. They were smart, and they were smart enough to give up all of their material possessions for the power of the future, and that's why they were much respected here; because hard work, for an immigrant who did not speak a word of English, was not unknown to many Americans; we were all children of refugees.

Interviewer: Were your parents refugees?

Hand: Not my father. My father was not. My father's people were from Alsace Lorraine, French-German. My mother was born what was then the Soviet Union. She came here when she was two-years-old; for all intents and purposes, she was an American raised here.

Interviewer: In Miami Beach?

Hand: No. My grandparents lived up North. That's a long story and not a very interesting one.

Interviewer: So, you really feel an affinity, then, with the Cubans who left.

Hand: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

Interviewer: What about the **[phonetic][00:10:03] Montréal** period?

Hand: When I lived in New York, that was during the **Montréal** period, and I really wanted to divorce myself from Miami because by the time I left Miami, it had fallen from grace, as many resort towns do; look at Atlantic City, for example. I was not proud to be from Miami; I told people that I was because I was, but I didn't keep in touch with anything or anyone here, except my mother who lived here, my father had died, and we heard these stories, the sad stories we heard about people being willing to swim to get here, to being in boats and being shot at, to having this huge cocaine ring here, and it kind of broke my heart because it turned a lot of people against Cubans. You know, the old business about "one rotten apple spoils the barrel," and Miami had a serious problem then, but I didn't live here so I was not well-acquainted with it; I just knew that it existed.

Interviewer: What brought you back here?

Hand: My roots.

Interviewer: When did you start feeling that tug?

Hand: When I lived in Manhattan, I could never have dreamed I would ever have wanted to leave it. Manhattan is a world unto itself, and it suited me perfectly. I'm culture crazy, and I'm interested in politics, urban development, design, fashion, everything that I found in New York, which was not here. We had an apartment that had great, large wonderful views, a beautiful building that overlooked all of Manhattan, and I used to take my coffee in the morning to the window in the living room. I had a window in the kitchen, but it didn't have much view. I would always look out at the view and marvel at the city. As time went along, I realized that I wasn't just looking out. I was looking for something, it wasn't there, and the thing that wasn't there was natural beauty. People come to New York for many reasons, but not for natural beauty, so I decided to move back to South Florida.

Interviewer: You like the tropical natural beauty.

Hand: I love it.

Interviewer: That goes back to probably Cuba and seeing it there.

Hand: And to early Miami. Don't forget Miami Beach, in those days, there were no towers here at all. Everything was green. Every house looked like this. Every house had beautiful gardens. Even apartment buildings had beautiful gardens. My feeling is this: if you live in a place that is unique physically – if you live on an island, a mountain top, cavers, desert – and you leave that environment, and you go to a totally different physical environment, you probably will go back to where you were primarily because the land form and the climate influence life.

As a child, there was no air conditioning in Miami Beach in homes, just in hotels, theaters, and even those were just air cooled. So, because there was no air conditioning, your life revolved around the weather; 90 degrees in August was record high, and today we have 90 degrees at least six months a year. You lived in cotton. Schools were not air conditioned.

Interviewer: How did they accommodate students who got overheated?

Hand: Don't forget, as I said, it was cooler then, in addition to which you always chose your living quarters on the basis of their exposure to the breeze. The breeze, in this part of the world, comes from the southeast, so the more expensive apartments faced southeast; the windows were always opened. Homes had master bedrooms facing southeast. Kitchens always faced north because no one was ever in their kitchen. Most families had a cook. If you didn't have a cook, you just did the best you could, but you didn't care if your cook had a breeze; you wanted your public rooms to have the breeze. This house is a classic example. Our bedroom upstairs, and these rooms all face southeast.

Interviewer: How often do you have to use air conditioning here?

Hand: I think it just depends on your comfort level. I love it warm. People come out of air conditioning into humidity and they go, "Hhh" and I go, "Ahh," because I love it. We use air conditioning about…but we're now here two months a year. We go away in the summer, but the rest of the year we don't use air conditioning; and even if we do, we keep the windows open.

Interviewer: Let's go back to, then, you're looking out over the landscape, or the cityscape, Manhattan, and you know that there's something missing, and you decide. Did you come directly here, then?

Hand: Yes. I went into my husband's room and said, "I'm leaving and I'm moving to South Florida," and he said, "See you around, honey," and I said, "Well, you know, you only get one life. We can divorce. We can commute. We can live separately. You choose. I'm outta here." So, I came down.

My husband is a devoted and a talented golfer, and in New York we had to drive to our club because there were no golf clubs in Manhattan. So, I thought that if I build a home in a golf community, it will encourage him to come, and so I did. He commuted for seven years until he realized that I was alone four days a week; not good for the marriage. So, he listened to his very clever wife who said, "Sell your practice, sell your business, sell the apartment, and move in with me," and he did. After he came to Boca Raton I said, "This doesn't suit us at all. We don't belong in the suburbs. We should be in Miami or Miami Beach. I prefer Miami Beach because I was born there. Let's find a beautiful old Italian or Spanish house that we love, that architecture, and buy it."

I was invited to a high school reunion, and although I was reluctant to come, my husband said, “You have to go. It’s a rite of passage, and nobody ever goes to high school reunions unless they have money and they’re good looking, and you qualify,” he said, “You’ll have a great time.” So, I went to the high school reunion, and sitting beside me was a woman I of course did not recognize. It was a thousand years ago. She said, “Where do you live?” and I said, “I have a winter home in Boca Raton, but I have an apartment in Manhattan that we are selling, and I want to move to Miami Beach, “Oh,” she said, “I’m a realtor. I’ll find you a house. What are you looking for?” I said, “Barbara, I want a house like the one we grew up in,” and she said, “Francinelee, there aren’t many left,” and I said, “Barbara, I only need one. Find me one in a good neighborhood. I want it to be a beautiful old Mediterranean,” and she did.

We pulled up in front of this house and it was so sad. There’s something very appealing about something beautiful that is neglected.

Interviewer: You want to adopt it.

Hand: Absolutely, and you want to help it retain its dignity.

Interviewer: You sound like a historic preservationist.

Hand: I am. I’m on the Miami Beach Historic Preservation Board. I’m also involved in City Hall. I’m on one of the city commissions. The mayor has about eight commissions. I used to serve on the Women’s Commission, but now I serve on the one for human rights. We field complaints of people who have suffered discrimination for a variety of reasons.

Interviewer: Does that keep you busy? Are there a lot of violations?

Hand: Well, the commission was just formed two years ago, but I keep myself occupied mainly with taking care of my home, my garden. I devote one day a week to my home and garden. The other days, I’ve been a trustee for the Miami City Ballet for 23 years. When I lived in Boca Raton, I had a very hard time finding good conversation, and my mother-in-law suggested that I join the guild that was being formed, which is a support group for the ballet, which I did.

There was a meeting one day, and a woman in the group stood up

and said to Edward Villela, who at that time was the chief cook and bottle washer, and a friend, she said, “If you don’t do more things like Swan Lake, you will never get our money,” and this enraged me. I don’t like people who contribute money, particularly in a creative organization, and then throw their weight around and tell them what to do; it’s self-defeating. So, I stood up and I said, “Excuse me. But if you contribute money to a creative enterprise and then tell them what to do, everybody loses. You lose, and they lose. They can bring you things that you would never know that you love. No one in their right mind would knock Swan Lake. Tchaikovsky's been with us for a long time and for a very good reason, but the Miami City Ballet can bring you Twyla Tharp and Jerome Robbins and things that you wouldn’t even dream existed,” and Edward came over to me and said, “Who are you?” and I said, “I’m nobody,” and he said, “You are now. You’re a trustee,” and that’s how I became a trustee. (laughs)

I’m also a patron for the New World Symphony, and I’m involved with the Bass Museum; I’m going to be teaching a class there this year.

Interviewer: In what?

Hand: I want to teach people the difference between the contemporary painting and sculpture of today, which is mostly trash, and the good stuff, and why it’s good. Because when the contemporary art scene arrived, I was convinced it was a hoax. My formal education ended with the impressionists, and that I realized it couldn’t possibly be a hoax, so I was surely to be missing something. So, I signed up for class at the Whitney Museum and the Metropolitan Museum to take classes, to learn about it, and it literally changed my life because my point of view changed from, “Why is this a good painting?” to “Why not?” “Why not?” opened a whole other dimension of life. I would never have met my husband; I wouldn’t have even met my husband with the original point-of-view, a different style from what I had in mind. Turned out to be a very good thing. I’m married 43 years to the same man and I just love him.

Interviewer: Art Basel.

Hand: Oh, that takes years. Art Basel has grown in number and in quality since it has arrived. In my opinion, and from the point-of-view of my education, a good portion of it is unworthy. The better galleries

that come down here and represent their collections, from Chicago and New York, have wonderful, wonderful things; very unaffordable, but outstanding, pieces; but I think it's good because I think that when people go to look at something, sometimes it's an acquired taste, even the quality stuff is an acquired taste. So, what I want to do with the Bass, and I've just begun **[phonetic][00:22:22] dosant** training there, I want to call my class, "I Just Don't Get It," because I didn't get it originally, but now I get it.

My favorite story about contemporary painting is about Barnett Newman, one of my favorite painters. One of the teachers I had used to come down from Yale to teach at the Met, and one of the things she taught us was that scale makes a huge difference in the artist's intent. You see a painting as big as a postage stamp, as opposed to a painting as big as this wall: completely different statement. One day, I was at the MoMA in New York, and Barnett Newman's painting was in the lobby. It's a very large, tangerine, tomato-colored painting, and it's about as long as this wall, it's about thirty or forty feet long, and near the edge on the right is a little white ragged line, and I love to stand behind people and listen to their conversation. Two women were looking this painting, and one woman looked at this enormous red thing and she said9, "I don't get it. It's just red," and her friend said, "Yeah!" and that's what I learned, one of the things I learned there.

I would like to help people, who live in this part of the world and who feel that they just don't get it, and they dismiss a lot of it because most of what they see is worthy of being dismissed, I would like them to learn what I learned.

Marty Margulies has, without a doubt, the finest collection in this city, or in any city. Last year, I was in Los Angeles to look at their art museums, and they both sensational. Sensational. The Broad, which has pop art, which is not my favorite, has extraordinarily good things, and their museum of modern art is wonderful; but if you live in Miami and you want to begin somewhere, go to Wynwood and look at the Margulies collection; it's just wonderful.

Interviewer: Which he opens every year to public.

Hand: He opened it I think before I moved here. I'm not sure how long it's been there, but it's incredible.

Interviewer: Tell us about moving down, and you found this house, and you

started renovating it. What were the challenges?

Hand: Fortunately, the house was only unpleasant cosmetically; that's very easy. Structurally, it was sound. We decided to put in totally new air conditioning systems. When the engineers came and inspected the wiring, the wiring was originally from 1929; it was copper, but it was wrapped in cotton. The cotton, of course, was pretty much gone. They suggested, since we were doing new air conditioning systems, that it might be wise to replace the wiring. The plumbing was excellent. The underpinnings of the house were solid. The house did not have this room, in which we are sitting. There was no outdoor room; there was originally, but it had been cemented in. The sun room, over here, was filled-in with cement, and small windows were placed there, but I knew enough about original photo architecture to know that that room facing southeast was an open room. It was six inches depressed, which meant the rains came in, which I explained to you.

So, we tore out all the cement. We used our hands to touch the walls to find out where the margins of the original arches were, and you could easily find them with your fingers; you could tell where the new cement met the old. So, we pulled out all the old cement and all the old windows, we put French doors there, and then we built this room because this room faced the pool, faced out East, and the garden. Then, of course the atrium, which was actually there, there was nothing planted there, but the atrium was walled and tiled, and had an ugly little old iron gate, which we now have hanging on the wall. We saved what we could.

We needed water features. This house is not on the water, so we put in the cascade, the fountain, and this little fountain behind the pool. That major challenge was making this house beautiful. It had all the right bones, good flow, nice square rooms, but the ceilings were dark brown, which made them look low and heavy. The bathrooms and kitchens were beyond a horror show, so we pulled those out. We built three new bathrooms pretty much where they were; some not. Servants quarters were worse than a Turkish prison, so that wing became a guest house.

Interviewer: How long did it take you?

Hand: It took us a year to renovate, and then a year to furnish, and about a-year-and-a-half to landscape, but you're never finished with landscaping. Never. That was a challenge. I knew the look I

wanted. I didn't want anything delicate like an English garden; I wanted Brazil. I love Brazil. Have you been there?

Interviewer: Yes.

Hand: So, we brought in all the plants that I love, large and small. These coconut palms had one-foot of trunk on them when we bought them. I knew the look I wanted, and I knew how to stagger, but what I didn't know…I knew to ask what are shade lovers and what are sun lovers, and at that time everything we planted was a sun lover because we had no shade, because it was all opened; but as the trees matured, more shade arrived, and many plants died that needed sun. So, we had to go back to the gardeners, to the nurseries, and buy shade lovers, and now we know to buy only shade lovers.

Interviewer: You spend one day a week, you said, on the house and garden.

Hand: I spend one day a week. I work with my gardeners on Saturday morning; we work together, and when he leaves I continue to work. Then, Sunday I do whatever I need to do in the house, which is not very much.

Interviewer: A lot of old homes on the beach are being destroyed, demolished, and people are buying double lots and building big mega mansions.

Hand: Well, the word "mansion" is questionable.

Interviewer: Tell is your feelings about that.

Hand: I go to City Hall all the time. I harangue the city fathers, but I know it's a waste, and the reason it's a waste is for two reasons: it costs a fortune to renovate an old home. Ours didn't cost as much as many do because ours was okay structurally and it was beautiful, so we didn't have to add much. It costs a fortune to renovate an old mansion; many of them have mold in the walls, things that are very difficult to deal with. So, it is more feasible economically to tear it down and, again, build new.

The second reason is young people are moving into Miami in droves; children abound. Young people want modern; it's more fashionable than Mediterranean, and there's a good reason for that, too. The reason they favor modern is it has more glass, more sky, more water, it has more light, it has more of the views people

seek. The city is very happy to allow them to do this: the bigger the house, the bigger the taxes. My argument is this: there are very few old neighborhoods in this town: **[phonetic][00:30:59] Lagoras** Drive, Pine Tree Drive, North Bay Road; that's pretty much it. What they should do, I think, is to allow people to build and tear down, but not on these streets, to preserve just these three or four, as they wish, and to say to the new builder, "You may build that house, but you cannot build it there. That neighborhood is landmarked."

They should landmark these neighborhoods; the difficulty there, and you know there's always a difficulty: I've had this house historically designated, and this house can never be demolished. It can be added to, but the additions must pass the design board, and they must be compatible in design to the original structure, and the inside can be as you wish. A lot of people who own old homes do not want them designated that way because they know that it will interfere with the resale, and it will. We have many fewer people who would want this house, than would have wanted it a decade ago, but that's okay because whoever wants this house will want it. The first person who walks in here will buy this house. If they don't want this style, they won't even be looking at this house.

Interviewer: Doo you see any forward movement towards designating some of the neighborhoods?

Hand: No, I see no forward movement. I don't say this in any way critically; everybody has their own set of values. For many people, value is measured in dollars; for most people. In my opinion, there are many values. Values come in many colors. For me, quality of life is more important than dollars. If I were to buy this house today, however unfashionable this architecture may be, I would buy it because I think it's beautiful and I love it. I lived with modern for years and I loved it, but when I came back to Miami I wanted a piece of my past. I wanted a piece of old Florida because it won't be here very long.

Interviewer: Then, there's the issue, of course, that all future developers are beginning to realize they have to contend with, and that's sea-level rise. Are you high ground here?

Hand: I don't know. The house that's being constructed on the corner is way up high because there are new restrictions. We have had no

issues with this house. When it floods, it only floods the street. We don't have any flooding in the house, and the garden is always fine. The swale occasionally in hurricanes it floods, but when we have regular rain, the rains just go right through the sandy soil and disappear. The streets are a little puddle-y for a day or so, and that's it.

Interviewer: Let's talk a little more about the art scene on Miami Beach, and how you've seen that evolve.

Hand: That's an interesting question. Miami Beach is essentially a town for fun, so people come here to be entertained. Culture is not up there on their list, and I don't know if that will ever change; but I do see that art, which has become the new status symbol, has helped people. I have a neighbor here, for example, who has a collection that should really be collected by the sanitation department. Financially, it's worth unlimited dollars; it's unbelievably costly because it's very vogue, but it's inferior artistically. I am hopeful that people will…

The Miami City Ballet, for example, is in very good shape financially; we are the most important company on the East Coast, next to New York. New York's budget is, if I'm not mistaken, I went to a board meeting yesterday, ours is $15,000, our annual budget is $15 million. We have a capital campaign, that will be put into place this year, that is a four-year plan to raise $55 million, and we will raise it; and the reason we will raise it is because Miami City Ballet is, for this town, in my opinion, misnamed. When Edward Villela was running the show and he was having trouble I said, "Change the name to Miami City Dance. Everybody loves dance," because you do other things than Balanchine. All of our dancers are trained in the Balanchine traditions, but our programs are widely varied, but he didn't want to do it. Edward is a classicist and I respected his choice.

Interviewer: I think we're going to wrap up with a projection about where Miami Beach is going.

Hand: Culturally?

Interviewer: Culturally, and I think that's a big economic driver, the culture that you're talking about.

Hand: Miami Beach definitely is moving forward, culturally speaking. When I was a little girl, the only thing we had that resembled Miami

City Ballet was the Boom Boom Room at Fontainbleau, and all you heard was Latin music, which was wonderful, but it's a whole other genre. As a trustee, I'm entitled to bring as many guests I wish to the ballet at no cost, and I say to people, "Come to the ballet," and they say, "I'm not a ballet person," and I say, "Have you seen Miami City Ballet dance?" No. "Come with me and be my guest," and they're absolutely blown away because they don't know. It's just a matter of exposure.

We have a huge outreach program. We bring in thousands of students ever year; we teach them. We have a woman who works in the favelas in Rio, and she sends us children who would otherwise be dealing drugs for the rest of their life and running from the police, who are talented dancers; we bring them here.

The money that I help to contribute funds their lessons, their clean t-shirts, which they do not have, and provides them a whole other life. We do dancing in all the public schools. We have playground programs. Our school, which started after I got onboard as a board member, our school receives hundreds, if not thousands, of videotapes worldwide that are dancers from all over the world, if you just look at them – I have a program upstairs I can show you – from everywhere, China, Turkey, England, everywhere. Of course, our Asian dancers are extraordinary: they have a small bone structure, so they just fly around; they don't even touch the ground. More and more people are seeing that this is a valuable city beyond the beach. I have nothing against the beach, but there's a great deal to be found here.

Interviewer: This has changed in the last 30, 40 years?

Hand: Yes, I'm sure.

Interviewer: We've been here for 35-plus years, and we used to look to see, "What is there to do on the weekend?" and there was nothing, and now it's just overwhelming.

Hand: Of course.

Interviewer: This is a big change that I saw.

Hand: I understand that the National Historic…it's the American version of the British National Trust, and I can't call it by name; but they have designated **[phonetic][00:39:00] CaaOcho**, which needs a

great deal of help, but which deserves to be preserved. I lived in the gables a few years when I was growing up, and the history was a thoroughfare filled with used car lots.

Interviewer: Speaking of cars, we interviewed Norman Braman last week about his role in Art Basel, and also in creating the Holocaust Memorial.

It's interesting – and this will be the final question, unless Carl has something else – the balance here between this being a residence, a home to people, and it being a tourist town still, and how the compromises, the challenges, of having that duality.

Hand: That's a very serious challenge. Our City Hall, I'm very much in favor of Dan Gelber, our present mayor. Me grew up here; his father was our mayor. He's very devoted to this city. He is not devoted to seeing how fast he can raise taxes, and I'm proud. I had a party here for him, to help him, in his campaign. That's a very serious issue. It does not affect us at this part of Miami Beach, but it very, very much affects South Beach. South Beach residents, for the most part, are not full-time residents. Many are South American, Central American, who have homes here, condominiums here, and they're here part-time. Some are full-time. I don't know the ratio or the proportion. They are disturbed by drinking on the street after certain hours.

Jerry Libbin, who used to be our City Commissioner, I was very much in favor of his work. He was determined to literally clean-up the beaches, and to let tourists know that that was important to us," and he had what was then a Beach Committee, and I served on it, and he gave everybody on the committee a plastic bag – we know plastic is not the number one thing – and a disposable cigarette box made of metal, and we stood on the sidewalk on Ocean Drive, and everybody who approached us we said, "We're really trying to keep our beaches clean. Please put your garbage and your trash in this bag, and deposit it in our containers on the sand, and please put your cigarettes in these containers, and do the same with them," because our sanitation department comes every single day to clean our beaches at a very high cost to our city. We could use that money to improve the life of people, and the life of tourists, in better ways than just cleaning up what you leave behind, and nobody wants to vacation in a place where the beaches are dirty. It's very simple, "You would not come here if our beaches were dirty, so help us keep them clean," and most people were very respectful and very responsive, and very proud, that residents volunteered to stand on the sidewalk and ask for help.

Interviewer: How long did that program last?

Hand: As long as Jerry was in office. I think he's now President of the Chamber of Commerce.

Interviewer: Yes, he is. We interviewed him.

Hand: He's no longer on the City Commission, and I think that program was sensational because it involved full-time residents who really didn't even go to the beach, but who were concerned that it be clean. After all, it's part of our city; you don't want to live in a place that's dirty.

This neighborhood, I must tell you, we have…we used to call them a roach coach. Are they still called that? A truck that goes by with **[inaudible][00:42:57]**. When I first moved here, and after we landscaped, every day I would go out and find paper plates and plastic forks and gum wrappers; this infuriated me. I realized it had been probably the workers who had been doing this, so I decided to cut off their source. I went to the people who run the roach coaches and I said to them very politely, "I spent a lot of money and time, as everyone else does on this street, keeping it green. Tell your people not to throw trash because if you do, I will have the city suspend your ability to use this street to earn your living." Since then, almost nothing.

[end of recording]