



Interview with Miami Beach Resident Mickey Schermer

Kathy Hersh: It's the 8th of February, 2015. My name is Kathy Hersh, and I'm interviewing Mickey Schermer in his home on Miami Beach for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project. OK, got that out of the way. Were you born on the beach?

Mickey Schermer: No, I came from Detroit in December of '47. Kathy Hersh: What brought you down here, or who brought you down here? Mickey Schermer: My parents brought me down here from Detroit, it was after the war. Detroit became a city in transition. The war was over, the factories were being disbanded, as far as military armament was concerned, and people were being laid off because there was such a tremendous amount of labor that was needed at that time, and a different kind of labor. I came from an area of, my parents were Jewish immigrants. I lived in an area that was mixed. Didn't have much fun, but they had a small store in the area.

Kathy Hersh: Are you talking about the tree, now, or down here?

Mickey Schermer: No, Detroit. They came here after my mother was accosted in Detroit, my father closed up the business and he decided he was either going to go to California or Miami, but he felt the car probably wouldn't make it to California, so he came to Miami.

Kathy Hersh: What business was he in?

Mickey Schermer: When he first came here from the old country, he was a butcher. Then he worked in the steel mills. He was Hungarian, and he worked in the steel mills in Ohio, and Youngstown. Then he migrated into Detroit, and there he was a meat peddler. He sold meat, and then he opened up a dry goods store in a predominantly black area.

We lived in a Jewish area, and after the war he decided that after what happened, he was going to leave Detroit. We came here in 1947, it was December 1947

Kathy Hersh: How old were you?

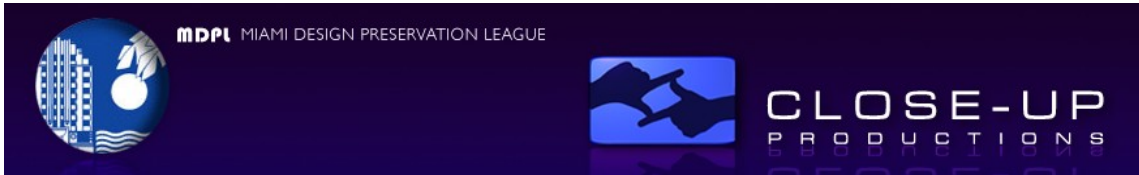
Mickey Schermer: I think I was 12. I was born in '35, I'm trying to think about '46 or '47. He fell in love with everything everybody else did in Miami Beach, and he never went back. He bought a lot on Euclid Avenue and 16th street, and I think he only came here with \$20,000, and he was able to build a 16-unit apartment house, and that's where I lived, all my life, until the day I got married.

Kathy Hersh: Really? In that apartment house?

Mickey Schermer: Yeah, in that apartment house, in a one-bedroom apartment.

Kathy Hersh: 16th and Euclid.

Mickey Schermer: 1611 Euclid was Schermer Apartments, right off Lincoln Road.



Kathy Hersh: Does it still exist?

Mickey Schermer: It still exists. Unfortunately, I sold it in 1982 or '87. I think I sold it in '88. It was a very interesting life here. I have a different perspective on what was going on at that time. I felt that...when we came I here I think that the MacArthur Causeway was like a wooden bridge. Lincoln Road was high end. It was a high end place in those days.

But it was a restricted area. It was very restrictive over here. They weren't too happy with Jews. But I never felt threatened or anything like that. I felt that in the years...the reason why the beach developed like it did was that after the war, it wasn't easy for Jewish people to travel and be accepted. I mean, when you really stop to think about it, they weren't accepted into the fancy, fancy places like in Carolina or in Arizona in those days. Europe was destroyed. It wasn't easy to get to the Middle East or anything.

They developed, and they needed a place to come to enjoy their lives, whether they made some money or they didn't. They came here, and they developed this. They had money. They had made money up north, I assume. The people came here, and they developed different hotels and apartments. They moved their life here. Because where would you go in the winter? There was really nowhere for Jews to go that felt this comfortable as they did here. Israel was just developing in those days. It wasn't even a country in those times.

Miami Beach was able to get built up. Cloaks and suites built hotels, and they were able to come here and show off and feel comfortable in getting around and enjoying their lives that they never had. Remember, this is only three years after the war. But they were being built 10 years after the war, when the Saxony... every year there was a new hotel, and every year people came down this season. When I got here, there was very little air conditioning. The hotels would close up after...the season was usually after Hialeah or Gulf Stream, flamingo and that was it.

Kathy Hersh: I thought you were going to say something like after Easter. [laughs]
Mickey Schermer: It went until after the racing season when they would go back up. Kathy Hersh: Really truly that's how...

Mickey Schermer: Yeah.

Kathy Hersh: Because the fall off of people after...

Mickey Schermer: I was able to measure it from Tropical would open in October. The season really started at that time in November, December, and it ran through Gulf Stream which was around March. Hialeah was in the middle. They always said the height of the season was Hialeah racetrack when everybody would come here. They had the big flamingo race in those days.

Kathy Hersh: Did people stay on the beach when they went to the Hialeah races?



Mickey Schermer: Yes, they did. The blacks couldn't be on the beach. Now I'm going to take you into 1950. In 1947, by 15 I was working, running cars, being a runner at the hotels and a runner at the nightclubs like the Copa, Beachcomber.

Kathy Hersh: A valet, parking?

Mickey Schermer: Valet, right. They used to call them runners. I'm sure people have told you about Copa, The Beachcomber, and Ciro's. I was a valet at all those places, and I would work from after school at five o'clock until two in the morning and then get up and go to school.

Kathy Hersh: Was it lucrative?

Mickey Schermer: Believe it or not, it really was. It was very interesting. They didn't let the blacks. In the beginning I was about 14, 15 when I was driving. They wouldn't let the blacks on the beach. That was, it's hard to say exactly, in the '50s, early '50s.

I remember Sammy Davis couldn't stay over here. They stayed over in Miami at a Harlem Square Club in Liberty City, Overtown. The reason, I'm sure people have told you, they called it Overtown was because the blacks would say they're going home to Overtown. They're going over town. That became Overtown.

I was working when I was high school. Friends of mine, their fathers owned some of those black nightclubs over there, the Harlem Square Club and the Café Society. We would go over there and see all the top black entertainers in those days like Sarah Vaughan and people of that kind.

Kathy Hersh: Did a lot of white people go there?

Mickey Schermer: On the weekends, yeah. It was predominantly black, but yeah. It was nice. They went there because that's where you would go after the clubs. The basic clubs were the Copa, The Beachcomber, and Ciro's. That was all up and down where the Venetian Causeway is now. The Copa used to have all the top shows. Then the hotels at that time in 1954, '55, I think I worked at the Fontainebleaus a laborer when they built the Fontainebleau.

Kathy Hersh: You helped build the Fontainebleau?

Mickey Schermer: I was a laborer. [laughs] I was carrying lumber and stuff, but I guess you could say I helped, very little, but I helped. I want to remember that. That's when Miami Beach was on the swing up. What hurt, I used to work at Dubrow's Cafeteria. I don't know if you've heard of Dubrow's. I used to carry trays.

One of my dear friend's father owned the cafeteria. Everybody would go in there, and we would carry their trays. We would make tips. It was a great life. It was a super life to live here. You never felt that, whether you were rich or poor, we were from South Beach which was the lower end of this end of the beach.



When I say lower end, it had not as much money in those days. It was Jewish, very, very ethnic. Beach High was Jewish. You lived your life like you lived. All of my friends lived in bedroom apartments with their families with not much money. We worked. I never felt that I needed any money.

I always had plenty of money. I never needed anything. I made good money. We got good tips. When I say good money, you know what I'm talking about, \$50 a week. I was 14, 15, 16 years old.

Kathy Hersh: That was a lot of money. What did you spend it on?

Mickey Schermer: To be honest with you, I would walk away with \$20, \$25, \$30 a night depending on what they gave us and what we could take. I gave some to my folks and things. At that time my dad had leased the parking lot across the street from what was at that time the Sagamore Hotel.

He had a parking lot, and I worked there. He was quite a big man. He couldn't park the cars as well as we could. He couldn't get behind the wheel. [laughs] We did pretty good there. It was 25 cents an hour, I remember. Then they built the Dilido Hotel which is now the Ritz-Carlton.

What happened was I always was trying to make a living, trying to do myself and help out, not be a burden. Let's put it that way. Then in high school I went to work at Burdines, and I became a manager. I was the youngest manager at 20 years old. Burdines didn't really like to hire Jews to be honest with you.

Kathy Hersh: How did you get hired?

Mickey Schermer: I worked in the stockroom. I worked myself up. It was an amazing thing. Then they wanted me to stay, one of the few Jews. I was only 19, and they were prepping me to go into retailing to work with them. I went to their executive training program, and I became a manager of a floor and opened the Burdines that is now the Macy's and moved it from Lincoln Road over there. I ran the men's department and the clothing department, the luggage department, the toy department.

Kathy Hersh: You moved around.

Mickey Schermer: In the same room because it was one store at Burdines. There was that big store. They're still there now.

Kathy Hersh: OK, so there weren't different floors.

Mickey Schermer: There were just different departments. I managed different departments at one time. It was limited to the amount of money you could make, so then I decided I'd like to be a stock broker. That's where I spent my years, 17 years as a broker, manager also.

Kathy Hersh: Where did you get the training for that?

Mickey Schermer: Blood, sweat, and tears in the office. I started in the back office.



Kathy Hersh: At a firm?

Mickey Schermer: At a firm, it was Hirsch and Company.

Kathy Hersh: Hirsch?

Mickey Schermer: Hirsch, H-I-R-S-C-H. It was on Washington Avenue and 16th Street. I was 20 years old then. It was hard to get in to be a broker those days. I kept knocking on the door. The manager's name was Arthur Burrell. He said, "All right, you can work in the back," in the cage they used to call it where they took in the money and took in the certificates and did this.

He trained me, and then I took the test and passed. He said, "Well, you can go on the floor and start being broker. You sell 5 shares, 2 shares, 10 shares." It's not like today. I would make \$60, \$70, \$80 a week. It was a big thing. It was hard.

Those days you would go out looking for somebody buying odd shares, 5 shares, 10 shares, 20 shares. I got lucky. A man that was a bookmaker. They were bookmakers. They were gamblers. He took a liking to me. He was a pretty prominent man. He had friends.

I used to work, and he would sit in my booth and watch the market. Then what they would do is they would come at 11:30 with their limousines and pick up him and his friends, and they would go out to the racetrack. That's when the racetrack was running.

Kathy Hersh: They gambled in the market as well as...

Mickey Schermer: Yeah, the gambling in the market was different, especially when I was there. They didn't mess around in the market. There was too much paper. There was too much of a paper trail. They bought stocks, AT&T. There was nothing until my later life, my later years. He had a...

Male: Can you give us his name? It's not as if it...

Mickey Schermer: I'd rather not do that. You'll realize later on. His big account was at Merrill Lynch. In those Merrill Lynch was like...Hirsch and Company just had come down here. He asked the manager. He said, "I'll bring the account over if you'll give it to him."

Because I always sat with him. To be honest with you, I was like their runner. I was a broker, and they would give me business. What he did for me was when people would come down here and want to be with him, he was that kind of a person, "Why don't you give this kid a break? Give him a few shares here and a few shares there."

That really started, and I had some pretty decent accounts. Then the accounts went from 5 shares to 10 shares to 100 to 500. He was like my godfather.

Kathy Hersh: [laughs]



Mickey Schermer: I had a lot of godfathers in those days. That went on for several years, and after that the New York office came here. They saw the way I was operating, the business I was doing. They asked me if I was interested in going to New York.

I wasn't going to New York. First, I was married. I had met Susan. I wasn't going to leave my parents here. They were older. It wouldn't have paid for me to do that. They said, "Well, we'll open some offices down here."

They opened some offices. It was First Hanover Corporation. I became a manager and a resident partner. It went on until 1973. Then in '73 there was a crash in the market. There were a lot of problems. There was so much volume that they couldn't keep up with it. A lot of companies got into trouble, financial troubles and things like that.

We were merged with another company. I decided it was time for me to...I don't like the idea of being responsible. Having other people being responsible for me when I don't have control...Excuse me. Over my way of life and they could do something in New York, which they, excuse me, they did. I got out of the business. I closed it and I excised it. Matt and I was building at that time. My dad was building and I would get through...

At that time, they used to close the market at two o'clock. Because there was such a backlog. Then there was a difference in time. In-between New York and Miami there was an hour difference in the time zones.

I would get out at like two o'clock and I would go and be on the job. That's where I learned how to build. I was building...That's when I started to build. In the '50s I learned how to, from tying steel to throwing rock to doing everything.

But in retrospect that's my life. But to get back to Miami Beach, I know that's where you're at. I always felt that Miami Beach was built because there was no place for our people to go. To feel comfortable. To wear their minks. To go out to dinner. To be accepted. I knew that was happening because I saw...I saw on, but it said, they were signs. They said, "No, Jews or dogs." That's hard to believe. But that's true. Sunsets one and two...

Kathy Hersh: You saw those signs?

Mickey Schermer: Absolutely, I sure did. I also...

Kathy Hersh: Because there are people who say they never saw them.

Mickey Schermer: I saw them. You can tell them they were there. I never felt, other than when you went to Miami. Now when you went to Miami they would lay it down on you because you were Jewish. But these were boys and kids and ballgames and things like that.

But I never felt any, had any problems in Miami Beach growing up. In school, it was like a country club, not a Beach High. As far as...You never



worry like that do today. It wasn't like that. You could go all over in Miami. At 12 years old I would go to the Orange Bowl game. In fact, I was...

I saw the first black ballplayer at the University of Miami when they brought him from Michigan, they played Michigan. He was the first black at the University of Miami. He was playing for Michigan, but they let the blacks play. I would sit in the end zone and the blacks were on one little half of the end zone and I was right next to them. Because as a kid, it was 50 cents to get in, and we would go by bus. We had no problem. It was a very safe town. It was... There was no problem with that. It was very comfortable. Miami Beach transformed into this place with all these fancy places. But I think what hurt the beach was that they came in with the American plan. When the American plan came in, that destroyed a lot of people getting...

It destroyed the restaurants. What happened was you need people to circulate. Once you keep them in a hotel, they don't go out for the dinner. Then the hotels, they put in clothing stores and different facilities.

People became sedentary into the hotel. I think that began the downturn of the hotel and the beach. The beach, I always felt that there was just... You had to get people out of the hotels. At that time, now the hotels and the restaurants, they started to go to close.

Because you only had five, six months to catch all this money, and then it was dead here in the summer. You had 12 months of rent against 4 months of doing things, and now you're in competition with, they were \$300. They started with the American plan of bringing them down here at that time. The beach started to suffer. That's when the beach really started to slide down. That's just my opinion, what I saw of it.

Kathy Hersh: Can I ask you a question?

Mickey Schermer: Sure.

Kathy Hersh: Since you earn your spending money and money you contributed to your family during the season, did you really feel a difference in the summer when everything closed down?

Mickey Schermer: There was no business. There was nothing.

Kathy Hersh: What did you do then?

Mickey Schermer: I was a beach boy. I would do, I would go to the... It was two dollars a day, and you would pick up the mats. I did it at the Raleigh and the Shelburne and then the... You would be, and then you would clean up around the pool. Then you would have to go on the beach and they would put a... You'd get a two-by-six and they would put on each end of a two-by-six about 10 feet long or 8 feet long a rope. It would be tide, and then you would have to, or they'd call it Beliss. I forget the word. Beliss, I believe it was.



The beach, which means you walked and you smoothed the beach. You walked up and back in front of the hotel you were working in. It was smooth. That when the guests got up in the morning, there was nobody walking on the beach. That's what I used to do.

We used to clean the cabanas and clean the pool. That was two dollars. Then when you get out of school, you would work until it got dark. Then I would go...If I got out at 3:00, I would be there at 4:00. By that time, the sun would go down. By 6:30, 7:00 I was parking cars till 11, 12 o'clock at night.

That lasted four or five months. But in the summer, it was basically you would, if you were lucky, you could work one of the hotels. The pool area. Or be a runner. I used to be also a valet also at...But it was limited. It was just like spending money. It wasn't like the season, when, if somebody came out drunk you would take them home. The police, it was a different world here. It was not as big. You know what I'm saying? It was different.

Kathy Hersh: What did you do for fun?

Mickey Schermer: My life was fun. I never...My life, I never...I never looked for much. Working. I never felt it was working, because my friends were doing the same thing, so we were having fun. I was out at night. What would be the difference if I was walking up and down the street or I was sitting on the street waiting for a car and parking them.

I had a lot of fun. I had a very good life. Miami Beach was excellent to me. I would stay at Flamingo Park and play. I used to be a batboy at Flamingo Park, and when they used to come down here they used to have the major league summer training camps down here, before the...

I forget what Miami Beach had. But Miami had, I think, Baltimore Orioles. They had all the teams here and I once was a batboy for the team and all. I was, for the Miami Beach Flamingos.

Kathy Hersh: That was spring training?

Mickey Schermer: No. During the season it was the Miami Beach Flamingos. But spring training, I used to be a...I used to be a batboy for the visiting teams. They would be major league teams. They would be playing at Flamingo Park sometimes.

Kathy Hersh: Wow. That must have been exciting.

Mickey Schermer: I was a lot of fun. It was a lot...Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Technician: I'm going to stop you just a sec. I am getting just a little bit of rubbing now.

Kathy Hersh: Who was it Carl told us about? It was about meeting Babe Ruth.

Mickey Schermer: I did.



Kathy Hersh: In Flamingo Park.

Mickey Schermer: Yeah. Here's what happened.

Technician: Hold on a sec. We're still rolling.

Mickey Schermer: It's an interesting thing, and I never realized it. I was...What was I? 12, 13 years old? Do you want me to keep talking?

Kathy Hersh: Yeah.

Mickey Schermer: I was a batboy and I was sitting in this dugout, I was sitting at the dugout at Flamingo Park. It was cold. It was like in March. It's funny how I remember this. It meant nothing to me when it happened, because what happened was I was in the dugout and they brought this man in and he was sitting up in the stands right behind home plate. He said to me, "Get him something warm, the fellow in a camel coat, camel head coat." I'll never forget. He had a cat on. He says, "Get him a hot chocolate, or a..." I think it was coffee, it was. He said, "You go up in those stands and give it to him. He wants one." OK, so I went back into the stands, got the coffee, and went up.

I walked over to him and he had a very gruff voice. Obviously he had had cancer. He was very rough and grumbly, just like me. That was the extent of my...Then I realized years later who it was. But I, they told me Babe Ruth, and to be honest with you, it didn't register. It wasn't that much of a thing to me at 12 or 13 years old. I know he was a hero and everything, but...

But he was sick by that time. I could tell, because he had a very...They told me had throat cancer. Because when I came back down they says, "You know, that's Babe Ruth," so I said, "Terrific." [laughs]

Kathy Hersh: What about, you said other major league teams played there. Did you know any of them? Were they stars?

Mickey Schermer: Want to hear something funny? I had, my son, I had a ball signed. I had bats and balls you couldn't believe. By every Dodger. I had on one ball Jackie Robinson, I had Furillo, I had Newcombe, Camba, Campanella. Name it. Fox. I had them all. One day I come home and there's my son outside, playing with that ball, and scuffed it up, ruined it. I can't imagine what that ball must be worth today. It was just...

They would sign bats and...You'd just lose them. It didn't mean anything to me because...I mean I was in awe. Stan Musial was here. They would come here for a charity event, and they would be playing because they were in the area. They were up in Lakeland or St. Petersburg, and then the teams would come here.

I would stay out in the outfield with them. They'd give you a ball, and...I lost them all. I had nothing. PS, that's the bottom line of my baseball career. But I never asked anybody for a...Ruth, when they told me Ruth,



people around him, I wouldn't ask to do it. I just, it never entered in my mind because...

Kathy Hersh: You mean ask for an autograph.

Mickey Schermer: Right. Because I was working for him. But at the end, after the ballgame or...Because they, there were known for them to get dressed. What they would do is they would bring them on a bus. By the time I carried the damn bats from the bus to the dugout, I was exhausted, to be honest with you.

At the end they would sign balls for me, things like that. They would send it down the line. That's how they did it. They'd just send it right own the dugout, and they'd give it to you. I had quite a number of them, but they're all gone. I had that one but it was scuffed up. It was ridiculous.

When you say, "I had a great life, I really did," it didn't...Money didn't mean anything. There was no money to speak of. I needed...

Kathy Hersh: Like you say, you had enough.

Mickey Schermer: I had plenty. If you have \$2, \$3, \$5, \$10. That's all you needed.

Kathy Hersh: How did you meet this uptown girl?

Mickey Schermer: How did I meet her? Let's see. Susie was...I was driving on 41st Street and I knew of her and I saw her. I pulled her over over on, and I'll never forget, on Meridian Avenue, and I introduced myself to her. She had a friend that I was going out with, and...

Kathy Hersh: How old were you?

Mickey Schermer: I was 21. I made a lot of trips to Cuba, also, when I was 16 and 15 in those days.

Kathy Hersh: Doing what?

Mickey Schermer: Just going over there with friends of mine.

Kathy Hersh: How did you get there?

Mickey Schermer: Airplane. It was \$29 round-trip. We would go to Capri and Nacional. That was in 1954, '55, '56. At that time I was a senior. I was 16, 17, 18 years old. I would go over there. It was wonderful.

Kathy Hersh: What did you do?

Mickey Schermer: Gamble. Party, had all kinds going on there. Everything was open.

Kathy Hersh: They didn't have the age restrictions, either, did they?

Mickey Schermer: No, nothing. No such thing there. Friends of mine, their parents were involved with the casinos. Not me, but their parents. In other words, you



have to understand now, these were my age, and their parents were there. At times, when they wouldn't come here, we'd go there.

It was wonderful. In fact, I always thought I was going to be working at the casinos in Cuba when I was...I didn't go to college, by the way. I did not go to college. I worked. I always thought either I would be doing something in that field, but it didn't work out.

At that time, if you remember, Kefauver came in here. Everybody made fun of him. It was pretty bad. Friends of mine, their parents really were hurt by that.

Kathy Hersh: That shut down gambling.

Mickey Schermer: That shut down. That really started to shut down after Kefauver.

Carl Hersh: Could you...?

Mickey Schermer: What?

Carl Hersh: We don't really have a lot of detail about Kefauver from the perspective of somebody who was here at the time. What did you know about it?

Mickey Schermer: What I knew about it was my friends --again, no names --their parents were being investigated. My friends' parents were part of the syndicate. See, most of these hotels had bookmaking cabanas. It's obvious that if you had a bookmaking operation going on in a hotel that you were paying off somebody. I mean, that was obvious. What happened was they had heard...I think Governor Collins was the governor at that time, I remember. Yeah, you have to remember.

Gambling was here. When I was a kid, I would drive people over to the...they had a place called Green Acres in Hallandale that was a casino. They had a casino up in Hallandale, right on the ocean. We would take people, drive them up there for five dollars a head. But it wasn't like...you didn't have expressways. You had to go up Collins Avenue and go around Beach Boulevard, and go out. I mean, it was just...

Kathy Hersh: How many passengers?

Mickey Schermer: Five. Four in there, \$20.

Kathy Hersh: Wow.

Mickey Schermer: Then you have to pick them up at two in the morning or when they...you'd do two a day. You could do two in the out. It was late, and we'd come back. But that didn't last. It closed, too.

Now Kefauver came down here, and I think they made light of him, because one he had a southern accent, believe it or not. They thought he was a hick. I don't think they were prepared for what went on. They thought it'll be a little rough for a little bit of time, and then it would go



over. But that didn't happen, and he was able to shut it down. At that time, they shut it down. By that time, Cuba was running the casinos.

Kathy Hersh: Did the scene switch there, then?

Mickey Schermer: Yeah. When I say switched...

Kathy Hersh: It had already been going on.

Mickey Schermer: It was ongoing there. I mean, Lansky and that whole bunch were over there now, so they just went continued on their merry way. That also was an effect that the Beach had, because there really was no place...again, Vegas was still coming on, and people thought Miami Beach would be the mecca. But, it never got there.

There's two parts of Florida. There's a South Florida and a North Florida. North Florida never let South Florida do what they really wanted to do. There was always a conflict. There always should have been a North Florida and a South Florida, like North Carolina and South Carolina. But, it didn't happen, and so, it got stunted.

Miami Beach is feast or famine. If you look at a chart, you would see that Miami Beach, it's up and down. That's what happened, since my time, until I realized it. In the 60s, it went along, and in the 70s, it was just a steady decline. Then, the Mariel came along, and that's why... I remember the Parbon House that my dad had built. He wanted to move out, so I took it over. Gave him some money, and bought him an apartment at the Mason-Grant. That apartment house, I just couldn't...it was horrible. I mean, I had 10 people in an efficiency. I would rent it for 2, and 10 would live it in. It was awful.

South Beach was really bad. Then the Mariel Boatlift, whatever...the beach was down anyway because there was a lot of old people, and there was nothing happening. The young people wanted to move away. In the 70s, Miami Beach in the 70s and 80s literally just went to sleep. The Mariel, that knocked them out totally. During this time, Lincoln Road, of course, was totally gone. By that time, they had decided they were going to make a mall. In the 60s I believe it was. I don't know exactly the date, but it was the 60s.

I remember my dad...they closed up Euclid Avenue, which was not a through street, and that's where the apartment house was. By that time they had made a mall, and the mall was fairly...it wasn't that successful. It was pretty, but it wasn't successful, because it was too hot. People can't walk down Lincoln Road. In those days anyway, it was hot.

The convention center was...there was no convention center. It was just where the convention center, the little one...the Jackie Gleason. That's all that was here. Lincoln Road started to go down, as the Beach went down, and so did property values, and so did my business. Although I was now in Miami, building. We had property in West Hollywood, Florida, and they weren't too receptive to my kind of people. That was another story that we could go into. I mean, the Klan was active.



Kathy Hersh: The Klan was active?

Mickey Schermer: They were active in Davie. We were going to buy up there.

Kathy Hersh: What year?

Mickey Schermer: That was in the '60s, late '50s, '60s. My dad built a building. We built a building out there in 1954, which I just did that 441, where the cows were, and we put up a building. You could hire blacks. You could hire anything.

They wanted us to call them by the n-word, and we couldn't do it. I mean, I was raised by a black lady in Detroit. I never knew from this stuff. I never knew. I mean, I lived in black areas. I had no problem. They said, "You have to call them that," but my dad would never do it. He just wouldn't do it, and I could never. I was 16 years old. I was building...

Kathy Hersh: They. Who was "they"?

Mickey Schermer: They were the rednecks. I guess you could call them rednecks, South Florida people.

Kathy Hersh: But what made them think they had the right to tell you what to call these people?

Mickey Schermer: It's like the South. You have to understand, when I talk to people, it's like what I tell my granddaughter, I knew slaves. I was born in 1935. In Detroit, during the war, they brought people to work in factories. They brought them up in boxcars, from the cotton fields, from the South.

If it's 1935, the war was over in 1865. These people, my friends' grandparents, were slaves or were children of slaves. Where we lived, they would say that, "My mama was a slave," or, "My great-grandfather..." If they were in their 80s, you could see they were there. There weren't many, but I knew a couple. They would introduce me to them. That's how they would introduce them, that their great-grandfather asleep over there, maybe he was 75, 80 years old. I'm 10. I'm 9, 6, 7, 8 years old. I remember it. You lose track of the fact that 1950 is not that far away. When you're born in '35, and it was over in '65, it's a difference of 70 years. People that were born in '63, they're only 74, 75 years old. If they were 80 years old, I was a 6 year old. I would be in their houses. I know my grandfather has trouble comprehending that, but that's what went on.

But in Detroit, it was different. See, Detroit they brought them up from the south to work in the factories. Here they're making --what? --25 cents a day, and now the black people are making \$20, \$30 a day. That was a world of difference. It's not like an eastern black person, like in New York. These people came up from the South, and they went to Detroit to work in the factories.



Now, what happens in a case like that? They're not as educated. They're not ready. They're behind to catch up. Then, you had the war. They had the First World War, and then they had that war. Detroit was a different place, and that's why when the war was over...

We had a riot in 1942, was the race riots in Detroit. My family got wiped out. [laughs] My grandfather, they cleaned out his store. They had riot.

My father, he was a little bit connected where our street was, so they left the building alone. He bought a little building, I think for \$5,000, and they left me alone. But, I was raised in that area.

What I'm saying to you is, after the war, they let them go. Now you're going from \$200 a week, in those days, or \$150 working on the line. They had no money. They spent it all.

When they came in, they beat up my mother. They robbed her. That's when I get back to what I was saying about how I got here. But that went on a lot, and that part of country, which is the mid-west, they were lost. They were floating. Because don't forget, it's one generation of education. It's not any better than where I came from. My parents came from Europe. Now it's me, and now it's my children. Now, it's my grandchildren. Well, we're removed a little bit, but we're still immigrants.

That was Detroit, and that's how I was raised. When I came here, I never that. The only thing I knew about it was that the lady who was with me, raising me, because my mother had to work in the store, and my father had to be...so I never saw my parents. They were working all the time.

She was supposed to come here. My father wanted to bring her. Her name was Isabel. She said, "Mr. Schermer, I'm not coming to the South. That's where I came from. I'm not going back." We could never understand why she wouldn't come be with us.

Why did she want to stay in Detroit? It was cold. We told her, "Come here." She said, "No, I'm not coming to this town." When we got here, we found out. I mean, don't forget, when I came here, there were no blacks in Miami Beach. They had to be off the streets at 7 o'clock. I had to pick them up in Miami and take them to the clubs, and bring them back over. That was part of my job as a runner.

Kathy Hersh: Oh, so you were hired by black people to get themselves across, over here?

Mickey Schermer: The club would say, "Go pick them up."

Kathy Hersh: The club would. OK.

Mickey Schermer: Yeah, go get them.

Kathy Hersh: For workers or entertainers?



Mickey Schermer: No, no, entertainers. Workers, too, but the entertainer's not going to take a bus.

Kathy Hersh: What entertainers? Do you remember any of them?

Mickey Schermer: Sammy Davis, I think I picked up, with the Will Mastin Trio, which was his father and his uncle. There were some musicians that used to stay over there. Those are the only ones that I remember dealing with, Sammy Davis. Lena Horne would come over here.

But I saw them in the clubs. I saw them. I think I saw every entertainer 10 times, because when the show was on, the cars were parked. We would sit on the stage and listen to them. Everybody, you name them, we saw them.

They were all here. Cab Calloway was at the Beachcomber, which was right across the street. At Serio's they would have the comedians, Danny Thomas and the Will Mastin Trio were there.

I was always involved with that. As a young man, it never excited me, because I was working. I was a working person.

Kathy Hersh: It was just your daily life.

Mickey Schermer: It was just my daily life. I worked at the Latin Quarters. I remember parking Barbara Walter's car. She was about five years older than I am or four years older than I am. Something like that.

Kathy Hersh: Was she down for a visit?

Mickey Schermer: Her father owned the club. It was the Lou Walters.

Kathy Hersh: Did she give you a good tip?

Mickey Schermer: She didn't even know who I was. They would take her right in. You would think she was the Queen of England. But, it was interesting. I had a very interesting life. I didn't have the normal way of...it was really good. It was great.

When my dad was building, I would just go out there, and then he would come home, because he was older, and he was heavier. West Hollywood was very, very redneck. The word redneck, they liked. They thought you were a Jew, and they said I was a white Jew, and that's OK.

But, I made a mistake. I hired black. I remember as a kid, I think when that first building I'm telling you about, getting back now, it's 1954, we hired an electrician. I remember he was a black man. His name was Mr. Edwards. He had no thumb. In those days, you used metal. It wasn't like they do today. There had to bend the tubing and run wire, and they had these clips. He could, with his two fingers...I never forgot it. He taught me how to do electric.

Some people came, and they said, "You don't hire people like that." My father said, "Well, what do you mean?" Some guys got out of the car.



They said that black people dig. They used the n-word. "They dig. They don't do anything else. Now, if you want your building to stand, you hire white people."

Kathy Hersh: They made a threat.

Mickey Schermer: Oh yeah, once. [laughs] Plenty of times. They also threatened us with Cubans. When we brought the Cubans up from Dade County, they turned down the steel. If the steel wasn't right, they would call them cane-cutters instead of steel men. Even in 1973, I was building up Malderry Road. I had hired Cubans. '73 already, Mary Ellis came. They didn't start yet, but there were a lot of Cubans here. The Southerners didn't want to work with them. The carpenters, they didn't want to work with them. They'd be up on a roof or doing a tie beam, pouring concrete. They'd try to knock them off with the swing, the gate. I'd have some interesting lives.

But nothing to a point where that maybe you felt threatened, because you never did. It's a good town. It just transformed. You went with the tide. They didn't want you, so you stepped back. You following me? You don't want me? I'm not going to be there.

I remember, when I was a manager at Burdines, when we would run the fashion shows, they didn't want me to go into La Gorce Country Club or the Surf Club. They would send the models in. They would send in the cloths. Or Indian Creek Country Club, or Miami Heart.

Kathy Hersh: It's not like you look so different, because you're Jewish. I mean, what? What?

Mickey Schermer: That was the thing.

Kathy Hersh: How did they know? From the name?

Mickey Schermer: They know. They would ask you, when they hired you, in those days, your religion. But, you don't feel that way in Miami Beach. You never felt that way. You felt like it was yours, because there were more of you, you felt. But it wasn't. They ran it. La Gorce Country Club was restricted. Sunsets One and Two were restricted.

Kathy Hersh: Not to this day?

Mickey Schermer: No, not that. But, Bal Harbour, same thing. The Kenilworth, those places, restricted. I think the one in Bal Harbour was restricted into the '80s and into the '90s. The Sea View. The name of it is the Sea View.

Kathy Hersh: Oh, you have to go. You're getting the signal.

Mickey Schermer: Oh.

Kathy Hersh: OK.

Mickey Schermer: The only thing I can say is that at this present time, the Beach is at it's upturn. It's a great place to live. It's a great place to come to. I can't



imagine any place else other than that I would rather live. There's nowhere else that I would rather live. There's no place that I would rather be than in South Florida. South Miami, Wynwood. Now you've got 40th Street. We went over there the other night. It was just unbelievable. I mean, I don't know. You should see what is going on. It's exciting. I mean, South Miami, when I was building out there, everything is just...it's a vibrant city. It pulsates, is what I say. Everything pulsates here. It's exciting to be in. I wish I was younger. I wish I was going to be here longer. [laughs] I wish I was 50. I could do it.

Kathy Hersh: Thank you very much for a fascinating...

Mickey Schermer: I hope I gave you some background...