

# Tequesta:

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## Forty Years of Miami Beach

By RUBY LEACH CARSON

It was nearly two decades after Miami was incorporated as a town before the challenging, ocean-front strip facing it across Biscayne Bay was considered ripe for development. Not until March 26, 1915, did Miami Beach, boasting 33 voters, make its bow as an incorporated municipality, bidding for a share of the area's fast-growing travel market.

Just what *is* Miami Beach?

During this, its fortieth anniversary year, its citizens are giving interesting definitions:

"Miami Beach is the capitol of vacationland," said Leon C. McAskill, 1955 director of the Miami Beach Hotel Association and former publisher of the Miami Beach Sun. "Miami Beach is unique even in the somewhat amazing and certainly unusual development of the United States. All the superlatives have been used — sometimes to the tiring point. Some descriptions are unflattering, most are in glittering praise. Whatever the opinion, the unadorned facts reveal an unprecedented growth, an ever increasing prosperity and a concentration of investment of 'smart money' the like of which is probably unmatched anywhere. When one remembers that only 40 years ago Miami Beach was a mangrove swamp, the present picture does approach the fantastic."

The city's present mayor, D. Lee Powell, in a signed article in the Miami Daily News of September 11, 1955, outlined Miami Beach as a community of more than 6,000 private residences and 20,000 apartment units . . . the homes of an estimated 60,000 persons.

"Miami Beach's community life," wrote Mayor Powell, "has been subject to the same growth and development as its tourist economy. As the city's resort pattern has shifted from a short winter season enjoyed principally by

the wealthy, to a year-'round vacationland visited by close to 2,000,000 persons a year. The city's permanent population has grown from a mere handful to the present estimated 60,000."

What does the city of Miami Beach officially call itself? On the city hall's outgoing mail is stamped this slogan: "The Closest Thing to Paradise We Know." And the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce has come forth with this: "The World's Placation Land." "*But it is not,*" says Samuel A. Rivkind, President of the Miami Beach Hotel Association, "the exclusive domain of the rich."

Much has been said in recognition of the city's fortieth birthday. The pioneers, the economists, the statisticians and the press, — all have been delightfully informative. These contributions will be valuable, along with the record books, when the historians close in during some future year to follow only the long shadows to their origin. And of those shadows, the longest will be the one cast by John S. Collins.

To begin the history of this now-distinguished resort city is to begin with the arrival there of the first man capable of foreseeing the area's possibilities and of starting the formidable reclamation necessary to make the dream come true. The Man of the Hour was Collins.

Almost immediately after Collins, however, five other men of destiny appeared on the mangrove-palmetto scene in this order: Collins' son-in-law, T. J. Pancoast; the Lummus brothers, J. N. and J. E., Miami bank presidents; and finally the sportsman millionaire, Carl Graham Fisher and his marine engineer, John H. Levi. Looking over the old records, it is inspirational to note that these six men, by their willingness to come to each other's assistance, brought success to themselves beyond their fondest dreams, and gave happiness to others. Only one of these men, J. N. Lummus, is living to help celebrate the city's fortieth birthday.

The concatenation of events which brought these men together in an epic struggle for reclamation could not have happened precisely at this time had not Henry M. Flagler brought civilization to the bay's edge. The arrival of his railroad in Miami in 1896 and the building of the great Royal Palm Hotel in 1897, had established a resort economy, creating a travel market which has continued to expand to this day.

If Flagler ever envisioned the bright future in store for the Miami Beach area, he made no further contribution to it. His main interest was transportation, therefore in 1903 he turned his attention to the building of the extension

to Key West, where his passengers could connect with the steamship company of which he was president.

By the time his locomotives began moving over the rails to Key West in January, 1912, the travel picture was changing. Automotive transport was "the thing", and its future would have tremendous impact upon Florida's economy. For the development of Miami Beach, John S. Collins was the first to recognize this fact, and by the building of a bridge for vehicles, he did something about it. By July of 1912, when the construction of this bridge began, Collins had already spearheaded other developments on the peninsula.

Collins was a distinguished and successful horticulturist in his native state, New Jersey, when in the 1880's his interest was aroused in the area that is now Miami Beach. He had become curious about the horticultural possibilities after the failure of a coconut planting venture in which he had been an absentee investor. More will be said about this highly dramatic venture.

It was not until the early 1890's, before the Florida East Coast Railroad had been brought south as far as West Palm Beach, that Collins made the trip to Miami. Charles Edgar Nash, in his book "The Magic of Miami Beach", (for which Pancoast wrote an approving foreword) describes Collins' emotions at this time:

He hired two blacks to row him across Biscayne Bay to the peninsula and we may imagine with what mingled emotions he first set foot on Miami Beach.

The situation was admirable, the climate was perfect. Here summer spent the winter and thousands of people would spend it, too, given the opportunity. It would eventually make an ideal winter resort and was just what he had been looking for. The future could be allowed to take care of itself, but was for the present — he walked into a virgin jungle of palmetto scrub, kneeled and dug into the earth with his hands, allowing the black, sandy loam to run through his fingers, the knowing fingers of a dirt farmer with more than half a century of experience behind him.

That settled it. The last vestige of doubt was gone. As he rose to his feet and dusted the clinging particles of sand from his hands Miami Beach was born. He knew that with water, fertilization, and proper care of this land could be made . . . into a town and the town into a city of trees and flowers and pleasant vistas.

To point to Collins' first active interest in this beach land, is to turn backward to the middle 1880's when he encountered an old friend at a pomological meeting in New Jersey. This friend, Elnathan T. Field of Middletown,

N. J., was enthusiastic about a coconut planting project which he and some associates had launched three years previously, in 1882. The project, however, had been halted by lack of funds since expenses involved had been greater than had been anticipated.

The various versions which have been published about this exciting early chapter in Miami Beach history agree in the main and vary only in the small details. Besides Nash, Authors E. V. Blackman, C. H. Ward, Kenneth L. Roberts, Tracy Hollingsworth, and J. N. Lummus, as well as countless journalists, have told the story. It's a good story for the homefolks to know, since visitors invariably ask: "Are coconuts native to this peninsula?" This article will rely for the most part on Nash.

A few coconuts, which had probably washed ashore, had succeeded in growing near an old wharf at Miami Beach by the year 1870, when they were seen by two northern visitors, Henry B. Lum and his 15-year old son Charles. For years these fellows kept thinking about the economic possibilities of planting coconuts along Florida's south east coast for shipment to northern markets.

By the year 1882 they had purchased from the government ocean-front land at 35 cents an acre and had interested several others, including Field and his fellow-townsmen, Ezra Osborn. The Lums' land included the present south Miami Beach and Lummus Park area. The land which Field and Osborn purchased from the government extended not only from the Lum property north to Jupiter, but southward to Cape Florida. Their acreage, with breaks, totaled 65 miles of ocean front. It cost them from 75 cents to \$1.25 an acre.

To help with the loading and unloading of provisions, and to do the planting, the coconut promoters hired 25 men from the New Jersey life-saving stations. Old lifeboats were bought and repaired. These, along with wagons, tents, mules, tools and food, as well as a small portable house, were put on board a Mallory line vessel bound for Key West. At Key West they were transferred to a chartered schooner, and taken to the Florida coast. The schooner anchored near the Lum acreage and began unloading men and provisions. Much was taken to shore in life boats, but much was floated ashore. The men dumped the mules into the water and led them as they swam with them to land.

The schooner then headed for Trinidad for the first load of coconuts for planting, and the men under the leadership of Captain Richard Carney

of Middletown, N. J., set up camp. There was a natural clearing on the site of Lummus Park, and here the tents were pitched and the sections of the portable house were bolted together.

Nash tells of the old Indian trail which ran north and south, winding among the trees and which was believed to have been used by the Tequesta Indians and later by the Seminoles. This was widened for a wagon trail. They were working on this when the first load of 100,000 coconuts was brought in for planting. The labor involved was formidable, since dense jungle growth grew close to the shore. Paths were hacked with machetes.

By spring of 1883 they had planted the 38,000 nuts allotted for Miami Beach, and had moved camp to the Cape Florida area to plant the rest. The next camp site was established on the present north beach area at the site of the Biscayne House of Refuge. Here, a shipment of 117,000 coconuts from Nicaragua was brought ashore for planting. The next site for operations was the Hillsboro House of Refuge above Boca Raton, and for this planting another load of 117,000 coconuts was brought, this time from Cuba.

Although the original plans had called for a planting of 450,000 nuts, by this time 334,000 had been planted. Nash writes that "by the end of the third year's work the liquid assets of the company had been virtually exhausted. This brought the active proceedings to a halt and nothing further was planned until Nature had a chance to show what results had been achieved."

The work had been so exhausting for the laborers that each year the company had had to recruit a new crew. It was reported that they had employed negro convict labor.

At this point, Collins was told of the project. He advanced to his friend Field the sum of \$5,000 so that the work could be continued. Of course, the project failed. Some of the nuts failed to put forth shoots. Some, having sprouted and started growing, were choked out by strangler fig vines and the fast-marching mangroves. Most of the nuts which germinated lasted only long enough to provide food for rabbits, wood rats and other animals. Only a comparatively few kept growing and bore fruit.

The men had overestimated a coconut tree's yield of fruit, underestimated the expense of the project, and had practically ignored transportation and marketing problems. There were about sixty stockholders in this first big effort to commercialize Miami Beach.

But, as Historian Nash points out, "Failure had no place in Collins' make-up." That was why Collins came down to look over the Field and Osborn beach acreage in the 1890's. Mention already has been made of his favorable reaction. It was some years, however, before he could return. Collins' grandson, Arthur Pancoast, told this writer that as early as 1900 Collins and Field had been acquiring the ocean-front land at Miami Beach by buying up shares of the coconut-planting company from the other stockholders. By 1906, Collins was a Miami Beach landowner, with a land-clearing project under way. Arthur Pancoast established the year from the fact that the family had record of a negro employee's death by a hurricane on the project at that time.

Back in his native city, Moorestown, N. J., Collins had left his business interest with his son, Irving; and in Merchantville, he had left his son-in-law, T. J. Pancoast, in charge. These interests included nurseries and the selling of farm machinery and builders' and farmers' supplies. This combined knowledge of plant life and the machinery needed for its cultivation, together with an adventurous and inquiring mind, equipped Collins sufficiently for pioneering development of the jungle strip across Miami's bay.

After thought and study and conferences with other experts, Collins decided to begin by planting an avocado grove. Field protested, remembering the coconut venture; but Collins had his way. When the clearing of land by manpower began costing from \$70 to \$300 an acre, Collins designed a tractor with special knife-bladed wheels. These tractors were made in the north, shipped by train to Miami and ferried to the beach on barges. The cost of clearing was then reduced to \$30 an acre.

To protect the young grove from the wind, Collins planted the twin lanes of Australian pine trees which later became Pine Tree Drive.

In 1909, when the apprehensive Field was glad to sell his half of the enterprise, Collins bought Field's share and became the proud owner of the largest avocado grove in the world. Arthur Pancoast revealed to this writer that Field had arrived upon the scene, which he and Collins were to develop jointly, *with the complete plans for a city in his pocket*. Collins realized such a plan was premature.

"Anyway, my grandfather was agriculturally minded," said Arthur Pancoast. "He wanted to make a go of farming developments on cleared swamp land first. Then that ocean strip not suited to farming he thought could be available for a city later. He did not think of starting a city develop-

ment until he needed a canal for solution of his farm transportation problems. Then he knew a canal would help in both developments.

“Just what sort of townsite Mr. Field had planned I do not know,” continued Mr. Pancoast. “Mr. Collins’ idea was to pattern it after Atlantic City, N. J. Mr. Fisher didn’t depart too much from that concept, as Atlantic City at that time was the summer playground of the United States, and Mr. Fisher wanted to make this the winter playground. From that point on of course, his showmanship and salesmanship took over, and the city has gradually evolved until it really is fabulous.”

From this point on, Collins had the enthusiastic support of his family. His son-in-law, T. J. Pancoast, arranged his business affairs in New Jersey so he could live at Miami Beach and help with its development.

He arrived in 1911 and helped Collins direct the work on his canal. It was dug from what is now Lake Pancoast, to Biscayne Bay, and quickly became one of the most beautiful features of Miami Beach. It still retains his name. Both Collins and Pancoast realized at this time that the canal would not only provide a quick way to get his avocadoes to market, but also would help open up an area which would soon be in demand for residences. If homes were to be built, then a bridge for vehicles would be needed.

The Collins family organized the Miami Beach Improvement Company on June 3, 1912, with Collins as president and Pancoast as secretary, treasurer and active manager. The following month, July 22, work began on Collins Toll Bridge which, when finished in March 1913, was to connect the beach at Dade Boulevard with Miami at North East 15th Street, a distance of two and a half miles. It was to be known as the longest wooden bridge in the world. At the formal opening on June 12, 1913, Mayor J. W. Watson of Miami was speaker.

The wooden bridge was only half finished, however, when the unexpected expenses caused a temporary halt in the construction. At the outset, Collins and Pancoast had borrowed \$25,000 for the project from two local banks — \$15,000 from the Bank of Bay Biscayne, of which J. E. Lummus was president; and \$10,000 from the Southern Bank and Trust Company, of which J. N. Lummus was president. That was early in 1912. By May of that year J. N. Lummus had resigned as bank president to organize and direct a Miami Beach improvement company to be known as the Ocean Beach Realty Company. J. N. Lummus was born in Bronson, Levy County, Fla., and had first visited Miami in 1895. He returned in 1904 to live.

In a booklet condensed from his book, "The Miracle of Miami Beach", Lummus stated that he and his brother, J. E. Lummus, and a few stockholders in 1912 purchased 605 acres of swamp land from Lincoln Road south and "immediately put men chopping down swamp, clearing and grading the Ocean Front at the South end. We paid from \$150 per acre to \$12,500 per acre for swamp land. The large price was paid for small tracts but we had to have them to put streets through. . . . Our development was south from 15th Street and was known as 'Ocean Beach'." Most of this purchase had been the Lum holdings.

Lummus pointed out that his Company was the first to file a plat and sell lots for a subdivision. It was filed July 9, 1912.

Collins' first plat was filed December 11, 1912. Collins' sale of lots was stimulated by his announcement that Collins Bridge had been refinanced and was on its way to completion! The fact that a patron saint had appeared upon the scene to give needed financial aid, not only to Collins and Pancoast, but also to the Lummus brothers, makes the year 1912 stand out as the year that gave birth to the city of Miami Beach. Of course, almost every Miami and Miami Beach citizen knows who this "patron saint" was:

It was Carl Graham Fisher.

This Indianapolis millionaire of Prest-O-Lite fame and fortune had come to Miami to make contact with his yacht, brought here by his marine-engineer friend, John H. Levi. The original plan had been for the two men to meet in Jacksonville. In January of 1912, Levi wired Fisher: "Arrived safely. Miami pretty little town. Why not meet me here instead of Jacksonville. John."

Fisher came, was captivated by the climate and tropical beauty everywhere, and bought a home on Brickell Avenue. He was so impressed with the wooden bridge which had been built half way across the bay by a gentleman in his 74th year, that he made Collins' acquaintance and advanced \$50,000 on the project. The total cost of the bridge was about \$100,000.

Collins, not to be outdone, not only put up the bridge bonds as security, but as an outright gift gave Fisher his first chunk of Miami Beach real estate — 200 acres, a strip 1800 feet wide from ocean to bay and nearly a mile in depth.

Fisher was so enthusiastic that he bought 200 acres south of the Improvement Company's land, and 60 acres on the bay front. Then he hunted up the Lummus brothers, whose work had slowed down, judging from J. N.'s own record. Lummus wrote:



In 1913 my Brother and I met Carl Fisher, who had a winter home on Brickell Ave., Miami. Fisher asked me why we did not do all this work at once. I told him we had an awful good reason and that was we did not have the money, so he loaned us \$150,000 and we paid him 8 per cent interest for the money and gave him 105 acres of swamp land from Lincoln Road South to 15th St. as a bonus for the loan. We had paid \$150.00 per acre for the land that we gave Fisher.

That, and that alone, is what started Miami Beach in a big way . . . .

On July 1, 1913, according to Lummus, he and Fisher signed a contract together with the First Clark Dredging Company of Baltimore to move six million cubic yards of bay bottom from the bay to the bay side of the beach. This was to fill in the bay land and deepen the bay for a Motor Boat Race Course. It was January 15, 1914 before Fisher's first plat was filed.

Fisher was only 38 years of age when he began cooperating with Collins, Pancoast and the Lummus brothers in the creation of Miami Beach. Levi was in charge of Fisher's developments which were to include man-made islands, hotels, polo fields, golf courses, streets and subdivisions. The work advanced despite the agonizing physical labor involved in the clearing of the mangrove trees and the accompanying discomfort caused by the hordes of mosquitos, and the constant danger of being bitten by poisonous snakes. Fisher's company was the Alton Beach Realty Company. It was bounded on the South by 15th Street, on the North by 20th Street, on the Ocean, and Purdy Boat Ways on the bay.

Even after the town was incorporated in 1915 under the name Miami Beach, many visitors thought of the beach strip as Alton Beach, so well advertised had been the Fisher interests there. Only the Collins interests were previously referred to as Miami Beach; and the Lummus area was called Ocean Beach.

Before the Collins Bridge was built all visitors and workers and the beach area's few residents were obliged to cross the bay by boat. Even for the auction sales of lands in the Collins and Lummus developments, the bidders for lots in the still-swampy area went to the sales by boat. E. E. ("Doc") Dammers, famous auctioneer of those days, presided at these events. He was best known for his policy of handing out new pieces of china to his delighted audience.

After the Lummus Company began selling real estate they operated three passenger boats from the foot of Flagler Street to the beach at Biscayne Street. Five cents one way was the charge. And business was good!

The bathing casino business got an early start at Miami Beach. The history of Miami by the American Guide Series tells of the first one which was a one-room shack built on the Lum property in 1901 by Dr. Gillespie Enloe. He leased it occasionally to Miamians for a week or two at a time. Then came Richard M. Smith of Hartford, Conn., who got the financial backing of a Miamian, Charles H. Garthside, for the two-story pavilion known as Smith's Casino to all the old-timers. In 1908 another Smith, Avery C. Smith of Norwich, Conn., bought out "Dick" Smith's share and made improvements and innovations. He built two ferry boats for cross-the-bay service for passengers from Miami.

A more pretentious bath house was built by Dade County's sheriff, Dan Hardie, on the ocean front near Smith's casino in 1914. The Hardie Casino was popular for its bathing facilities, restaurant and semi-weekly dances. Robert Gow, who among other duties, had charge of the restaurant, was the father of five youngsters of school age who enjoyed to the utmost the social activities the beach afforded. Alice Gow, now Mrs. Charles DeWitt Strong of Coral Gables, enjoyed most of all the school bus trips on the Collins toll bridge. "Those trips were fun," she recalled. "We took our fishing lines along and fished while the driver stopped to talk to the bridge tender. We were forgiven for being late to school when we finally arrived in Miami."

The Pancoasts built the Miami Beach Casino during 1912 and 1913 on the ocean at 23rd Street. This two-story structure was the finest the area had known, built of driftwood inside, and shingled outside. In 1914 a swimming pool was added. Arthur Pancoast had from time to time managed the Casino, even after Fisher took it over in 1916 and spent large sums on its improvement. Another interest was now consuming Arthur, however, and in 1923 he made the plunge — the building of the ocean front's first large luxury hotel. He opened it to a distinguished clientele in 1924 and operated it for 20 years, selling it in 1944. It was the Grossinger Pancoast after that, until 1955, when it was razed for the erection of the larger Seville.

In answer to the speculation as to who built and occupied the first home in Miami Beach, it is interesting to recall that 72nd Street and Collins avenue was the site for the Biscayne House of Refuge, established in 1876 and operated until 1926. Its purpose was to "afford succor to shipwrecked persons who may be cast ashore and who, in the absence of such means of relief, would be liable to perish from hunger and thirst in that desolate region." It was manned by one keeper and had facilities for a family, if the keeper had

one. Wm. J. Smith was the first keeper. So probably he should receive credit for being the first home-maker on the beach.

Then there was that portable house which Captain Richard Carney, one of the stockholders in the Lum-Osborne coconut planting company, brought to the beach in 1882 and kept there as his residence until 1886.

And even before Captain Carney moved that house to the rear of his estate in Coconut Grove, the house had a companion structure. Charles Lum built a two-story dwelling nearby and brought down his bride. The beach's first honeymooning couple lived there three years.

In J. N. Lummus's book there is a photograph of a tiny cottage which Mrs. Philip Clarkson had shipped from Chicago in 1913, and set up at 3rd Street and Collins Avenue. Lummus built his own home in 1914 on the ocean front at 12th Street, next to the present Tides Hotel. Some of the others who built in 1914 were S. A. Belcher, E. B. Lent, Willie A. Pickert, George A. Douglass, T. E. James and Mrs. John McSweeney. Collins built by the ocean in 1917. In 1914 T. J. Pancoast built a mansion on the edge of the deepened wading pool which connected Collins Canal with Indian Creek, and which had been named Lake Pancoast. Carl Fisher's first home was built on the Ocean and Lincoln Road in 1915.

The first hotel was built in 1914 and operated by its owner, W. J. Brown. The Wofford Hotel and Apartments was second, on the site of the present Wofford Hotel. The Breakers was third. By 1915 the beach had one of the largest Marconi wireless stations in the South. It had telegraph service, two bath houses, an 18-hole golf course, mail service, a free school bus and winter boat racing!

The cream of the sports world was brought to the beach by Fisher. The first annual regatta was held January 15, 16, and 17, 1915, by Fisher who not only dredged the course, but built the grandstand for the spectators and provided the trophy cups for the winners. He had secured the fastest speed boats and cruisers to compete. The national magazine *Power Boating* featured the event.

The beach was really getting under way, and the developers and the several hundred persons living there decided that NOW WAS THE TIME for incorporation.

On March 26, 1915, the town of Miami Beach was incorporated. Meetings were held in the Lummus office building and 33 voters were registered.

J. N. Lummus was given the deserved honor of being the first mayor. In his abridged booklet he wrote that "the Lummus Company paid all the cost of incorporating Miami Beach and paid the City Clerk's salary and all other bills until the Town could get in some tax money in 1916."

James Whitcomb Riley planted an Indian laurel tree in the parkway on Lincoln Road and James Avenue on April 12, 1915, and read verses he had written commemorating the building of the National Lincoln Highway, a Fisher-promoted enterprise. The tree which Riley planted was later moved to the Carl Fisher Park. The poem Riley read pointed to the fact that Miami Beach's Lincoln Road was named for this national highway. Fisher had become nationally popular not only for that Lincoln Highway going east and west across the United States, but for his leadership in the development of the Dixie Highway, running north and south.

This appreciation of a proper network of roads showed in Fisher's development of his Miami Beach land. His interest in recreation areas and sports facilities was revealed by golf courses and parks. There are now two city golf courses and ten city parks within the limits of Miami Beach.

Lummus Park from the time it was given for public use in 1912 has been one of the city's favorite attractions. The gift of J. N. and J. E. Lummus, it cost their Ocean Beach Realty Company more than \$40,000 for creating and maintaining between 1912 and 1917. The company built board walks, planted Bermuda grass and coconut trees and put in twelve pumps and two tennis courts when the park was given to Miami Beach. J. N. Lummus recorded these achievements in the 1952 abridgement of his book. He considered the park by 1952 to be worth at least sixteen million dollars.

When it became apparent another bridge across the bay was needed and that the wooden bridge could not last much longer, the two Lummus brothers and Carl Fisher each donated \$2,000 toward expenses involved in planning a \$600,000 county bond issue to build a three-mile causeway across the bay. When completed in 1920 it connected Miami's 13th Street with 5th Street at Miami Beach. Two lines of street car tracks were laid on it at a cost of \$740,000. Of course later the tracks were pulled up and the causeway widened, and a modern bus transportation system established. World War II resulted in its getting a new name — the McArthur Causeway. The causeway was planned by the Lummus Company's engineer, Roy Wilson.

Much credit is due the civil and construction engineers who pioneered the Miami Beach developments. Although John H. Levi was Fisher's direct-engineer at the outset, W. E. Brown remained throughout the Fisher de-

velopments at the beach. The first city engineer employed by Miami Beach was Robert M. Davidson, who stayed with the job for seven years, until he became city manager of Coral Gables. Later he became a real estate broker at Miami Beach. J. I. Conklin was the civil engineer in charge of the Collins Bridge construction.

In 1916 the Lummus Company sold part of its holdings to a group of northern millionaires: James A. Allison, who was Fisher's Indianapolis banker and his Prest-O-Lite partner and who was to be a Fisher partner in the Miami Beach developments; James and George Snowden, Carl Fisher and Henry McSweeney. They built Star Island and made roads, built residences and planted trees and shrubs on the peninsula west of Washington Avenue.

The first building to be erected on Lincoln Road was Fisher's ocean-front residence in 1915. His office was built in 1917 on Lincoln Road and Washington Avenue. Then followed the Lincoln Hotel, the Community Church and, in 1921, the Miami Beach First National Bank at Alton Road. From the beginning, August Geiger was Fisher's architect.

In 1924 Geiger built Lincoln Road's first commercial building, a structure with location for 17 stores, and situated on the site of Sak's Store and westward to the corner. When the Lincoln Road Association was formed, D. Richard Mead became its first president. Geiger served later for ten years. The Community Church from its beginning maintained a real community spirit. The Rev. Elisha King who became its pastor in 1921, remained as leader of his flock for 18 years.

The men did not do all of the work in the building of Miami Beach. Volumes could be written about the women! The wives of the mayors, from Mrs. Lummus and Mrs. Pancoast on down the line, were helpful in innumerable ways.

Mrs. T. J. Pancoast, president of the Miami Beach Woman's Club for 13 years, from 1928 to 1942, had been the guiding spirit of the development of the Miami Beach Public Library. This was started by the Woman's Club and Mrs. Pancoast not only gave of her time and thought, but helped financially. Her son, Russell T. Pancoast, was architect for the building.

To Russell Pancoast goes credit for much of the fine architecture seen in Miami Beach homes and business buildings. He designed the Surf Club, the Church by the Sea and was an associate architect for the Miami Beach Auditorium. Besides being a member of the Florida State Board of Architects, Russell Pancoast is a Fellow in the American Institute of Architecture.

The Lincoln Hotel attracted celebrities from the political, literary, sports and social world. Fisher's mother lived there in 1920-21. The James A. Allison family was there and their daughter Cornelia, was an attractive and popular teen-ager. As she later married a pioneer Miamian who was to become the 1938 president of the Miami Beach Board of Realtors, she remained at the beach.

Mrs. Frazure was persuaded to write some of her recollections for the June 13, 1954, issue of the Miami Beach Sun. She wrote, in part:

I remember . . . .

At night, driving along the ocean one could see the eyes of droves of land crabs shining in the car headlights and occasionally you would see the bright eyes of a wild cat . . . . I remember . . . . Carl Fisher's glass enclosed tennis court back of where the Albion Hotel now stands . . . . The polo field was south of Lincoln Road between Meridian Avenue and Alton Road.

(Mrs. Frazure also remembered when her father built Allison Hospital, now St. Francis Hospital, and)

. . . Carl Fisher's battered old slouch hat and the snappy Panama hat worn by the handsome first mayor of Miami Beach, J. N. Lummus, Sr. . . . on New Year's Day of 1921 the opening of the beautiful Aquarium that Father built at Fifth Street and Biscayne Bay . . . . and the night before, New Year's Eve of 1921, the opening of the Flamingo Hotel with a gala party, and the Sunday tea dances held there in the gardens . . . . the nine-hole golf course connected with the hotel and the famous Regatta for all types of craft, from Hydro-planes to Express Cruisers, held in Biscayne Bay in front of the Flamingo Hotel.

Referring to the trolley which made a circuit of Miami Beach, she aptly described it as "Toonerville" type. Horseback riding was one of the sports Fisher had introduced, and Mrs. Frazure recalled

riding horseback along the surf and the bridle paths circling Bay Shore and LaGorce Golf Courses, and the bridle path in the center of Pinetree Drive.

She remembered Jungle Inn, Miami Beach's "first speakeasy and gambling joint, which was located in the wilderness at approximately 67th Street and Indian Creek Drive", and that there was nothing between there and the Firestone Estate at 43rd Street and Collins Avenue (now the Fontainebleau) except Ocean Drive, a narrow beach sand road. With logic she concludes her reminiscences:

The peaceful life of those "good old days" is something to be remembered and cherished but we should not regret their passing to make way for progress on Miami Beach.

How well Mrs. Frazure has recaptured the flavor of life at Miami Beach at that time is appreciated by this writer, who as a newspaper reporter for the Miami Metropolis (now the Miami Daily News) lived at the Lincoln Hotel that season and covered beach activities.

That was the winter President-elect Warren G. Harding came to "straw-hat land" for his pre-inauguration vacation. The president-elect and men he expected to appoint on his cabinet came on Senator Frelinghuysen's houseboat, which was floated down Florida's inland waterways to Miami Beach. On the trip down, they had stopped at various Florida resorts to play golf, and now they were ready for golf at Miami Beach.

When they arrived on January 29, 1921, they were taken to the Lincoln Hotel for lunch. The host for this occasion was one of the party, Senator A. B. Cummins, who had spent the previous month at the Lincoln. This writer had enjoyed many conversations with the Senator and had even tried to swing golf clubs properly under his supervision. Such informal instruction was given on the golf course across the street from the Lincoln, where smart stores do business today. As early as that, Cummins had promised that this reporter might have a personal interview with the president-elect when he arrived.

The promise was kept, but with difficulty. Crowds in front of the hotel parted so that the smiling, bowing president-to-be could enter with his cabinet-to-be. At the luncheon, the writer was privileged to be seated between Harding and the honor guest at his right, who was — of course! — Carl Fisher. James A. Allison also was an honor guest. Harding was enthusiastic about Miami Beach and talked about it for half an hour. "Your own people here have not awakened to the possibilities of this playground of America," he began. "This beach is wonderful. It is developing like magic." He said much more, all of it carefully recorded.

This was the only personal interview given by Harding during this trip to Florida, although he was followed continuously by newspaper men. During the luncheon they stood outside the dining room on the terrace, looking inside through closed French doors. Among them were the male colleagues of the reporter who was getting the only interview. And this reporter, while not one to gloat, couldn't forget that her managing editor had phoned her early that day telling her not to bother her head about Harding's arrival — that any effort would be futile — and that the men "were taking care of it". But it was this exclusive interview that made the front page that evening, thanks to Senator Cummins!

The Harding party was lodged over the week-end at the Flamingo, the beach's second and most pretentious luxury hotel which had opened on January 1. On Sunday afternoon Harding visited Cocolobe, Carl Fisher's private island 38 miles south of Miami. While at the Flamingo, he occupied one of the villas on the Flamingo grounds. As a publicity stunt, the young elephant Rosie caddied for him. His friendly interest in Miami Beach was not forgotten. Harding Avenue was named for him.

One of Fisher's contributions which was deeply appreciated by the public was the Flagler Memorial placed on a tiny island in the bay. It was made in 1920 at a cost of \$125,000. H. P. Peterson was the sculptor. At the four corners of the base are symbolic figures representing Pioneering, Engineering, Industrialism and Prosperity. In this contribution Fisher was assisted by John B. Orr and Allison. The monument is located between Hibiscus, Rivo Alto and Belle Islands and can be reached only by boat. In 1939 it was deeded to the City by the Alton Beach Realty Company.

Miami Beach was ready for a Chamber of Commerce by 1921, when the population was estimated at 644, so on July 13 of that year T. J. Pancoast, Line Harger and Charles W. Chase, Jr., Lambert Rook and A. J. Zoller met to plan the organization. The Miami Herald files reveal that the By-Laws were adopted nine days later at a meeting at Smith's Casino and that Pancoast was elected president. By December over 350 members, (over half the beach population), had been recruited. A site by the entrance to the county causeway was chosen for a Chamber of Commerce building. The structure erected there was used until 1954, when headquarters was shifted to a new building at 1700 Washington Avenue. The old building is now the Junior Chamber International headquarters.

Miami Beach's Chamber of Commerce was directed by Ike Parrish from 1943 to 1953. The present general manager is John G. Proctor, whose aim, he says, is to devise and improve ways of serving visitors to the city and to constantly work on a community development program. Mr. Proctor said that the work of any one of the Chamber's present 18 committees would be a story in itself. F. B. Cresap is the 1955 president of the organization.

When T. J. Pancoast was elected as the first president of the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce in 1921, he remained at its head for 20 years. He had been the second mayor of Miami Beach, serving from 1918 to 1920. His civic contributions included also the presidency of the Miami Beach Realty Board, which he held for several years. As a business executive, Pancoast



was president for the Miami Beach Improvement Company and later vice-president of the First National Bank and the Pancoast Hotel Company.

Collins Bridge was sold in December, 1920, after seven years of continuous use. It was replaced by the Venetian Causeway, built during 1922 and 1923 by the developers of the Venetian Islands at a cost of approximately \$2,505,300. Hugh M. Anderson was the guiding spirit in this enterprise. The Venetian Islands are among the most beautiful of the beach residential areas, and are greatly admired by the sight-seeing boats which make scheduled tours of the bay.

During 1923 and 1924 Fisher's dredges poured bay bottom land along the bayshore at 43rd Street for another luxury hotel and also for polo grounds. The hotel was the Nautilus, not to be confused with the equally swanky Nautilus built later on the Ocean. The first Nautilus required elaborate ground preparation. The rich top soil was scooped aside for the sand fill, and later spread over the surface. Fifty mules and Fisher's two young elephants, Rosie and "Young" Carl assisted in this work. Photographers of the era left pictures of Carl pulling a sand scoop, and Rosie carrying happy children on her back.

By July of 1924, the first coconut tree was planted on the Nautilus grounds and the road building was proceeding. The rock for this was hauled from the mainland on barges. They were floated up Collins Canal to the bantam line railroad which the Fisher interests were using. They found this little railroad almost indispensable, for with it they could pick up the tracks and little cars and deliver them wherever most needed.

Also of much interest at the time was the activity of the 1,000-horsepower dredge named "Norman H. Davis" which was said to force a 20-inch stream of wet bay land for a full mile. It could bring in 20,000 cubic yards of fill in 24 hours and it had on board a complete machine and repair shop and its own ice plant. Two other less powerful dredges also were used.

The Nautilus opened formally in 1925 and for some years was a favored luxury spot. Although the structure is no longer a hotel, it is more important than ever for now it houses the Mount Sinai Hospital. The polo grounds are now Polo Park, one of the city's garden spots. Fisher's fourth hotel, the King Cole, erected on North Meridian Avenue on Surprise Lake, is now the home of the Miami Heart Institute.

New construction in Miami Beach during 1923 showed the biggest increase since developments started. The value reached \$4,185,600. The big

Florida Boom was on its way. In 1924 the construction figures reached \$7,014,750. Real estate could be sold quickly, at a profit. This was the year Carl Fisher sold his Miami Beach Electric Company to the American Power & Light Company.

N. B. T. Roney, declared by J. N. Lummus to have built more houses than any one man on Miami Beach in those early years, was building the million dollar Roney Plaza that year. It opened in 1925 as one of the most elaborate hotels of the era. Instead of bringing interior decorators down from New York, as did the Fisher interests, Roney employed local talent, Miss Mary Albert Hinton, who was Miami's first interior decorator. This hostelry has been operated under several ownerships, its 1955 owner being J. Meyer Schine.

In 1925, the boom year, the state census showed the beach to have 2,342 voters. From here to the present time, comparisons by decades are interesting. In 1935, voters numbered 13,300. In 1945, 32,327 and in 1955, an estimated 55,000.

The estimated yearly tourists jumped from 50,000 in 1935 to an estimated 2 million in 1955.

Assessed property valuation the year the city was incorporated, 1915, was \$244,815. Ten years later it was \$44,094,950. Ten years later, 1935, there was a four million dollar drop, but by 1945 the assessed property valuation had climbed back up. It was \$85,757,650. In 1955, the figure reached \$374,645,800.

Nash wrote that at the beach early in 1925 "credit soared to such dizzy heights that small-timers came to swing big-time propositions on a little cash and a lot of confidence", and that "paper millionaires came to blossom as the rose". Fisher, Collins and Pancoast were said to have retained most of their unsold property until the hysteria died down, which came about after a stock market crash in November of that year. The boom continued to develop. Two more bay front hotels had appeared — the Fleetwood and later the Floridian, the latter on the site of the Allison Aquarium.

For the difficult days before and after the explosion of the boom, Beachites considered themselves fortunate in their leadership. Claude A. Renshaw had been made city manager in 1925, a position he holds as this is written in 1955. Typical of the regard with which he is held is this comment by Arthur Pancoast:

"Renshaw is level-headed, non-political in his thinking, and constructive. He has Miami Beach entirely at heart."

The mayor of Miami Beach from 1926 to 1928 was J. N. Lummus, Jr., the 26-year-old son of the first mayor J. N. Lummus. As "Newt" was born and reared on the beach, always alert to its problems, he was so highly regarded that he had served on the City Council between 1922 and 1952. He holds the record for being the Beach's youngest mayor. During his term the Venetian Causeway was finished, piping to carry water from Hialeah to the beach was installed, and the planning of the present City Hall and street widening were undertaken. Lummus, Jr., later served as Dade County Tax Assessor from 1929 to 1952.

Miami's third mayor, T. E. James, was a connection of the Lummus family, a fact which adds to the contribution this family made to the area. One of the most distinguished of the early mayors was, of course, John H. Levi, who was first elected to the City Council in 1918. Three years later he was elected to a two-year term as mayor, after which he continued serving on the council. He served there more years than any other member has to date.

Another pioneer to become mayor was Val C. Cleary, elected in 1930. Louis F. Snedigar, native Floridian, was elected Mayor in 1922, when he was 31 years of age. He was re-elected in 1924 and served until 1926.

Under Snedigar's administration the real estate boom was working itself up into a frenzy. And then, on January 10, 1926, an accident occurred which helped precipitate the "bust" in a most unforeseeable manner. The four-mast barkentine *Prins Valdemar* in an attempt to leave the Miami harbor, got grounded and rolled over on its side. Its 241-foot length completely blocked the ship channel leading into and out of the harbor. It was 25 maddening days before an 80-foot channel could be cut so ships could pass around it. Ships in the meantime had lined up on the gulf stream, waiting with boom-bought cargoes for delivery to awaiting merchants and builders. Even the causeway was lined with impatient freighters, and many ships inside the harbor were unable to leave. The results were fatal to the rising tide of the boom.

Kenneth Ballinger in his book "Miami Millions" wrote that the *Prins Valdemar* saved people a lot of money. "In the enforced lull which accompanied the efforts to unstopper the Miami harbor," he wrote, "many a shipper in the North and many a builder in the South got a better grasp of what actually was taking place here."

There is no space here to fully discuss the collapse of the boom; nor the still-famous "hurricane of '26"; nor the subsequent 1926 Miami bank failures — but Miami Beach survived them. The city even blossomed forth in the 1930's into a steady building program.

Golden Beach, which had been developing as a residential area during the 1920's, was incorporated in 1929 with the Dade-Boward county line as its northern boundary. The next municipality to develop as a result of the "spilling over" of the city of Miami Beach area, was Surfside. It was incorporated in 1935 to extend from the ocean to the bay and from 87th Terrace on the south to 96th Street. In Miami Beach proper, the '30's were devoted to hotel building. Although assessed property valuation dropped nine million dollars between 1930 and 1935, by 1940 the figures had leaped to over 70 million. The Miami Herald claimed in 1940 that Miami Beach had 3,041 homes and 239 hotels with 15,044 rooms. Besides these, there were 706 apartments. In the year 1940, forty hotels had been built.

Thomas W. Hagan, present editor of the Miami Daily News, in a signed feature article in the News on August 8, 1940, gave figures to show that hotels represented then from 13 to 38 per cent of Miami Beach building. "The 1940 construction," Hagan pointed out, "showed a trend toward more costly construction. Prophets — amateur and otherwise — disagree violently on the question of saturation." Hagan then gave more figures to show that the demand was at that time still ahead of the quantity and quality of supply.

That same issue of the News announced that the City had set aside approximately \$122,565 for its advertising and publicity program. Dorr & Hume, now Miami's oldest agency and operating under the name August Dorr Advertising, received the city account; and Steve Hannagan, favorite of Carl Fisher and the public generally, was to continue doing beach publicity.

Three more municipalities were to appear on the north of Miami Beach: Indian Creek Village, in 1939; Bal Harbour, in 1946 and Bay Harbor Island, in 1947. Bal Harbour extends from 96th Street to Baker's Haulover channel. Bay Harbor Island is on Broad Causeway which opened in 1951 and which connects Bay Harbor Island with the mainland at 123rd Street. This is a toll causeway. More will be said about this "Golden Strip" and its hotel and motel economy. The last two of these towns to develop had not appeared when World War II brought something else that was unexpected to Miami Beach.

That "something else" was the Army. The men stationed at the beach after the United States entered the World War in 1942 were referred to as the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command. Hundreds of soldiers, none above the rank of a non-commissioned officer, lived in the plush hotels and drilled in the streets. The newspapers since have declared that the G.I.'s who trained at the beach later returned with brides on post-war honeymoons,

and stayed to become permanent citizens. They occupied 85% of the hotels while in training.

Although the lights on Miami Beach were completely blacked out during the war, no lights or traffic of any sort were allowed north of Baker's Haul-over at night, where John M. Duff, Jr., had developed the Geen Heron Hotel. As a retired marine captain after World War I, Duff had engaged in the hotel business at the beach: first when he built the LeRoy Hotel and Villas in 1933; and in 1938 when he leased N. B. T. Roney's Cromwell Hotel. When World War II took the Cromwell, it also took Captain Duff. Currently Duff is managing director of the Golden Gate Hotel.

That the Miami Beach story is basically "hotels" is the opinion of Leon C. McAskill, executive director of the Miami Beach Hotel Association in 1955. Because of McAskill's first-hand knowledge while working with the hotels, and because he kept in intimate touch with the hotel development while publisher of the Miami Beach Sun, this writer asked him for permission to include here his own previously unpublished summary of the development of hotels at Miami Beach.

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#### McASKILL'S REPORT ON HOTELS

The remarkable growth from a swampland to the world's most modern, concentrated vacation playground, established an industry that boasts one-fourth of the hotels in a state that is near the top in the nation for hotels.

Slowly through the depression years of the thirties the hotel industry in Miami Beach changed from the hands of "promoters" to the more stable and capable hands of experienced hotel men. By the end of the third decade of the century, the Miami Beach hotel industry had become of age and was becoming recognized as "big business". Growth and numbers and influence was halted, temporarily, by World War II. 85% of Miami Beach's hotels were taken over by the Air Force, and with the facilities provided, speeded the war's end by many months.

At the end of hostilities, Miami Beach and its chief industry entered the period of its greatest growth. After a gigantic reclamation project had restored the hotels, the construction parade began. Each year during the past decade has had a hotel building program that strove to outdo last year's final word in elegance and perfection of appointments.

In 1946 six new hotels were built with a total of 366 rooms. The largest of the six 1946 hotels was the Martinique with 137 rooms.

1947 saw the erection of the first postwar multi-million dollar glamor hostelry. The Sherry Frontenac added 250 rooms to Miami Beach's total room count. Six other new hotels that year brought 1947's added rooms to 785. 1947 also saw the first of the postwar additions built to existing hotels. Two hotels added a total of 84 rooms.

As an example of the solid investors now becoming attracted to the Miami Beach hotel industry, George Sax, Chicago banker, unveiled his glamorous Saxony Hotel in 1948. That year set a record for Miami Beach's blooming hotel industry. Seventeen new hotels with an amazing total of 1576 rooms added their glitter to the Gold Coast skyline in 1948. Three existing hotels added a total of 62 rooms.

Right next door to the Saxony, the competing-for-glamor Sans Souci led the 1948 parade. The Sans Souci added 253 rooms and two other newcomers added almost 200 more rooms to the now amazing total.

In 1950 the 250 room Casablanca headed the parade of new oceanfront houses, and seven other fine hotels built in the half-century year added (with the Casablanca) 1111 more rooms, and two major alteration jobs accounted for almost 200 more rooms in that year.

The Algiers at 26th and Collins, with 258 rooms and the Biltmore Terrace at the extreme edge of Miami Beach, were the leaders in size of the new houses built in 1951 with 258 and 230 rooms respectively. Three other new hotels brought the total of rooms added in '51 to 628.

In 1952 the beautiful Empress was that year's largest contribution to Collins Avenue and the Ocean. Total new construction in 1952 was 284 rooms, and 37 rooms in additions to existing hotels brought the year's total to 321.

1953 saw the largest hotel built since 1946, the DiLido with 329 rooms at Lincoln Road, Collins Avenue and the Ocean. Two other new houses added 160 rooms more.

Hotel history in Miami Beach was made in 1954 with Ben Novack et al., crashing into the world's spotlight with the fabulous Fontainebleau on the site of the old Firestone Estate, Collins Avenue and the Ocean. With 545 rooms and every imaginable facility — and Novack and Morris Lapidus, the architect, are not lacking in imagination — the Fontainebleau is already world famous. Other new structures and additions added 135 rooms at a cost of about one million dollars.

In the present year, building of newer and, if possible, finer hotels goes merrily on. The Eden Roc, the Lucerne and the Seville will be ready for the

1955-56 season. These three beauties will add 734 rooms to the ever increasing total, with the Eden Roc contributing 304 rooms. Major additions are being added this year, too. The Versailles, the Waldman (formerly Lord Tarleton) and the Shore Club are adding a grand total of 318 rooms.

The ten year total of hotels built in Miami Beach is 55, and the total increase in number of rooms 6988. The 14 major additions to existing hotels added 831 rooms to the total, making a grand total of 7801 added rooms for the period. Not included in the above totals, of course, are the many beautiful hotels immediately adjacent to Miami Beach in Surfside and Bal Harbour. Here, too, new hotels are building or are on the drawing boards, not to mention those recently built which include the Sea View, Balmoral, Bal Harbour, Emerald Isle, Arthur Godfrey's Kenilworth and the Golden Gate, among the largest.

The number of hotels within the corporate limits of Miami Beach is edging close to the 400 mark, and the number of hotel rooms now exceeds 30,000. The total valuation strains the imagination. It must be a half billion dollars, and the end is not in sight. One problem may be noted; we are fast running out of land. Remember, Miami Beach's land area is only eight miles long and a mile or less wide. (A total of 7 square miles of land area.)

The construction of the new Seville and the Lucerne may be the beginning of a trend. These two new beauties are being built on the sites of the Grossinger Pancoast and the Good, respectively, two of the famous hotels of Miami Beach's yesterdays.

No doubt others are doomed to the same fate. It pains those of us who knew the glories of Miami Beach in the 20's and 30's to see the passing of old friends and landmarks — but the eyes of Miami Beach look ever ahead — even when dimmed by a tear for departed glories.

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Such is Miami Beach's hotel history, recorded by one who knows it. Among those who remember the old days at the beach are the 250 members of the Miami Beach Pioneers' Club, founded in 1949. Its president has always been E. M. Hancock, the city's building inspector.

During the decade from 1945 to the present, during which time many insisted that the beach had been over-developed, Editor Thomas W. Hagan's conclusions of 1940 had continued to hold, "that the demand is still ahead of

the quantity and quality of supply". And no doubt larger and still lovelier hotels will be marching in architectural grandeur against the sunrise of tomorrow.

When William Allen Chase became first president of the Miami Beach Motel Association in 1953, there were 41 motels along the three-mile shore which the Association calls the "Golden Strip". There are now 61 motels on the strip from 158th to 191st Street, extending from Baker's Haulover to Golden Beach. Tradition says that the Haulover sand strip got its name from the days before the deep channel had been cut across it and a man named Baker had been among those who dragged their boats across, from Biscayne Bay to the Ocean. The County has developed Haulover Park, a beauty spot just north of the channel.

What public relations men like Steve Hannigan, Joe Copps and Hank Meyer have done for Miami Beach, Hal Bergida is doing for the golden, three-mile long Motel Row. He gets to the public the story of the new de-luxe motels with their luxurious vacation facilities. The general area boasts shopping centers, fine restaurants, beauty parlors, fishing boats and pier fishing.

Local writers and radio programs have been a part of the great promotional program. John D. Montgomery beginning in 1929 published a paper for awhile at Miami Beach, and several other papers have come and gone. The present daily paper, the Miami Beach Sun, is owned by George B. Storer of the Storer Broadcasting Company, which owns WGBS. The Miami Beach Times, founded as the Democrat by J. H. Wendler in 1927, is now published by James Wendler.

The first radio station for the beach was installed at the Fleetwood in the 20's over the call letters WMBF—Wonderful Miami Beach, Florida. In 1926 WIOD — Wonderful Isle of Dreams — was installed on Collins Island, opposite the Nautilus Hotel. It was bought by the Miami Daily News in 1935. The present station at Miami Beach, WKAT, was started by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Katzentine in 1937. Mr. Katzentine is an attorney and a former mayor of Miami Beach, having been elected in 1932 for a two-year term.

As Associate Editor Ralph G. Martin of Newsweek wrote in his issue of January 17, 1955, "It takes publicity to make this Miami Beach magic". Newsweek then proceeded to pay tribute to Miami Beach's city manager, Claude A. Renshaw, and to its public relations director, Hank Meyer, who has held that position since 1949. Referring to Meyer, the Newsweek article said:



More recently it was Renshaw who brought in one of the best public-relations directors in the business. He is Hank Meyer, who just won a travel writers' grand award for the best travel promotion in the world. . . . It takes Miami Beach magic to fill these hotels, and it takes Hank Meyer to make that magic. And yet Hank talks of tomorrow and says: "Miami Beach isn't overbuilt; it's under-promoted."

The travel award to Hank Meyer, mentioned by Newsweek, was only one of many this nationally known publicity expert has received. In 1953 he was nationally "best" for photo coverage; in 1954 he was reelected by the Miami Beach Junior Chamber of Commerce as the outstanding young man of Miami Beach, and nominated to the selection as one of the ten outstanding young men in the nation. His latest honor was a citation for outstanding achievements in public relations in the field of government, awarded by the American Public Relations Association.

Newsweek climaxes its Miami Beach and south Florida comments by quoting Hank Meyer's comment about Miami Beach magic: "You can't bottle it, or pack it, or ship it. If the American people want this, and I know they do, then they will come down here to get it."

But to make the people "come down here and get it," Meyer says he tries to reach 160 million people as often as he can.

All of which brings the reader right back to the question posed at the beginning of this article. WHAT IS MIAMI BEACH?

Newsweek's story included this: ". . . 4,000 acres of noise and wonder, the garishness and fun of Broadway, the nightly parade of mink coats, no matter what the weather. Most of all, perhaps it's a sense of luxury." The article had already mentioned the miles of ocean front and the tropical beauty, but did the visiting editor see those thousands of pretty, modest homes, those 58 schools and 22 churches and facilities for outdoor, healthful sports, or attend the symphony orchestra concerts?

SO, WHAT IS MIAMI BEACH? Carl Fisher once told Steve Hannigan "Steve, Miami Beach was the only natural we ever had. But, Boy, what a natural it was!"

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