



Interview with Marjorie York

Interviewer
Kathy Hersh

S1: 00:00

Today is June 8th, 2020. We are interviewing Marjorie York for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project. We are in the Art Deco Welcome Center. And thank you very much, Marjorie. It's taken us a while to sit down opposite one another, but I'm looking forward to hearing about all your activities. Tell us a little bit about how you got to Miami Beach in the first place, and we'll just go from there.

Marjorie
York

S2: 00:32

Oh, like I say, I'm from Cape Cod, Massachusetts. And all of the best colleges are in Boston. So when it came time for me to go to college, of course, I wanted to go to the University of Miami. And I had never been in an airplane, and I have never been in Florida. But I loved it here, and you could study outside under the trees. And after that, I never liked cold weather again. So when I graduated, I came six months out of the year here and six months in Cape Cod. And a lot of people-- of course, they're a lot older than I am, but everybody I knew was here. And I knew people in every hotel. I walk down the street, and it's just like being home [laughter].

S1: 01:14

So you decided to get active. Was there one thing that sort of launched you as an activist? Because you are in everything. You are really--

S2: 01:28

I'm on every board there is - county boards, city boards, everything.

S1: 01:30

How many boards are you on? Just name some.

S2: 01:32

At least 20 boards and subcommittees, and I'm active on every board. I don't need my name just on the boards, if I don't want to do anything. So I really work hard in the community.



- S1: 01:44 So what are the main boards and the main work you're focused on now?
- S2: 01:50 Well, of course, we're sitting here, and it was 100th anniversary of the Women's Suffrage. Yes, I'm on Commission for Women. We had a wonderful exhibit-- when did we--? In January, the exhibit opened here.
- S1: 02:06 And so you were involved in helping set this up, this exhibit here?
- S2: 02:10 No. I actually set up the exhibit, but I was representing Commission for Women, which is a City Hall board.
- S1: 02:17 What do you think is the most hot issue right now that you're involved in?
- S2: 02:25 Right now, I'm on the County Community Relations Board, and the protesters that are marching here-- we're not meeting, and so we weren't asked to come and to try to settle things and be part of it. And of course, on that board, all the police chiefs come, especially the Miami police chief is very good. He comes to all of our meetings, brings his offices, and they're trying to really do things peacefully. But we've lost touch with the group at this moment because we're not meeting, and we're not meeting by telephone.
- S1: 02:58 So it's been in suspension then during this whole crisis happening over George Floyd.
- S2: 03:04 Yes. And there were other things like Martin, Trayvon. His uncle was on the board. And we met his sister, Sybrina, and she came to talk to us. And we had townhall forums so that the people in the community would understand what's going on, and they wouldn't riot at the time.
- S1: 03:28 And this was at the time of the Trayvon Martin



- killing?
- S2: 03:31 The Trayvon Martin case, yes.
- S1: 03:33 Of course, there have been many killings since then.
- S2: 03:35 Yeah.
- S1: 03:36 Particularly pertaining to Miami Beach, have you been involved in issues of housing, for example? What kinds of things have you been involved in that affect Miami Beach particularly?
- S2: 03:49 Oh, in just Miami Beach. My closest friend, Connie Morrow, started the Sunflower Society back in 1971, when I wasn't-- I mean, I didn't know her then. I used to just come in the winter. And she became my closest friend when I moved here year round. At that time, the Sunflower Society was contributing a lot of money to the Children's Hospital. And she asked me to be on the board, and I said, "We can't just keep giving money for different things. We need to really stand for something. Let's have a grant and have a program that will really be ours." I knew the grant writer, Beth [Sider?]. She actually works here. She isn't here today. She is working part-time here. And she said, "There's grants available from Department of Cultural Affairs for after-school art classes." Of course, I didn't know anything about grants, and I didn't know anything about art because I am not the art teacher. But luckily for us, the grant came with two wonderful art teachers, and we've had the free after-school art classes.
- S2: 05:00 We're doing it in various schools. We're in Fienberg/Fisher at the moment. We've had 15 years of wonderful, free classes in the summer over in Botanical Garden with over 300 students. This



year, of course, we've kind of been limited, and we won't be able to do that. And at the end of the school year and at the end of the summer, we have wonderful exhibits. And the thing I like about it is that all of the elected officials that know me support us. They come. They read the proclamations that we give to the teachers and the principals. And the school board representative comes. And in fact, school board representative gives us some extra funding, because the grant is a matched grant funding. So I'm so pleased--

S1: 05:40

So that's a success.

S2: 05:41

--when elected officials really come, and they like the things, and they praise us. And then we feel we're doing something really good for this community. Other part of the grant is we're in the Overtown Youth Center. It's been torn down right now. As soon as it's rebuilt, we'll be back there with classes as well.

S1: 05:59

What about housing on Miami Beach? It'd been an issue for a while, housing.

S2: 06:05

Oh, housing, yes. When I first came here, I used to go the Housing Authority meetings when I had more time, and I got to learn about it. One of the boards I'm-- in fact, one of the first boards I was asked to join was Community Action Agency. And they help people. They have some funding that they can help with rent subsidies. They help with the Florida Power & Light; that's a big program from them. They have Head Start Children; that's one of their big-- in fact, when I leave today, it's our final meeting for the summer. Of course, it's a telephone call-in meeting. So we can't meet personally, but at least we're up to date with what that board is doing.

S1: 06:50

So do you see yourself less of a hands-on person, as more of a policy and structure-creating person?



- S2: 06:58 Yes. That's why I join so many boards, because I think the only way to change things for the betterment of the residents is by talking to the elected officials and changing some of the laws.
- S1: 07:11 And what are some of the changes that you've been involved in?
- S2: 07:16 Some of the changes I'm involved-- oh, of course, through the PACT meeting. They're a wonderful group. I joined it through-- we were Human Services Coalition at that time. We're Catalyst Miami. We were the first ones to join that. We were on 17th Street. Aaron Dorfman was downstairs when he started PACT. And through that group, they've really changed some of the things, especially for the juvenile justice. And some of the things now aren't considered really felonies. And they give them a warning so that the youngsters don't have a record. That's very important.
- S1: 07:53 Can you explain for our potential viewers what PACT is?
- S2: 08:00 Oh, it's People Acting for Community Together. It's a lot of churches, some of the schools. Fienberg/Fisher used to be part of it. And it's a community grassroots group, and they choose every year at least two main things that they feel need change. Sometimes it's housing. Sometimes it's, like I say, juvenile justice. Immigration is one of their issues.
- S1: 08:30 What are the changes that you've seen? You've been living on Miami Beach now 30 years year round, you said. What are the changes--?
- S2: 08:36 But I see the changes, but when I came in the year-
- when I came in the year-round, you could walk anywhere. Nobody was afraid to go out at night.



The hotels all had entertainment. We'd come at 11 o'clock at night. You could walk through the parks. When I came here for year-round, everything was with "Buzz" on the doors. All of the apartments are locked, and you can't get in. Oh, I'll tell you how I became a community activist. The first time, I was on Pennsylvania Avenue and 16th. And now, those people have sold that building, so I'm on corner of Jefferson and 15th. And the nearest thing to me was the Jewish Community Center. So I went there to see what kind of activities and to become a member there. And they had a wonderful group that was called Friendly Visitors. We met once a week, and we could visit shut-in people or we could call them on the telephone. I like to go in person. And my person was living in the Palms Hotel here on 15th Street, and visited her every week. And then whatever the needs of the people, we would report them back and see if we could really help people.

S2: 09:52

And then I was given somebody else that lived in one of the high-rise apartments, and it happened to be April 1st. And I went there, and I'm pressing all the buzzers. And I'm not good with locks, because I only live on the second floor where there's no locks. And I'm pressing and pressing the buzzers, and I can't get into the building. And somebody walks by and says, "Happy April Fool's Day!" And I said, "You know what? I'm the fool because I don't know how to get into the building." So then I said, "I only want people where I can go and get in and visit them, that you don't have to go in with security." Because up north, we never even locked our doors. We weren't afraid of things up there. So that's the biggest change I see here.

S2: 10:36

And of course, this neighborhood was different too. It was with all the Jewish stores, and they were closed on Saturday, and I loved that. Because



originally when I was born, we lived in Waltham. And there were no Jewish stores like that. So for the holidays, you would have to go into [Berkline?] and buy the foods and things, and it was different. So I loved it when I came here.

S1: 10:58

What do you think influenced you to be this active?

S2: 11:08

My mother wasn't as outgoing as I was. But of course, she was with her sister, her dad. And when I was five years old, she used to collect the Blue Boxes for Israel. And she would wait till I came home from kindergarten, and she would take me to collect the Blue Boxes. And my father's hobby was the Temple. He was past president. He was treasurer. When they started bingo, he was there every Monday night. And every Sunday was a meeting at 10 o'clock. And if I wasn't ready for Sunday School, he's ready to go [laughter]. But the Temple was his second home, so I was brought up like that, that you do things and you help the community. But I was not a community activist. I was on the boards, but Hadassah actually had board training in Boston. And I'm not a good traveler, and I said, "I don't need to be trained. I'm on the board, but I want to be away six months out of the year. I'm never going to be president. I don't need to be trained."

S2: 12:10

When I moved here for year-round and I started to be on boards, I learned as I went along, because I was not a community activist. I was only known for my recipe for cooking and baking, and I thought that's what I would always do. So when I moved here-- like I say, I know I learned as I went along, but I didn't know who to give my food to. And I discovered Camillus House was picking up food. And every week, I would give them at least 12 casseroles and baking. And then when they



stopped doing that, somebody told me they're giving out food to the homeless on 2nd Street. And so I found Saul and Miriam Lichter. They weren't from my town, but they were from Temple Beth Sholom. I go to the Temple of Emanu-El here. So they picked up my food every week, and then they said to me, "Why don't you come and see what we're doing and help give out the food on Sundays?" I was very glad to do that, and that's how I got involved with the homeless and how I got on homeless committee on Miami Beach. And then I found out Saul was former principal of Beach High. And that's how I got on the education committees at Fienberg/Fisher, EESAC, and we had the Healthy Learners.

S1: 13:35 What were some of the issues they were dealing with back then?

S2: 13:38 Back then, it wasn't so much things that-- things always need funding from Tallahassee. They still need funding. That hasn't changed. But through the Chamber of Commerce-- and that's how I came to the Chamber. Their education group had a wonderful thing - Teacher of Year Luncheon, Elayne Weisburd Luncheon every year. That, they were doing good. And they had a mentor program. It was called Career Shadowing. And the youngsters followed around, and then they came at the end to tell their experiences. And some of them-- actually, that was the careers that they might have eventually. And they had the internship program. And through--

S1: 14:23 During your time involved with education on Miami Beach, was that the period of time when there was desegregation going on?

S2: 14:31 Oh, no. That was long after that, and I didn't know anything about desegregation. In Massachusetts,



we never-- we didn't have anything like that. No, the schools, I think that was way back. But I happened to meet through Fienberg/Fisher, Nora Swan. She had been field commissioner for 14 years, and then they eliminated her position. So she was doing adult education. Why I came to that? At that time, I had my calico cat. And I said, "There's somebody that's a producer and whatever." And of course, I didn't need to be famous in the film industry. I wanted my cat to be famous. And that's how I met Nora. I had been in a film commercial because I thought, "That's something fun to do." And they took me for the Gatorade commercial. They liked what I was saying, because they wanted you to dress for the beach. And of course, I swim everyday. I have nice beach clothes, so my beach hat. And I said I wanted-- this was before Hurricane Andrew, just that year. And I said, "One last swim before the hurricane arrives." And they loved that, and they wanted me in the commercial.

S2: 15:43

So when I got through and I had a talking part, I was actually eligible for SAG. And I could've done more with things, but by that time, I was on a lot of boards. And I really didn't have time. But I learned from Nora all about post-production, pre-production. And I learned all about the film industry, and I met all of the famous people. And when Mayor Penelas had his Economic Development Summit, the first one, I went with Nora. She didn't know a lot of the Miami Beach people. I introduced her to the Miami Beach elected officials, and she introduced me to the senator, Bob Graham. And she knew him very well, and she knew a lot the county people. And that's how I learned-- at that time, I was more on just Miami Beach groups. I actually learned from her the importance of county



boards. And unfortunately, she had a brain tumor and she passed away. And after that, I had a tree planted for her in Fienberg/Fisher. I wrote an article in the newspaper about her. I had been on FMPTA, which is Florida Motion Picture and Television Association. That's how I got interested in the film industry.

S2: 16:57 Because when Jeb Bush was campaigning here, I didn't know him. He was right on Lincoln Road. That time, they wanted to close-- the film industry was closed up in Tallahassee, the film board. And I said to him, "You are standing in the heart of the film industry here. And one day, it will be just as important as tourism." And I say, "And when you get elected, I hope you will open the film board."

S1: 17:22 And then it didn't happen.

S2: 17:23 It did happen, yes. Nora personally went up to Tallahassee and made it happen. It did happen, and they had the incentives for the film industry. And you saw-- you used to walk down the street and see. They're doing magazines. They're doing foreign things. They're doing film.

S1: 17:38 Here on Miami Beach?

S2: 17:39 Here on Miami Beach. This was the film capital of Florida. And then they were so foolish in Tallahassee. They took away all of the incentives. I think it was in 2016. And then you don't see the filming. Sally Heyman took it up, and she's now got some incentives from-- and I've known Sally for years. She was a personal friend. She got some incentives. And now, you're just beginning to see a little bit, the film industry is coming back. But it is so important. It's such a wonderful industry. And of course, if you close the streets here for two days to do a film, the residents run to City Hall. And they complain, they can't go down the street. They don't



realize how much money is brought in. These people stay in the hotels. They eat in the restaurants. And it's good for the economy, and people don't see it. So while I was with Nora, I got a title, Goodwill Ambassador for the Film Industry.

S1: 18:34

Why did they shut down the film commission [crosstalk]?

S2: 18:37

Because they were not having the incentives to do the production here, so they went to other states that did have that, like Georgia and Alabama and different places.

S1: 18:46

Why weren't they given the incentives?

S2: 18:48

Because from Tallahassee, they didn't think it was necessary. They'll give the money to something else. We're always fighting for something up in Tallahassee.

S1: 18:56

Do you think that there is a real geographic division in the state of Florida between Tallahassee and South Florida?

S2: 19:03

Absolutely, because I'm on many boards, whether it's for the children, whether it's for the Alliance for Aging. Every year, Max Rothman goes up to Tallahassee to fight for services for the elderly. The waiting list is over 1,000 people for services in their homes. Can you imagine what is going to happen to these people [inaudible] to have shopping or need personal services and have to be on a waiting list? And the reason why we don't get more funding is the northern part of the state is not really a retirement community, and they don't vote for the things that they want down here. And it's a fight every year for the same thing. We need more funding here in [Tallahassee?]. Same thing with the schools. We need more funding here for these



schools. And there's a lot of immigrants here, and they need ESL classes, which is English as a Second Language. And they don't have that in the northern part of the state, and they don't see that. But there is a very big difference.

S1: 20:08

Do you make many trips to Tallahassee?

S2: 20:09

I am not a traveler. I don't even go to Broward County. I barely got to Florida in the airplane, and so I can't ride more than that. I would be invited with Catalyst. Every year, they want me to come. I'm not going eight hours on a bus to go there, so I get reports for everything. And I know all of the elected officials here. I visit them in their office. I know them all by their first names, and they all come to my events. So I don't really have to go up to Tallahassee to see them [laughter]. But I do want to talk about International Day of Peace because that's [crosstalk].

S1: 20:41

Okay. Let's talk about the International Day of Peace.

S2: 20:43

Oh, I was on the Community Relations Board in Miami Beach. And one day, all of the schools had a march down Tallahassee for peace, and I was in the march representing Fienberg/Fisher school. And when we got done marching down Lincoln Road, there was no place to have speeches and a talk. And so the church invited us in to do it there, and I said to myself, "There needs to be a permanent place." Because at that time, we were starting to talk about gun violence and how important it is and how important peace is. And so I said to myself, "I'm going to bring this to the Community Relations Board." It was my idea to have a peace pole. I brought it to the board. And of course, whatever I do is original. And they said, "Oh, there's peace poles. You can order them from



the computer." I said, "Oh, no." I said, "I have two wonderful art teachers. We have free art classes, and one is actually a wood carver. I'm going to invite the art teachers to the board, and they will create something that this board can be proud of."

S2: 21:59

And of course, when they saw and they saw the designs and what the art teachers were going to make, they all voted for it. Well, of course, we needed about \$3,000 in order to pay for the materials, to pay for the teachers. And where we wanted it, I wanted it in Botanical Garden. And just the cement work alone was going to be a lot of money. Of course, it's my project. Nobody on the board's going to raise money. Of course, they left it up to me. So it took me a while to raise the funds. People were very nice to me, and they were giving the money. And I finally had the money. And then you had to go and get a permit. And when you stand upstairs in the permit office, you can be there until tomorrow waiting in line. So I came and I said, "I'm from the Community Relations Board. I'm here to see Tom to get a permit to do something in Botanical Garden." Right away, he came right out when he saw me, and he gave me the permit. Good, got the permit. We're all ready.

S2: 23:01

Go over to the Garden, and we picked out our spot and where we were going to do the peace pole. And everything is fine. Then I had to go and get somebody to pour the cement. I had met-- what's his name? Colby [Carr?]. Actually, I met him when they were lighting candles on Lincoln Road. So he's the first one-- I said, "You wouldn't know a contractor to pour the cement?" and he gave me a name. And we had to wait all summer for that person to come back, and then the person didn't want to do such a small job. And then I found



somebody else, and he wanted to charge \$1,000 for it. And then I finally found somebody who was actually willing to do it. And by that time, so much time had gone one, they were going to renovate the Garden, and we couldn't use it for two years. And when I came back and with all my permits, oh, those permits are only good for a limited time. Had to go back to City Hall, get permits. Then we do the cement. Finally, there, we're going to have the peace pole. It took me five years to do it. But you see, one thing about me, I don't give up if I have an idea.

S2: 24:13

And the first year we did the peace event was through the Community Relations Board of Miami Beach. Then the next year, we had a new mayor, a newer commissions. And what did they do? They dissolved the Miami Beach Community Relations Board, such an important board. But lucky for me, I was on the County Community Relation Board, and I brought that idea to them. Of course, they loved it. They had a project, and they didn't have to do any work, and they got their name on a project. And so we did that a few years, until there was a new-- Amy [Coswell?] retired, and she was wonderful to me. She would have me stay there till 7 o'clock at night after everybody was home, because she wanted it just perfect. She wanted to know my ideas and how I wanted it. And they were going to print the programs for me, and they were going to print-- oh, the flyers. The art teacher created the flyers for us with the peace-- the pole is beautiful. It's with all doves on it, and it says "Peace" in eight languages.

S2: 25:17

And of course, it's an original. You'll never see anything like that anywhere else. And so then when we had a new advisor come in, she was going to do this and going to do that. And she said, "No people



want to come to Miami Beach. We're a county place." I said, "Okay. You know what? I'm on the Ayuda board. I'll ask Ayuda if they want to put their name on the program," because I can't say, "It's Marjorie's project." It has to have a name of an organization so it will look like-- and the last years, we've done it through Ayuda, but it was easier for me than working with the county. They have restrictions. Everything had to be approved by the county too - you print anything with county logo. Ayuda, nothing. "Here's what I want. Here's what I want." "Fine." Go into City Hall. They all know me. Got friends in [crosstalk] Ayuda. It's much easier.

S1: 26:03

So the county was quite a different scene.

S2: 26:04

Yes. The county, you have restrictions when you're on-- I mean, City Hall was the same way. When you print everything, it has to go through the communications department. I mean, I don't blame them. It's city, and nobody wants to be sued for something that isn't right. I mean, but when you're with your own organization, you can do whatever you want. It's much easier.

S1: 26:24

In the years that you've been doing these kind of projects--

S2: 26:30

Oh, for 30 years. The first thing, I came to-- when I came to Espanola Way to the Jewish Community Center, then somebody asked me to be on Community Action Agency. It met at 6th Street. And then she also asked me to be a volunteer with the Guild for the Blind, which I'm still doing today. I'm on the White Cane Day at the LightHouse. I read the proclamations at White Cane Day. In fact, it was my idea. I always have ideas. We always had the march around the LightHouse. And one day, I saw somebody on-- the mounted police going down



Biscayne Boulevard. And of course, you know me. I like to pet every animal there is, and he stops so I could pet the horse. I said, "Would you be interested in leading the White Cane Day March?" "Oh, yes," and he called. And every year now at White Cane Day, they come with three horses to lead the parade.

- S1: 27:29 So I'm not clear on what your role is. That established a Martin Luther King Day Parade on Miami Beach?
- S2: 27:35 No, not Martin Luther King Day. This is LightHouse for the Blind.
- S1: 27:39 LightHouse for the Blind, okay.
- S2: 27:40 --of the Blind. White Cane Day is an established day. It's probably an international day, not only for the United States, for the blind recognition of-- and that comes during Disability Month. And I'm on that committee for the White Cane Day event. See, I like community events. And if I have a choice of what kind of committees to be on, it's usually events planning.
- S1: 28:04 Of all the administrations that you've had to deal with over the past 30 years, is there one that stands out as having been very progressive and open to ideas and helpful to work with?
- S2: 28:23 Well, Catalyst Miami, of course. We were supposed to do the Poverty Solution Summit right now, in the midst of this virus. So we postponed it till next spring. And I'm on the events planning. They're open to all new ideas. Maybe I'll mention the name, it will help. Daniella Levine started it right now. Then she turned it over to someone when she became county commissioner. And like I say, we always did summits, and we got the people together for focus groups. We had Imagine Miami,



where we exchanged ideas. And I think a lot of good comes exchanging ideas. Because I don't know what goes on in every municipality, unless we meet with the people, and they tell us what they need. And in fact, same thing with Commission for Women. There's about five. And Community Relation Board, there's about five. And I've said to both of those boards, they need to expand and have them in other municipalities. And in fact, my idea was for Commission for Women to invite all of the five, and we meet together, and we exchange ideas. It's my idea for Community Relation Board as well. We haven't gotten to it yet, but when we have board retreats, I still bring that up. That's how we learn from each other. That's how I feel. It's important.

S1: 29:42

So you're an ideas pusher.

S2: 29:45

Yeah. Now, the idea is in Miami Beach, on many boards. I like county boards, and I like to be part of the county. In fact, I was on the film board in Sunny Isles Beach when my friend, Connie Morrow, started the Sunflower Society. She was chairman of that board, so I had one of the other commissions appoint me so it wouldn't look [crosstalk]. She just chose her friend. So those people only wanted to work in Sunny Isles Beach. They didn't care what the county was doing. I said, "You are part of the county. When you come, there's the county board there and the film board there. And you need to be part of it." Then they realized in order to get permits and things, you don't only have to do it with your city. If you're part of the county board, it makes it easier for the filmmakers. But they never saw that. Same thing when I represent Commission for Women. I go to all of the county events, and I'm laughing. I said, "Well, here I am again. I'm the only



one representing Miami Beach," and they all know me. You can get people sometimes to crossover and to go across the [inaudible]. They don't see the importance of it.

S2: 30:52 Now, we're having a wonderful event, hopefully, for the 100-year Suffrage for Women's Equality Day in August. It will be allowed to do this event at the Women's Park in Sweetwater. I'm hoping by then, the restrictions will be lifted. And they have-- what do you call that? It's a time capsule. It was supposed to unveil, and then dig up the time capsule and things. So by then, hopefully the virus-- because schools will have started. And if schools are in session, I hope we'll be able to have events again.

S1: 31:31 Did you get involved in the historic preservation movement here at all?

S2: 31:38 I wasn't living here then. I moved here the year Barbara [Capitman?] actually passed away, and I never really knew her. Of course, I knew Donna [Zemond?], Nancy [Liebman?], all of the people who were involved in it. And I come every year to Art Deco Weekend. In fact, we have the free arts and crafts table, thanks to Daniella upstairs. So we do that. But I did not know the-- I wasn't living here. I was only here year round. So year round, I just visit all my friends and whatever, and I wasn't active in the community.

S1: 32:09 What's your proudest achievement?

S2: 32:12 International Day of Peace, the peace pole. That's permanent. It will always be there. I write an article in the Chamber newspaper every year, and it says that's my legacy to the community so that there'll always be-- peace events can take place there.

S1: 32:28 And are there peace events held every year for



International Day of Peace?

S2: 32:32

They said I'm the only one that's actually in the county doing a big event. Of course, the schools mention it. I have all the [inaudible] the patents, made drawings. The schools, they come here to be-- the schoolchildren. We had about 150 youngster at the event last year. All of the community people, all the elected officials give us proclamations. The last two years, Mayor Gelber was the keynote speaker. So I said, "Well, are there other events for September 21st?" They said I was the only major event going on. Well, it was my original idea to do, and nobody has copied it since.

S1: 33:14

Were there campaigns you were involved with that failed, that you learned from?

S2: 33:20

That failed. Yeah, we're still working for immigration. Daniella Levine is working for them to have-- they do not have identification, and they can't go into schools to pick up their children and things. And she wants a municipal identification for people to have, if they don't have their driver's license or things like that. And that has not passed yet, and it has not-- it took a long time for the [city?] to go to the county commissioners. It sat on their desk, and it still hasn't passed. One of things that have failed... there probably have been things that have failed, and we have to still work on them. But like I say, we don't give up on things. We just introduce them the following year or with a different group or invite other people to take part in it. So--

S1: 34:11

How do you sustain your energy to do all this?

S2: 34:14

Yeah. Well, that's it. I'm up early every morning, quarter of 5, 5 o'clock. And like I say, I'm known as the cat lady of Miami Beach because I feed stray



cats every morning at 5:30. After that, I'm a community activist. I can outrun anybody. I swim everyday. I'm waiting for the ocean, to swim if it's over 80 degrees out. When it's cold, I won't go in the water. I go in the heated pool in Flamingo Park in the winter. But I can probably outdo anyone because I was always a fast walker, and I was never one-- when I used to come home from school, change my clothes and say, "I'm going to the park. I'm going to play tennis. I'm going to ice skate. I'm going to do this." I would never come home and sit and watch television like some of the youngsters do [laughter].

S1: 35:00

What would be your message to young people today?

S2: 35:03

To be part of the community and to look and see what's going on. The issues are important because it's going to affect them. And as they get older and when they're in college, things might affect them, especially where there's so much debt, they said, with college loans. And maybe they could change that. And then when they get married and have children in schools, there will be things that they can be on PTAs. And they can actually change some of the policies and things that they don't like, if they're aware of things. And if they're aware when they're youngsters, they can still come as junior members. I got them to have - Commission for Women - a junior member, and also the Community Relations Boards. And some of the youngster too did come and are active. I know when I was in school, I wasn't active like that and could speak like that. In fact, when we had to give speeches in school, I was so afraid, and I didn't want to speak. Now, it's second nature to do public speaking. I'm program chairman for three groups. I introduce all the speakers. I introduce all the elected officials.



And people say-- I mean, I don't brag about myself, but people say I'm good at it, and they invite me to do it. So I'm pleased [laughter].

S1: 36:25 So what is it that keeps you in Miami Beach, that you love about Miami Beach?

S2: 36:31 Oh, the water. I'm from Cape Cod. I need to live near ocean. When I go and visit other cities, I think I'm not even in Florida. There are cities, nice residential places to live, but-- [inaudible] the Alliance for Aging has moved to Doral. And so when I go there, I said, "Gee, I must be in another state. There's no water or anything there [laughter]."

S1: 36:51 So it's a love of the water and being in the water.

S2: 36:53 I think it's the climate and the water. And the weather here is beautiful.

S1: 36:57 And what you can do year round here.

S2: 36:59 You can be out-- when it comes winter here, I want to hibernate when we have those cold days, but I can't. I have to go to the meetings [laughter]. So I'm running down the street to the buses, because I never wanted to drive. You see, when they had driver ed in high school, I didn't want that. And I still don't know how to drive, so I go by the buses. And we have wonderful transportation. I don't know why people complain. In Miami Beach, you can go to the county. There's several buses. And you get right off, right in front of the Government Building or you can go to the Omni if you needed change. Buses go down Biscayne Boulevard. So I have no trouble. And people say, "Why are you running?" I said, "Because sometimes there are two and three things in one day and not much time to go home in between." So I said, "I don't want to be late to a



county meeting." They're laughing. Well, that's the truth. I mean, I'm--

S1: 37:51

Well, Woody Allen says that 99% of life is showing up.

S2: 37:55

It's true.

S1: 37:56

And you seem to always show up.

S2: 37:58

Yes. Well, they can depend on me, and they know I'll always make a quorum. And if I can't come, and there's two things one day, I always tell them. I said, "I'm coming. I'll be a little late because I have to come from the other--" A lot of people just don't show up, and there's not a quorum. And these are county boards, and these people have been appointed by a county commissioner. Now, that is not right.

S1: 38:20

So you have good relationship--

S2: 38:22

I'm dedicated to people, and I'm very honest with things, and I take it serious. If you've been appointed to a board, whether it's a city board or a school board or a county board, I take that very serious. And I said, "It's an honor to be a part of that." And I work hard for their goals and their ideals. And besides, I always have ideas. And the best place to bring ideas is at a board. Because if you work yourself, you might not-- you might. I mean, people know me, so they listen to me. But if you're one person doing it, it isn't that important. But if a whole board is behind you, and we can have a forum and a townhall meeting and tell the importance of it, you'll be listened to. And you might just make that change.

S1: 39:06

And you mentioned earlier that a lot of people don't realize that.

S2: 39:11

They don't. And see, I learned as I go along.



Because like I say, I was just famous for my recipes, and I thought I'd always just stay home and bake and entertain, and I was the hostess with the mostest. I didn't know I was going to be a community activist. But it's only common sense, the things you're doing. And if you're going to be on a board, you don't just sit there and just have your name on a board. That doesn't mean anything. It's a waste of a day [laughter].

S1: 39:38

Is there anything that you'd like to add, that we didn't ask you?

S2: 39:44

No. I do so many things everyday. When I leave here, I'm having a call-in meeting. I'll tell you, this is funny. Because my pussycat's at home, when I go to meetings, I just say to her, "I'll be back later on to feed you," and she can't come to the meeting. So now, she's part of every call-in meeting. Her name is Truffles. So at the last meeting and every meeting, I say, "Hello, this is Marjorie and Truffles [laughter]." So they said the other day, "Hello, Truffles." They're treating her like a board member. And the other day at United Way, I said, "Marjorie and Truffles." So the advisor went, "How is Truffles today? Tell everybody who is Truffles." So they're treating her like a board member now.

S1: 40:26

So you're on conference calls?

S2: 40:29

Right now. At first, we weren't. And we were so out of touch, we didn't know what was going on. But then we started-- most of the boards, some of the county boards haven't had conference calls, but the others are. And then we're learning what's going on. Community Action Agency has fed about 85,000 homebound seniors that used to come to the community centers and eat their meals, and they're delivering the meals. And with Catalyst as



well, if they need LIHEAP, which is help with the electric bills or they need food stamps, they're doing it on the computer. And people can still register. Nobody has come back to their offices. Even in the Children's Trust, they haven't come back to their offices. Catalyst said maybe in July, some of them will come back. And City Hall, of course, you're not allowed to go into City Hall [inaudible] also on the-- and a funny thing that people don't know about me, I'm good with people, and I'm good in talking, but I was never good with machines.

S2: 41:33

And when I was in eighth grade, if you were good in your studies, there was a bonus. They gave you a typing course. And I was the slowest one in the class. I didn't like it, and I never touched a typewriter since. And now, everything is by computers, and they laugh at me at the Chamber when they introduce me, "Here's a person that's the most active person that doesn't have a cellphone and doesn't have a computer." I said, "You know why I'm active in the community? Because I don't have to stay home and do those things." I said, "And that's why I have time to be out in the community." And my saying is, "I'm good with people. I'm allergic to machines. I don't even sit next to them [laughter]." And that's the truth. If I had to stay home and work on the computer, you think I'd be out at all these meetings and doing things? And everything I do is handwritten. The only thing is when I write my article for the Chamber paper, they want it typed. So from Community Action [Agency?], she said anything you need typed, she'll type it for me for [inaudible].

S1: 42:35

Is the Chamber working on anything specifically now that you're--?



S2: 42:37

They're working on something so big, I don't know what's happened to it. In fact, tomorrow I'm going to call the Chamber. And 2021 is the 100th anniversary of the Chamber. They were going to work with us, the Commission for Women. One of our events was going to be the Women's Suffrage. They're planning all these things and events. I know they didn't have their big gala at the end of May, and I don't know what the Chamber is doing. I'm on the city committee, and I wanted for September, the different Chamber of Commerces-- I mean, council generals to be a part of it. It won't be this year because we're not meeting, but I don't know if other groups are meeting as [inaudible]. In fact, tomorrow, I was going to call the Chamber and see what's going on with them. I really have lost touch with them.

S1: 43:20

This is the Miami Beach Chamber?

S2: 43:21

The Miami Beach Chamber, yeah. So that's important. I'm glad I'm a Chamber member. Like I said, we do Teacher of the Year Luncheon. We have the Career Shadowing Day. We do a lot of good things with the Chamber. I'm on the Women's Business Council of the Chamber, which is a very active group. And in fact, that's how I get some of my speakers for Women's Club, by meeting these people that I ordinarily-- because these people are not all from Miami Beach. They come from all over the county to our Chamber, which is very nice.