



Interview with Barbara Zohlman

Interviewer
Kathy Hersh

S1: 00:00

Today is February 17th, 2020. My name is Kathy Hersh, and I'm interviewing Barbara Zohlman for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs project. And we'll just start out talking about you were born on the Beach. You were born in a hospital off the Beach, but you've always known the Beach. So tell us what your growing up was like there and things that you cherished and loved and you noticed.

Barbara
Zohlman

S2: 00:31

Growing up on Miami Beach was a special time because it was truly a paradise. It was truly a paradise. And I would even say a paradise lost because there were maybe 300,000 people and now there are over 2 million people on Miami Beach. So it was like a small town. Everybody knew everybody. And it was definitely a very Anglo community. We didn't have the rich cultural quilt that we have today. There were very few Hispanics, no blacks on Miami Beach. And it was a paradise not because of that but it was a paradise because of the weather and because of the beaches. You could actually see the beach. You could actually see the ocean. You did not have all these condos. You didn't have all the traffic. It was a safe place. It was very safe. I always felt safe.

S1: 01:47

You spent a lot of time on the beach. You said your parents were there all the time.

S2: 01:51

Yes. When my parents were young before they had children and responsibilities, they and their friends, people went to the beach. Everybody was on the beach. That's where you met. You could have bonfires on the beach. You could be there late and canoodle on the beach. I mean it was a great, great



time. Although it was also a very desolate time for me as a child. I'm a creative soul, and I would look for the museums, and there were none. So I spent my weekends at the library at the art section looking through art books. And that was my museum, were the art books in the library. And I remember my father and mother looking for an art teacher for me so that I could have private lessons. There was no one. Classes weren't offered like they are offered now everywhere. There was no ballet. There was no symphony.

S2: 03:14

And the people who came to the beach to live there were from someplace else. So their collections if they had beautiful art collections stayed in Boston, stayed in New York, were not coming down to the Miami Beach. It wasn't the place where you would take your possessions and display them. Now we have private collections, beautiful private collections. And I know the people who have them. But the collections if you really look at them are more contemporary and modern. You don't see a Picasso. You don't see a Da Vinci. You don't see any of the old masters because our community was new. It was new. It still is trying to find itself I think after all these years, 70-something years that I've been living here and never left. It's still trying to find out who it is. Maybe it will take another 100 years. Who knows. But it's changed dramatically.

S2: 04:38

We finally did find an art teacher. His name was Michelangelo. He had no legs. He would come into my father's little restaurant, which we called a snackery, on Biscayne Boulevard, and he traded food, my father would feed him, and I'd go back to his little hovel, which parents today would never let their child go to this man's place, and we'd sit on the floor because we weren't sitting on tables. He had no legs. And he sat on the floor, and we sat on



the floor. And that's how I had my art lesson. It was very different. And when Pedro Pan came to Miami, it was different. It changed again and again and again. And then the old people on South Beach, who I would've probably been one now, they were gone. I don't know where they went. They vanished. It's like one minute they're there and now South Beach is South Beach and it's all young. And if I go down there, I feel like I'm ancient. It's very, very, very interesting. You would see maybe one or two movies being filmed. Frank Sinatra filmed down there a movie. I remember that was a very, very, very big deal. And he--

- S1: 06:19 Did people stand around and watch to see him?
- S2: 06:22 Yes, of course. It was--
- S1: 06:24 Did you do that?
- S2: 06:25 It was a happening. It was a happening. It was before I was old enough to know what that all was. But we didn't have the cultural sophistication of northern. Remember, we're the south but without the south because when you come speak to me, people say, "Oh, so you're from New York?" "No, I'm from Miami Beach." But we sort of I guess absorbed all the different people that would come down. Some of them would stay and call it home and start raising families. And then we would start moving into sort of a society of not just tourists but actual people who worked and lived on Miami Beach.
- S1: 07:25 Was there any resentment of having to share paradise with tourists?
- S2: 07:32 Well, you would always say-- if somebody was driving in front of you and they weren't driving fast enough or going the right way, you would say, "Oh,



it's a tourist." And you could always tell tourists because at that time, the license plate told you, "Oh, they're tourists. They don't know where they're going." But I think that's in most places. I think tourism helped us grow. I mean the money from tourism, that's why Miami Beach was built. I mean Carl Fisher and Rosie the Elephant, everything was a production. Everything was razzle-dazzled to get people down here to live and to work and help the economy grow. So tourism was a big deal. And then you had all the big hotels. And at one point, I remember my mother saying to me she remembered when there was gambling on Miami Beach. And my mother loved to gamble and play cards, and she said it was great. She said, "We didn't have problems. They didn't want gambling because they [inaudible] the wrong element. Well, the wrong element was already on Miami Beach. They were living there anyway." So she thought gambling was great and it brought more people down to the hotels. But then there was no more gambling. She always voted for gambling all through the years. Whenever it came up on the ballot, she was right there, "Let's [crosstalk]--"

S1: 09:11

Was she down at the dog track ever?

S2: 09:14

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We had the dog track, and we had the horse track. And we also had [jai alai?]. And when my husband and I were teenagers, we would call it Jack and Al's so that our parents wouldn't know that we were going to [jai alai?]. We were going over to Jack and Al's, and that was we were going to [jai alai?].

S1: 09:42

Was there a stigma attached to it, or?

S2: 09:45

No, I don't think there was a real stigma attached to any of that. It was something else to do. There wasn't a lot to do. Today you could spend every



day and every night doing something different in Miami or Miami Beach. That's how much is going on. There were no malls. Forget about the malls. We went to Lincoln Road. That was our mall. And we'd walk up and down Lincoln Road. And that was it. I didn't go to the beach.

S1: 10:16

Were there all types doing that or was it a certain middle-class? Or was there a mix of people going to Lincoln Mall?

S2: 10:25

I think everybody went there. We also had a five and dime there. And that was my favorite place. And I know there were sit-ins. When we're talking about the black community, there were sit-ins there. And Lincoln Road always had stores that were pricey. So those of us who couldn't afford the Pappagallo shoes or all the different things that the girls wore, we just went and looked. But it was a happening place. And they always had fresh-squeezed orange juice. That was a big thing. You would go get the fresh-squeezed orange juice. And we also had some interesting characters. One was Silver Dollar Jake. I loved him. I still have silver dollars that he gave me.

S1: 11:28

Tell us what he did that made him so famous.

S2: 11:34

He was very flamboyant. He had a very-- I think it was a Cadillac. I don't know cars. But top down, always had the convertible down and the music playing. And he would go around, and kids would come up, and he would talk to you, maybe give you a piece of candy or something, and then he'd give certain kids silver dollars. That was a very big thing. And then on Lincoln Road, there was Holy Joe. Oh, is that what you wrote, Holy Joe? I always felt bad for Holy Joe. Holy Joe always was wearing a suit and a hat and he had his Bible and he would



preach. He would just stand there and preach. And kids, they were always teasing him and always taunting him and that kind of thing. But he stood there day after day preaching.

S1: 12:40

What was his message?

S2: 12:42

His message was messages from the Bible, loving one another and caring for one another and the good things in life and what you should think about and what you should pray about. And Miami Beach was very, very much so a Jewish population. Now--

S1: 13:12

Was that part of his motivation do you think?

S2: 13:14

I don't know. I really don't know. All I know is he went through so much and he just stood there and he took it. And he believed so strongly in his message. And he became someone that I respected and admired. A lot of kids didn't think that way, but I did. And it was a very, very different time. There wasn't hate, but everyone knew their place and where they were supposed to be and what was safe and what was not safe, where could you go and where should you not go. But we went everywhere. My mother would take our clothes-- we had a washer and dryer, but she would take a big bundle of clothes to Overtown, and she'd drive up to this tiny shack and she'd take all the laundry into the shack so that the woman in the shack could iron all of our clothes. And then she'd come back a couple of days later and pick up all the ironing and pay the woman I know in change. I never saw dollars pass through hands, just change, coins.

S1: 14:51

You went with her?

S2: 14:53

Yes, I went with her. She took me with her. And--

S1: 14:58

Were you nervous?

S2: 15:01

No, I wasn't nervous because my father also, his



business was over the bridge. It was not on Miami Beach. My father was not a doctor, lawyer. He sold junk and he had junk shops in Overtown. And he would sell from his car. His car was filled with all kinds of old stuff. And he would sell, trade. He would do that kind of thing, and he also had these small little snackery restaurants, which Enid is so convinced that he ran the snackery in the Hampton House, which could definitely be true. I just found the accountant. My friend's fiancé heard about the Hampton House through me through her, and he says, "When I was younger, I was the accountant at the Hampton House. I used to keep their books." A white guy.

S1: 16:11

For the Markowitz family?

S2: 16:12

Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

S1: 16:14

Let's back up a minute, and I would like for you to tell the story of your connection with Enid [Pinkman?].

S2: 16:28

The story of Enid and I goes really far back. My grandmother and grandfather had a house on Allison Island. She built this very beautiful house. And she had a housekeeper who was from the Bahamas, and her name was Lenore. And Lenore was a large black woman, and she would take care of my grandmother's home and make food for my grandma. My grandmother was from England, and I think she thought she was the queen of England because she was very prim and proper and she had a little bell on the dining room table that she would ring. Now, I'm telling you if I'm sitting here-- my grandmother always sat at the head of the table. Right about just not even a yard was the kitchen, but she insisted she had to ring the bell. And then Lenore would come in and serve. Now, I



always thought that was disrespectful to Lenore, but I couldn't say anything to my grandmother. Anyway, so Lenore and I became very close because I had two working parents, which was very unusual for the '50s. And so they weren't home and I would spend time at my grandparents' house.

S2: 18:11

Lenore and I became very, very close. She was very nurturing. She was very warm. And she would spend time actually talking with me and not telling me what she thought was important. We would talk together, which was to me very good. And she gave me a doll, and the doll was black, a black sock doll. It definitely was handmade. It looked like maybe it could've been a [take-off?] from a raggedy hand doll because it had long wool, brown wool, pigtails and a little red-and-white checkered dress. However, the face was embroidered and it had big blue eyes. And I thought, "How curious." It was very, very soft. And it was just about this big. So that was the doll she gave me. And I loved that doll. I loved it so much that I kept it all with me all through my growing-up years. And even when I had three granddaughters and I gave all my dolls to my grandchildren, I kept that doll for me because that was my connection. That was the doll that I talked to at night and that I slept with at night. And now we fast-forward, and Enid's family--

S1: 19:57

Enid being Lenore's daughter.

S2: 20:00

Enid being Lenore's daughter. Enid was getting married. Now, I knew Enid had become a teacher, and that was a very big thing. We were really happy about that. And my mother said, "We're going to Enid's wedding." And I said, "Oh, great." And she says, "You and your brother get dressed up. We're going to Enid's wedding. She's getting married." Well, we got dressed up. We crossed the bridge into Overtown. And we went into this little church,



and they were handing out fans. I go, "What do we need a fan for?" I mean I'm from a temple. I never got a fan at temple. But we had fans. And then I realized there's no air-conditioning. And there were a lot of people and a lot of bridesmaids, okay? So Enid's getting married, and it is really, really hot out. So now I knew you had the fan to keep you cool. And two of the bridesmaids fainted because it was so hot.

S2: 21:06

And they were yelling and screaming and so joyful at the wedding and standing up and doing this. And my brother, who was three years younger than me, he was scared. But it was like something I had never experienced in my life. And I just remember that as being a very, very big happening growing up, being able to be there and see Enid's wedding and we were the only white people in the church. And that was wonderful. I found out later on, basically a year ago, that Enid had wanted to go to my brother's bar mitzvah because Lenore, her mother, had told her that my brother was going to be bar mitzvahed and what it meant and what it was all about. And Enid really wanted to come see it. She couldn't because blacks were not allowed on the Beach and she couldn't go to my brother's bar mitzvah, but I could go to her wedding. It just didn't seem right.

S1: 22:31

Let's talk about-- well, there are a number of ways we could go here.

S3: 22:38

Do you want to finish the doll story?

S1: 22:41

Yeah. Let's finish the doll story.

S2: 22:41

Okay. So I'm downsizing, and I saw up in my closet the doll. And I said to my husband, I said, "I really want to-- the only person who should have this doll other than me is Enid." And I knew-- now, this is 60



years later. I know that she was a teacher and I don't know her married name. I knew Lenore's married name, her mother's married name. And I'm not that computer savvy. So I didn't know how to find Enid. We were at a fundraising luncheon, my husband and I, and Calvin Hughes the news anchor was the MC for the luncheon, and I leaned over to my husband and said, "I'm going to ask Calvin Hughes to help me find--" I didn't know him, "help me--"

S1: 23:41

He is black, Calvin.

S2: 23:42

He's black. Calvin is black, yes. To help me find Enid. And my husband said, "You can't do that, Barbara. That's like saying if you're Jewish, you know every Jewish person. You can't say that." I said, "Well, I don't know where else to go, and I'm going to ask him." I've been in fundraising a long time, and my motto is if you don't ask, you don't get. So there you go. So after the event, I go to Calvin. I told him the story. I said, "Could you just listen two seconds?" I told him the story. I said I cannot find my grandmother's daughter, and I want to give her this doll. And he says, "Well, what's her name?" I said, "Well, I don't know her last name, but her first name is Enid." And he looks at me and smiles and he says, "I know Enid. We go to the same church." It was amazing. That night I got a phone call and I hear Enid screaming, "Barbara, Barbara, oh my gosh." And it was like a miracle. It was so insane. And when we got together, I said to her, "Just give me all your information." She's just, "Well, that was my first wedding." And she says, "I have another name because I got married again." So we connected and I gave her the doll. And we've been connected ever since.

S1: 25:14

And she gave you something.



S2: 25:15

Yes, she did. When I went over to her house, she says, "I have something for you." And I said, "Okay." So she gave me a purse, and she said, "Your grandmother gave my mother this purse." Now, I know the purse was old, but I know it had to have been expensive because my grandmother only bought the finest of finest. My grandmother would have all her clothes made and had pearls sewn on her bra so if her shirt went over you would see pearls and not see the bra, okay? That's who my grandmother was. This is who Enid's mother worked for. But anyway. So Enid and I have reconnected, and I have her mother's purse, and she has my doll. And our lives have just been enriched. I know mine has. Mine has. And just thinking about her makes me smile, so.

S1: 26:36

Have you had any discussions about those times and the difficulty of having relationships with people between blacks and whites?

S2: 26:49

I think we're really starting to catch up with each other and to really know. I know of some of the things that she has gone through. I know what I went through. But I also know that it always seemed to me that when I came across people who were I don't want to say a different stature but people who were different from me whether they were different in religion, whether they were different in color, whether they were different in their cultural upbringing, to me, I always felt that people were people. And I could see through all of that. It was the heart and the soul. And I think that's why Enid and I are so close, because we both have a very similar heart and soul and are very accepting. Now, I can be not very accepting when I feel there is injustice, but I would be the person who would fight for that to change. And some



people just talk about change, and that infuriates me.

S2: 28:20

And Miami Beach has changed a lot. When the gays came to Miami Beach, it wasn't like, "Oh my God, look what's happening to the Beach, da, da, da, da." It was just another wonderful layer of people coming to this community. And when the Cuban refugees came, it was another great layer. And then the Haitians came, and it was another great layer. And people were leaving the beach, "Ah, I'm not staying here. Look who's coming here. Look who's coming here." But how wonderful, how culturally rich. However, we have all these rich, wonderful traditions and cultures on Miami Beach now where before it was really white bread I'm telling you, big time. And people are still afraid. This one won't go to Calle Ocho. This one doesn't want to go to Little Haiti. This one's afraid to go to Overtown. It just seems like the world doesn't want to really come together. They just seem to gravitate to their own.

S2: 29:51

And that is why I created the Miami Children's Museum because I felt this would be a way, a safe environment for families to come with children. And I do believe it's all the children. I've always been about the children. I've taught the children. I love children. I do believe they're our future. It sounds corny, but they certainly are. And it would be a place that they could play together and learn together and be together in a nurturing environment that was culturally rich in my Pollyanna maybe viewpoint.

S1: 30:39

Why would you say Pollyanna viewpoint?

S2: 30:42

Because I do believe in a more utopian kind of a community.

S1: 30:51

But the fact that you're saying my Pollyanna



viewpoint, there's a story behind that maybe. Did you have challenges creating that? Were there people who didn't understand what you were trying to do?

S2: 31:03

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. First of all, people said, "What, are you going to hang children's artwork? We don't need a museum. We don't need this." And I would say, "We do need this. We need a coming together. And this is my view of what we need." And I always believe - and I've taught my children this - if someone doesn't agree with you and they tell you you can't, you can. You can do anything you want to do, and I truly believe that. I'm not a rocket scientist. I had something that I felt I needed to do. I always wanted to leave something to my community. I always thought it would be writing. I'm an artist, but I'm not a great artist. I'm a writer, but I'm not a great writer. I never thought in a million years that there was something that I couldn't do if I really believed it. And it sounds kind of Pollyannaish in this day and age, but you can do something. I started that museum with \$50 and only started with the people who believed in me. I surrounded myself with people who believed in my vision and \$50. And it was tough. It was very, very tough. And you have to have--

S1: 32:43

Were there people--?

S2: 32:43

You have to have tenacity.

S1: 32:45

Were there people at the time who criticized you for that, for bringing together--

S2: 32:56

I--

S1: 32:57

--children from different backgrounds?

S2: 32:58

Different backgrounds. I don't know. Not to my face. I know that people thought that I was crazy.



They thought that I-- "This is just a teacher. She taught, and she's an art teacher, and she taught special needs kids, and she has this bleeding heart. She loves everybody." But there were people who believed in me. And in whatever you do in life, surround yourself with the people who believe in you and believe what you said.

- S1: 33:43 Let's talk about you said right after college you got hired to teach at Beach High.
- S2: 33:49 I did.
- S1: 33:50 Can you tell us what years those were and what it was like then?
- S2: 33:54 Yes. I graduated the University of Miami in '68. And I had interned, I had done my teaching internship. One of the schools was Miami Beach Senior High School. Now, you're only talking about four years' difference in time from when I went there and when I went back to be a teacher. So a lot of my teachers were there. And I got sent to the office because I didn't have a hall pass and they didn't believe I was a teacher. They thought I was still a student going there. I'll never forget. And then when I got pregnant, that was even worse. I looked like an unwed mother walking the halls in my artist's smock going to work. But there was a change--
- S1: 34:44 What year was it?
- S2: 34:46 That was in '68. And '68 and '69 is when drugs started. Now, when I went to high school, you didn't hear about-- you didn't hear about drugs. You just didn't. I mean if you took a drink of alcohol, that was like the big deal, or beer. That was like a big deal. But when I got back, and I would be called in to testify for some of my art students who were caught with drugs. And of course, I would testify what a wonderful student they were, how great they



were in art, and we won all these awards and they won this award. I was a character witness to the positive of the child. And then fast-forward many, many years after the museum, and we were the second or third class to go into the new Beach High, okay? So Beach High didn't have air-conditioning except in the auditorium, and it had big windows that were open. Perfect for people like me who would look out and just daydream and not pay attention. Of course, now you can't look out windows. Everything's locked up. Everybody's locked up. Security all over the place.

S1: 36:26

There was a race riot, was there not, at Miami Beach High school?

S2: 36:30

I don't think so. But there was a big riot on 27th Avenue. My father's business was there. It was burned. And it was I think a real turning point. People had had enough. It's the same thing with the women's movement. I remember marching for women's rights in South Miami, so--

S1: 37:07

Back to Beach High, '68. '68 was a year of turmoil around the country. Did you see any of that reflected at Beach High?

S2: 37:22

No. Beach High at that time was still a very insulated mainly white-- when I went there, it was all white. Now, four years later, it was starting a little bit of integration especially with sports and that kind of thing. And then I went back 40 years later because I was involved in running a drug prevention program, and I wanted my alma mater to have this club, this prevention club in Beach High. I walked into Beach High and I thought, "I can't be on Miami Beach." The high school looked with bars and graffiti and it was horrible. It was like culture shock. I couldn't believe how it had



changed.

- S1: 38:31 This was 40 years from 1968?
- S2: 38:34 Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And they were going to within a couple of years, tear it down, which they since have torn it down and built a new Beach High fully integrated. Always a great school. Some really wonderful people came out of that school. Some wonderful people came out of the University of Miami, artists and musicians.
- S1: 39:08 You were mentioning that there were three art teachers at the time that you taught at Beach High and that one of them was murdered. Could you tell us about that incident and what impact that had, what you know about the incident?
- S2: 39:29 What I know about the incident is that Beach High was very into the arts. The visual and the performing arts was way before it's time, and there were three art teachers. Today you can't even get one. They don't even do art in most of the schools. But at that time, we had three art teachers. And one of them was a marvelous art teacher who I interned with as a matter of fact, and he was gay.
- S1: 40:05 His name?
- S2: 40:07 [Maricini?] I believe. Mr. [Maricini?]. I'm trying to think of his first name. And come to find out that after I had left, he was murdered. He was found murdered in his home, and it was a very, very bizarre incident. There were frozen parakeets in the freezer. There were frozen parakeets on his body, in his body. And it was heinous. It was totally heinous. And--
- S1: 40:52 He was murdered because he was gay?
- S2: 40:56 It seemed that way. That's what the media portrayed, that this was a gay on gay or something



something. Everybody had their own theories. I don't know if they ever caught the person. But I know at that point there was not a lot of acceptance of people who were different, who they felt were different.

S1: 41:29

Was he out?

S2: 41:32

No. I mean you knew he was but just like in that day--

S1: 41:39

He didn't talk about it?

S2: 41:40

No. It was not like it is today where you could be open and speak your mind. No, this was always behind closed doors. This was always the secret. This was always never discussed in the teaching profession. That's what it was.

S1: 42:00

As it turned out, he was probably a victim of a serial killer. Did that come out later?

S2: 42:12

I had heard rumors about that, that this was happening and that there were other horrible incidents. But then you had overpowering I think everything became the drugs and the cocaine cowboys. And right across the street from my house, people were shot down outside a liquor store, in a shopping mall. And it was everywhere. People were having big mansions, and all of a sudden, there was lots and lots of money coming in, lots of money. And the whole economy of not only Miami Beach but of all of Miami would change. And it would also change again when a lot of people from South America would come, and then you would see all these banks being built downtown, all these banks being built. If you looked at the landscape of Miami Beach and Miami, you could just see how things were changing and changing and changing. And now we're a big city.



We're a metropolitan area. We are sun and fun like we were then, but to find the sun, you have to go through the condos, the wall of condos and hotels and everything. And it's just so completely different than this small little community. It's become this big metropolitan area.

S1: 44:22 Tell us about the neighborhood where you grew up and whose house was across the street from yours.

S2: 44:29 Yeah. It's weird. When I was born, I was living in an apartment building that was owned by my grandparents, and it's still there. It's right off of Alton. It's one of those low-rise apartments that are I guess a little Art Decoy. And then we moved into a home on Lakeview Drive. And Lakeview Drive was not more than four minutes across from the Flagler House. And then there were these small, little modest homes, but there was a waterway, and on the other side of the street were these big, beautiful homes, which were backed up to the waterway. So those people had boats and this and that, and they still do. And it's embarrassing to say, but I'm a truthful person. When I would be dropped off at my house and the people who didn't know really where I lived and they would drop me off as a courtesy, I would stand on the side of the water in front of the big houses, and then when they left, I would walk across the street to my modest little house. But--

S1: 46:09 You said Carl Fisher's house was in--

S2: 46:11 Yeah. Carl Fisher's house was not far. And when I was in elementary school and we were studying about Florida, and I wanted to do a report on Carl Fisher because I thought it was amazing that here's somebody who had a vision and he actually made his vision a reality. And that always interests me, how people would-- how could one person do something like that? And he surrounded himself



- with people who believed that he could do something like that. And his house had an elevator, and I thought that was the bomb. I mean I just thought that was so cool that Carl Fisher's house had an elevator. That was a very big deal.
- S1: 47:06 Was his wife Jane living there? Was she still alive at this time when you--?
- S2: 47:12 Yes. When I was in elementary school, she was still there. She was still there, and when we called, the person gave her the phone and she told me what books to check out at the library.
- S1: 47:29 Oh, for your project?
- S2: 47:30 For my project. And she told me about, she says, "Oh, you'll find it all in this book and you'll find it all in that book."
- S1: 47:40 She in fact wrote a book about--
- S2: 47:42 Yes. Yes, she did.
- S1: 47:43 --her experiences.
- S2: 47:44 Yes. And we had many people who really made Miami what it was. I mean they have a bronze sculpture at the park where I live. It's called Carl Fisher Park. And in fact, I found out at a reunion a few years back that one of the boys I knew from school said that he kissed me by that sculpture. I don't remember, but he said he did. But anyway. But it was a town. It was more of a town than it is now. You don't know the people when you go-- we go down to Miami Beach often. We love the Beach. I knew I wouldn't raise my children there. My husband wanted to stay in Miami, and I said, "I will not raise my children on Miami Beach."
- S1: 48:49 Why is that?



- S2: 48:49 And that's why we're out in South Miami.
- S1: 48:52 Why?
- S2: 48:53 Why? Because for me it was very difficult being one of the have-nots and one of the-- Beach High, it was like the Beverly Hills 90201 school. That's what it was. Every other kid had a car. I did not. They all had cars, beautiful cars. That parking lot, wow, man, at Beach High, great. Kids came with chauffeurs. They had very--
- S1: 49:37 So there was a very much class distinction [still?]?
- S2: 49:40 That's what I say. There is within the class there, even without any of the other cultures, within that core culture, there was a class you know. And--
- S1: 49:57 Was there snobbery at the school?
- S2: 49:59 Very snob. Yes. There were cliques. There were popular kids and the not-popular kids and the geeky kids and-- just what they portray when they do some of these TV shows. I mean that's really how it was. And I didn't want my children to have to go through that. At 21, when I got married, in my mind, that was it although I was teaching there. I was teaching there. But it had started to change. I mean I'm sure every school has their cliques and their haves and have-nots and everything. But it was big time in the '60s at Beach High.
- S1: 50:57 Because there was so much wealth?
- S2: 50:59 There was a lot of wealth. But it was different wealth. It was development wealth. It was the developers, their children, that was the wealth. And there were also the Mafia. Well, I mean--
- S1: 51:19 Tell us about the Mafia. You had a good Mafia story, a connection to Sony Capone-- Sonny.
- S2: 51:26 Yeah. Sonny. Well, my mother told me that when



they had moved down to Miami Beach, Sonny Capone asked her out before she met my father, and my grandmother would not let her go out with Sonny Capone because he was Mafia and she said no. And I found that out because I asked my mother one day, "How come when I go to so-and-so's house, her father's always there and her mother's always there?" I mean mothers were always home. Mine wasn't. She was one of the few who worked in that time. But the father was home. My father was never home. He was always working. "Why is his father home and why is this one's father home?" And my mother said because they're Mafia and they're down here and they live here and that's it.

S1: 52:25

And you knew what the Mafia was?

S2: 52:27

Oh, yeah. I knew because my mother would always talk about the gambling because they wanted to take away gambling because the gambling brought in the bad elements. She would say the bad elements. But they were great family people. Live and let live.

S1: 52:47

We've heard that there was kind of a truce in terms of territory and some of the more criminal activities that were conducted by them. In other words, they weren't having shootouts on Lincoln Mall over territory or anything here.

S2: 53:06

No. No. I think it was more of a-- well, Meyer Lansky and-- it was more of a coming down to Miami sun and fun to relax and discuss things and that kind of thing. But, no--

S1: 53:27

Were there Mafia kids at Beach High?

S2: 53:30

Their children were there. Yes, of course. We all [crosstalk].



- S1: 53:34 And you knew who they were?
- S2: 53:36 Yeah. Yeah. And--
- S1: 53:38 Well, Sonny Capone, that would be pretty obvious by the surname.
- S2: 53:42 Yeah. Right. Right. Right. No. But first of all, if you heard an Italian last name, which was very unusual on Miami Beach, you sort of would go in that direction, not that that was always true, but you would go in that direction. But it wasn't until the drugs came that there were--
- S1: 54:10 Do you think there was a connection between the drugs and the Mafia?
- S2: 54:13 I think there was a connection between the drugs. I think there was a definite connection between the Mafia. But I also think that the drugs brought in elements to Miami that really and even today I mean--
- S1: 54:33 Like the Scarface movie?
- S2: 54:35 Yes. Yes.
- S1: 54:36 People have said that really was real, the way it was.
- S2: 54:41 Yes, it was really real.
- S1: 54:43 That's pretty scary.
- S2: 54:44 It is scary. But there's always been something scary. There's always been something scary. I remember I was driving down Grand Avenue to meet someone for lunch in Coconut Grove. So I would just go straight down Grand Avenue because that's how I went. I get to the restaurant, and I'm meeting this person and the maître d' comes over and says, "Is your name Barbara?" I said yes. He says, "Your mother's on the phone." I said, "My mother's? What happened?" Well, they had just



been visiting us, and I had to leave to go to this lunch, and I pick up the phone and my mother is screaming at me, "I followed you. You went down Grand Avenue. How could you go down Grand Avenue? You're not supposed to drive there. It's so dangerous. You know that's a black community there." She was livid. I said, "What are you talking about? I drive all over the Grove. But, Mom, don't be ridiculous." But she was petrified for me.

- S1: 56:04 And this was the same woman who had driven her laundry over to Overtown.
- S2: 56:08 Right. And the same woman.
- S1: 56:11 So what happened? Was it the drug scene and all of the publicity?
- S2: 56:15 No. I think it was just certain parts of the community that people-- when I told friends as recently as several months ago that I was driving down to meet Enid at the Hampton House, "By yourself? By yourself?" It's the same mentality as when I went to speak at a museum conference in Germany, "You're flying to Germany? A Jewish girl by yourself? By yourself?" We have to stop this. It's got to be stopped because it's such a generality. I mean we can't be afraid of every place. If you live in a place, you should embrace that place.
- S1: 57:18 Some of the fear-- a lot of the fear we know comes from ignorance and not having ever been exposed to people from a different cultural or ethnic background. Do you think that the difference between your attitude and your mother's had anything to do with Lenore?
- S2: 57:45 It's very interesting. Coming from Baltimore, Baltimore was and in some ways maybe still is very prejudiced, very prejudiced.



- S1: 58:04 Your mother came from Baltimore?
- S2: 58:06 My mother came from Baltimore. And I remember when I would visit my cousins in Baltimore, we would go to the country club. I didn't know what a country club-- I knew there were club-- I knew there were places in Miami that Jews weren't allowed that was also very, very telling when I was growing up. And I'll tell you a story about that. But when I went to the country club, I didn't hang out at the pool; I hung out in the locker rooms where the black staff were with the towels and the washcloths and the soaps, and I would sit in the afternoons all afternoon while my cousins were in the pool talking to these women, black women, who worked at the country club. And I remember that to this day.
- S2: 59:01 And going back to Miami Beach, we weren't allowed-- we meaning the Jewish population, were not allowed to go into some hotels that were restricted, some golf clubs that were restricted to Jews, no Jews allowed. And when we were younger, my brother and I were child models, I mean nothing big and wonderful, but we modeled clothes for children's clothing stores. And we would go to the hotels and do a fashion show. Well, there was a big opportunity for my brother to model at a hotel that doesn't allow Jews. My mother changed his last name for the information, not legally, but just so that he could model because we brought in money that we put aside for college. I said, "How could you do that? If they don't want us, why would you--?" "So this way he could model, Barbara." She changed his last name. So I don't know. I really don't know. [crosstalk]--
- S1: 01:00:19 Did she legally change it or just--
- S2: 01:00:21 No, not legally.



- S1: 01:00:21 --just for the publicity?
- S2: 01:00:22 Just for the--
- S1: 01:00:23 The forms?
- S2: 01:00:24 Just for because we were with an agency and the agency had to fill out forms, and she changed it for the form. And he modeled there. That was very interesting. But I never thought how-- I just said, "Well, they don't want us here. They don't want us there. I don't have to go here or there." I never thought to even fight something like that. I just accepted that when I was younger. I wouldn't accept it now, but I just accepted it. It was just accepted. But she was the same woman, my mother, who would come across women who had been mistreated and brought them into our home and they stayed with us. One woman was raped. Another woman was beaten by a boyfriend. And they would stay with us for years and share my bedroom, and my mother would get them work and they would work.
- S2: 01:01:30 My father would bring in derelicts, and he set up the garage with a bed and all this kind of stuff, and he would say-- one guy's name was Danny Poole. Danny Poole looked like a homeless person. He lived in our home, and my father said, "Now we have a house man. He'll open the door for your friends. He'll be your house man." "What are you talking--?" And he would take him to work with him and everything, but he would live in our house. So they would take these people in and accept them for who they were and what happened and try and make their life a little easier, a little better, but yet, she was petrified that I would drive down Grand Avenue. And that mentality is still here. There are people who will not go to certain-- people stay



within their own little communities. And it's not just white people. I think it's black people, it's Hispanics. They don't want to go outside their comfort zone. And I've always felt that if you go outside your comfort zone, you get such rewards.

S1: 01:02:51 Well, we as white people can more easily go out of our comfort zone and not fear the rejection that people of color get all the time. So it's much easier for us to bridge. It's part of white privilege actually.

S2: 01:03:14 True. But then if you grow up Jewish, you know that people hated you, people put you in concentration camps and burned you up. And I think every society, every culture has had their horrible, horrible, horrible atrocities happen to them, the blacks, the Hispanics, the--

S1: 01:03:43 The Indians.

S2: 01:03:44 The Indians. I mean and we all have had that. So doesn't that-- the Pollyanna thing again, but shouldn't that make us more the same than different? We've all been through that. Our ancestors have been through that same kind of prejudice and hatred. It should bring us together to be stronger, to-- I just look around. I look at the Haitian art because that's what I do, and I look at the South American artists who are here and the young people who are now in Wynwood, and different parts of our community are so culturally rich and our symphony and our ballet. Oh my gosh, it's fabulous. But you can go to Overtown and it hasn't changed at all.

S1: 01:04:56 Yeah. There are a lot of reasons for that. Did the students change much in your experience?

S2: 01:05:03 As I say, I think there's today-- when I went to school, people-- well, my husband talks about he used to go over to Overtown and play pool and play



basketball and all of that kind. But on the whole, we were kept in that little bubble of Beach High. Everybody was white. Everybody knew where they were on the pecking order whether you wanted to be there or you didn't want to be there as far as the haves and the have-nots and what you were wearing and what you looked like. And even that seeped into my religion because I went to Temple Emanu-El, which is a very big temple on Miami Beach. And I hated it. I hated it because people would go there and all they would do-- they weren't singing. They weren't reading. They were looking at, "Oh, she got a new mink stole. Oh, look at her diamond ring. Oh." They were looking at the people and commenting and everybody judging and this and that. And I didn't like that. I didn't like that.

S2: 01:06:42

And then when the holy days came and we had to go into the Miami Beach Convention Center, which was not like it is now, but it was bigger than our temple, "And Mr. and Mrs. Schwartz just donated \$5,000. And Mr. and Mrs. so-and-so." And I told my mother, I said, "I'm not going back." She says, "What do you mean you're not going?" I said, "That's disgusting. If you want to give, you give quietly, not so that everybody can see what you had. That's ridiculous. I won't do that." And she says, "Well, you have to tell the rabbi." Rabbi Lehrman was like God himself had come down. And I said, "Then I will." And I went into his office with my mother, who was mortified. And I told him, I said, "That's disgusting. You should not be doing that. That's not why people give or-- they shouldn't want to hear their names. They shouldn't want to hear how much so that everybody knows what they have. And by the way, Rabbi Lehrman, why can't women hold the Torah? How come you never chose a woman to hold the Torah?" I was--



- S1: 01:08:00 How old were you?
- S2: 01:08:01 11, 12 years old. I was really pissed. So we were in this bubble going to Beach High to answer that question, and I don't think-- I think whatever we heard, we heard within ourselves in our own little bubble, not outside. And then when I went back to teach, there were-- it was the time when a lot of Hispanics were coming over. The Cubans were coming over, Pedro Pan. So that was that. And I'm sure it was hard for them because they didn't know English. And, hey, I studied Spanish for a billion years it seems, and I still can't speak it well. I understand it though. So that's a little good thing. And then when I went back after several decades and saw predominantly black school with Hispanics and I would say the white population was the minority then. But kids are kids. If you teach kids to be mean, they'll be mean. If you're mean, if you have your prejudice, your children are going to pick up on that, your children are going to emulate what their parents are saying and doing. I've seen it as a teacher a million times. So they have that whole saying from South Pacific, from your children, you'll be taught to hate, to da, da, da. And that is so true.
- S1: 01:10:00 Do you think then that back in the bubble days, there was snobbery but the enclave was basically white tone and small-town, so that got reinforced?
- S2: 01:10:16 Mm-hmm.
- S1: 01:10:18 But then did the bubble burst at some point? Did you experience more tension between--?
- S2: 01:10:25 More tension because you were bringing in people who were not like you, who did not have your cultural background, who were from Cuba, who were from here, who were from there, and then you were bringing in kids from across the bridge, that



- big divider--
- S1: 01:10:46 Was that the euphemism?
- S2: 01:10:48 Across the bridge?
- S1: 01:10:50 From across the bridge.
- S2: 01:10:50 Yeah. From across the bridge. Yeah. You had to be home. You had to get back across the bridge before it was time that you couldn't be on the Beach. And the thing is we saw all these acts. We saw The Temptations. We saw Sammy Davis Jr. We would go to the Fontainebleau and see all these people. But then afterwards, they went back across the bridge, probably to the Hampton House.
- S1: 01:11:28 Some of them went there. Yeah. For sure. Anything that has occurred to you that we didn't touch on? We have the Mafia story. Oh, tell about your father hitchhiking down with Wolfie. And what impulse was there for your father? This was post-World War II I presume.
- S2: 01:11:55 My father was a very interesting man. He came from New York, and they lived on a farm. He tells about delivering calves.
- S1: 01:12:11 So he wasn't a city boy?
- S2: 01:12:13 Oh, no. No. And he went into I mean the Army, the Cavalry, and he talks about the Cavalry. In fact, he would send my mother postcards. He was a cartoonist, and he should've developed that because I have postcards every day of his life but they're in cartoons in the Army. And so I don't know how he met Wolfie, but I guess it could've been in the service. And so Wolfie wanted to come down to Miami Beach to open up a restaurant. And my father wanted to come down to Miami Beach as well. So they hitchhiked together, and Wolfie's telling him about he wants to open up Wolfie's and



he wants to open up a restaurant and my father should come in with him. But again, as my grandmother said, if my father took up being a mortician, people would stop dying. And my father said, "No, I'm not going to do that. I don't want to do that. I'll work in one of the--" he worked in the Shelby Hotel on South Beach, which was not South Beach but was a hotel at that time. And--

S1: 01:13:33

Did he maintain the friendship with him?

S2: 01:13:35

Yes. They maintained the friendship. They maintained the friendship.

S1: 01:13:39

And Wolfie was not Jewish, correct?

S2: 01:13:42

I don't know. I don't think he was. I don't know.

S1: 01:13:49

I think from what I read, if my memory serves me, that he absorbed the culture and knew what would sell, and it was kind of--

S2: 01:14:01

Yeah. The deli. Yeah. Because [crosstalk]--

S1: 01:14:05

It was assumed that he was Jewish.

S2: 01:14:07

It was assumed that he was Jewish because of what he served and Wolfie Cohen and all that kind of stuff. But my father came over when he was a young boy from Russia. So he became a citizen. He had to become a citizen. But he had worked in the Catskills, and his very good friend was Danny K. And I have pictures of him and Danny K in the Catskills. They were waiters, and they would perform on stage and do all that. Danny K had a daughter that he named Barbara, and my father named me Barbara. And he was a character. He was always joking and telling stories and very interesting kind of guy. But he left me with a sense of people are people, doesn't matter what you look like, doesn't-- as long as you're good in your heart and your soul, you're okay with me. And anything



that you feel you can't use, somebody else can use it, so don't throw it away.

- S2: 01:15:44 Obviously, I didn't throw that doll away going back to Enid. Who keeps a doll for so many years and so many years? And it's not that it's expensive because-- I took it to the antique roadshow. I did. The antique roadshow came down here, and because I have antiques and my mother and my gran were all into older things, so I said, "I'm going to take the doll." Because it was so special to me, I figure it's got to be a special doll. I probably was in my 30s when I did this. And they said, "Ah." I said, "Well, couldn't it be folk art? Wouldn't it be folk art? Somebody hand made this obviously black person. But why did it have blue eyes?" That always fascinated me.
- S1: 01:16:37 You didn't figure that out?
- S2: 01:16:39 No.
- S1: 01:16:40 You have blue eyes.
- S2: 01:16:42 Yeah, I know, but I don't know if Lenore made it or not or something. But it was just so unusual to me. And it just was-- so [they said?] worth \$100. I said, "To me, it's worth a lot more than \$100,"

##