



Roger Grant Interview

Thu, Apr 21, 2022 · 4:49 PM

Kathy Hersh

0:00

My name is Kathy Hersh, I'm the interviewer. I'm interviewing Roger Grant for the Miami Beach visual memoirs project. Tell us when your earliest memory of coming to the beach.

Roger Grant

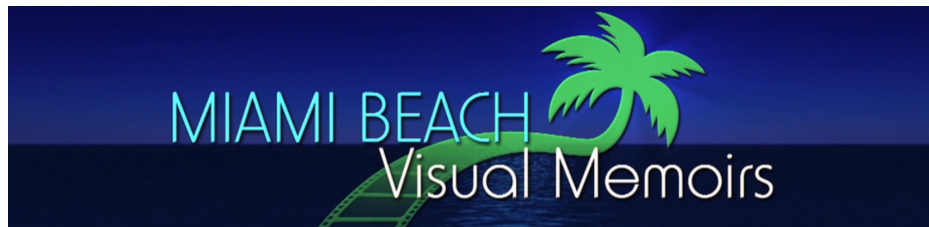
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My earliest memory was when I was seven years old. And I remember stepping going down the steps of [Eastern Airlines](#) when Miami Airport was called Wilcox field. And we had left Baltimore, it was pre Christmas, we left in miserable snow and ice. And luckily the plane it was so those days, it was almost four hours, where it was before jets. And we walked down the steps. And I was so taken with this, the warmth and the smell of flowers. And this was in the tarmac of the airport. And we drove to my toe and my family that I had here. We drove to their home. And I saw oranges and grapefruits and bananas and I and I remember I looked at my father. I said, why can't we live here when it's live in a crappy place like Baltimore. And he said to me, when you're grown up, you can live anywhere you want. And after I graduated college in Maryland, I moved here six days later. And that was the...

Roger Grant

1:23

you've been here ever since. Well, I for business, I have spent two years in California. I also was going back and forth to Washington. But I always kept my home here, irregardless of where I went. I lived in Miami Beach, actually in North Bay Village. But in those days it was even though it wasn't technically part of my, the address your address was Miami Beach, Florida, not North Bay Village. They didn't have their own post office. It was



Normandy 33141. But I can remember the city from the time I was seven years old 1957.

Kathy Hersh

2:03

And how do you do? What kind of things did you do when you came to visit?

Roger Grant

2:06

Well, since my uncle was in the hotel business and all his friends were in the hotel business, we had access to all the nice hotels. I played with my cousins and all their neighbors, which was in mid beach fairgreen drive. We went out every night to the great restaurants except when my mother would cook because none of my aunts could cook in Miami. They were all business women. And but my mother loved to cook. So that was like the highlight of her coming down. She could make the traditional meals that they ate when they were growing up in Baltimore. But we literally I we used to go see all the new hotels. My we would if he could find parking we would actually otherwise he would let us run in while he were out around the block. So we could say and I remember when we... I remember when he showed us the Deauville we didn't go inside because he couldn't find parking. He just really wanted to show the port cocheire and I remember once a kid it was like oh my god look at this thing. And we we toured the Fountain Blue when it first opened and it only had one building the curved building. We did not really go much to South Beach except to Joe's stone crab. There was an Italian restaurant called piccolos which all the locals went to but not in the season. You only locals only went there in the summertime because they had promos and it wasn't busy in the winter. But we used to go to South Beach for certain the famous restaurant on Washington Avenue was a must. Anyone that came to visit me we that would that was always one of the top on the list. Of course Morpheus was like place you go three times a week and that will we would go to the one that 22nd and college there was another one at Lincoln Road and Collins the one at 22nd Street was called celebrity corner at the corner of 22nd and



Collins. But that one was open 24 hours. The one on Lincoln Road closed at 2am So that was

Kathy Hersh

4:25

and that was probably good reason it was called celebrities corner right? Well

Roger Grant

4:28

of course it was nothing but I remember I remember seeing when he first started and his name was caches clay. He used to work out at the Fifth Street gym and then they would all go to wolfies for late at night it was unbelievable as I got older and I lived here in the anybody who was anybody late at night would wander into three or four in the morning so they could eat a giant meal to sober up to drive back to where I was among that. We literally you know we'd go When I see it a mail mail, send mail by the time we were done, yeah, I was ready to try backup 10. And that was so.

Kathy Hersh

5:07

So you saw Cassius Clay? Yes, yes,

Roger Grant

5:09

indeed. Many, many others, but I just don't remember because it was such a blur. I remember Lincoln Road before it was a mall. And that was truly next to Fifth Avenue was probably about the most glamorous Street in America. It was all the upper upper Fifth Avenue in New York stores. People got all dressed up to go to Lincoln Road. When my mother would get all dressed up, and then at night, even when the stores were closed, that's where everyone walked. It was like the boardwalk in Atlantic City. My mother would wear mink stole and her glitter glasses. And people get drunk. And all you did was walk up and down. And everyone was dressed to kill. It was the hotel I remember when I was a little kid. And we would



walk we walked I think into the lobby of the Fountain Blue. And I mean, they would keep it like 60 degrees in the heat. And the reason they did that was so women could wear their first in the lobby. People used to socialize in the lobby, you'd go in there be and then Fountain Blue. The lobby got so popular. They had a list of guests if you were not with a guest, they stopped allowing people in because everybody wanted to hang out at the lobby in the Fountain Blue and, and wearing their mink stoles. So that's I think, you know, the wolfsonian Museum used to be a cold storage. They stored all the furs for Saks Fifth Avenue reveal and but it was a very different time. It was you know, white gloves, a hat, a lot of sequins and benmore white shoes.

Kathy Hersh

7:07

Um, did you go to any of the nightclubs?

Roger Grant

7:11

Yes, we went well, when I was, of course, when I was very little. I couldn't but as soon as I hit about 12 years old, then they would take us when they went to see shows when we we stayed at the Deauville. I'm not certain of the years either 61 or 62. And JD Garlon was playing in the hotel. And my parents wanted us to see Judy Garland. She was it was one of her many comebacks. And she happened to be whatever year was 61 or 62. I guess she had dried out a little bit. And I do remember that.

Kathy Hersh

7:52

It'd be hard to forget.

Roger Grant

7:53

Yes. Now you would never Yeah, I mean, she was still you know, even though she's her. She had a lot of issues. 1960 see there's 61 or 62. I moved here in 1971. And at that time between about 1971 and the end of the 70s maybe up to about 1982 hotels that were technically owned by



Maurice Landsberg was a friend of my uncles. He was originally from Baltimore, he owned the in rock, the Deauville, the SAKs a there were seven hotels and they had a promotion called the cavalcade of stars, which was done at the Polian room at the Deauville. And it brought in the the hottest the hottest entertainers at the time. And we saw numerous I remember so Joan Rivers for the first time that would have probably been 1972 She was getting really hot because she was on Johnny Carson every week and she gave an outrageous perform and of course she could be uncensored. We saw there which I remember toady fields. She was hilarious. As she was closing her act, a woman that was sitting in the fourth or fifth row and the dove on this was a theater that held like three four or 5000 people decided to leave early got well because she's you know for the parking or whatever. And, and toady fields got really pissed off. And she said to her, where are you going? What are you racing to get home to do nothing? And the woman said, I'm gonna count let's just she was arguing with her and she starts to walk out and and I remember toady said Well, fuck you. I'm gonna do another 20 minutes. The audience reward. Another interesting. On the negative side, we went to see Woody Allen there at the absolute height of his career. And he was so nasty and arrogant to the audience. He was not funny. He came out for 30 minutes he did only 30 minutes. he stunk. And then he walked out. He says, I'm done. And I've never heard an audience boo like that. He immediately had three or 4000 people that hated his guts. My mother never forgave him. She wouldn't cut his movies. And we were giant Woody Allen fans. But then I remember as the most negative. I'm trying to think of the other we saw one of the best we saw was Steven at and they were at the height of their career. And I remember what she she sang a song from the Broadway musical on a clear day you can see forever it was what do I have that I don't and it was absolutely so spectacular. The audience just and they they ended up doing an hour of on course, at that show, we I don't think we got out till two in the morning. That was a very memorable now I have other memories of other hotels. Unfortunately, the some of the most interesting were at the diplomat which is not Miami Beach, but when I was young, I remember when Frank Sinatra was at the Laurent. I did see I never saw Sammy Davis perform in Miami Beach. But I did see him at the pool at the Deauville hotel. We didn't go see him for some reason. We maybe. But I remember when we saw the



all these crowds at one end of the pool, and Sammy Davis was staying at the hotel. He was he was playing there.

Kathy Hersh

11:49

That must have been after they ended the Oh

Roger Grant

11:54

yeah. Oh, yeah, it was it was I think they ended the SEC, the segregation. I think it was 1964 this would have been around. I was in high school. 11th grade 66 It was already. I do remember when I was a little boy. When we would come to town and we would have a big dinner at my uncle's house and she would ask their maid to stay late because to help clean up and she lived in over town. She was not allowed to be on her own. After six o'clock they had to carry. And I remember I used to go over town with my uncle to take her home. And I couldn't like PNC town. No, she's not allowed on the street without. And I don't think they changed that to a 1964. Miami Beach also, in addition to being anti black, was incredibly and despite the fact that it was a very Jewish city, there was a lot of properties in Miami Beach that Jews were not allowed to buy. Look, Horace island right around the corner from us was totally restricted. Sunset islands was funny, three and four were Gentile, and one and two were Jewish. Bow of course, bow harbors not Miami Beach. But Jewish people were on the right side of the street, Gentiles who are on the left, there was no mix. And that was the way with there were probably almost all the properties on this street when they were initially built had had covenants, requiring that you could not be of the Semitic background and force itself to someone No, absolutely not have one of those covenants? Well, this house wasn't built until 1951. Probably the house that was here before did unsure, because this they would not. Fisher was a real Jew hater. He would not say these funny things. We have this Kancil culture now. We have a Street 41st Street, which is the most religious Street in Miami Beach is was named after Arthur Godfrey, who was notorious anti Semite. And in fact, one of the commissioners proposed to remove his name from the street. There's a statue of Carl Fisher and in Lakeview Park. And I mean he would not sell to a jewelry wouldn't. That that's the way it was. And nobody really questioned it because they came



from other. Baltimore was the same. Philadelphia was the same many, many cities in America were the same. Yeah. How did you feel encountering that? I just thought it was so strange. And I remember my parents telling me a story. Lena Horne, back in the 50s Was I think she was playing at the Eden rock, but she was not allowed to stay in the hotel. She was the highest at the time. I'm not just about the highest paid entertainer in America, if not the world, and she wasn't allowed to stay in the hotel. And I just couldn't conceive of the stupidity of but then again we I was always I was old enough where I remember were growing up there were certain places where Jews just did not go. There were even restaurants in Miami Beach that catered to Gentiles and, and one we loved and we would go our last name was grant so they would give us a reservation over the phone. And my father doesn't look particularly Jewish, very fair, blond, blue. But I remember we used to go to daddy's daddy's restaurant, which is now it was Barton it's now Barton G it went from daddy's to starfish to Barton Qi Gabby's catered to get daddy's catered to the bath club and the surf club members. It was a northern Italian restaurant and my parents love Northern Italian food which was not very well known in America. And Gaddy is required a tie and jacket, no exceptions and they wouldn't give you one. If you showed up without it. You did not go in. The food was wonderful. It was a very low key, but it was a Gentile restaurant. You didn't see any Jewish people in there. The Jewish restaurants where everybody hung out where the embers which was on 22nd Street, it was owned by Walter Kaplan was friend of my my family.

Roger Grant

16:40

And that was like though, for us it was a Sunday night restaurant. But you got all dressed up to go to the Amber's I used to order the the rotisserie duck and ribs combo. I can remember the baked apple that they serve everything with the most incredible baked apple and they had best French salad dressing. And and also you could get Stone crabs for appetizers and but the embers was the place. There was another one on 23rd street called Chandler's if you couldn't get into the embers you went to Chandler's I went to Joe Stone Crab probably the first time I was maybe nine or 10 years old. And when I moved here it was during stone crab seats. My parents loved Stone crabs. It was like a once a week thing. But I will remember I recall



when we went we had been going for a couple years after I moved here was around maybe 1973. And we go in and my father opens up the menu and he sees jumbo Stone crabs had gone up to 795 and my father was appalled. He said you know what? Nobody's gonna pay that. And it was and I mean of course they bring you out a platter like they were always you had to wait. If you didn't know know them or they didn't know you had to wait probably two hours for a table. But the tradition was my my family knew dudes the wife's family that owned it and they gave us a number to call and what we would do is you come in and then they say okay, and they would tell us go into the bar, the bar was in the front and just sort of like man don't because we don't like them. And then like 10 minutes later, you'd get a tap on the shoulder to go in and you never kept until you leave. That was the it was \$20 tip and I'm we're going back to the 50s and 60s. But that was the courtesy you thank them. You had a \$20 bill in your pocket you never tipped before was that was the Joe's that's the way they worked. The I remember the toupee of the maitre d he was the maitre d there from the time I was a kid till probably I was in my 30s 40s. But I remember because there's always dressed immaculate, but I remember his toupee.

Kathy Hersh

19:16

But your uncle was in the hotel?

Roger Grant

19:18

Yes, yes. He, they came down here. They knew nothing about the hotel business. I had the Pittsburg end of the family decided I think they were in the insurance business. They the other family on the very fine kinda like an Epicure in Washington DC. Now, but everybody was originally from Baltimore. And they they talked him into they went ahead and they developed and built the Royal Palm Hotel. It was the hotel or the year I think that was 1938 or 39. I'm not sure it was kosher hotel, but it was a beautiful, glamorous hotel and they counted up until the mid 1950s. They sold it and they built another hotel which was called the Monte Carlo, which was a Collins in 65th Street two blocks below the Deauville. And it was one of the top hotels. That Hotel The only reason I know when that hotel opened was because my cousin Marsha, who was still living, she now lives



up I think in Ocala, or the Gainesville where her daughter is the hotel Open, she got married, there was the first function they had in December of 1953. I did not go to the wedding, I was a baby. But that's how I know when it opened. And it was a very successful Hotel.

Kathy Hersh

20:46

Ever hear your uncle or anyone in the family talk about the World War Two era when they had to house a lot of soul. My

Roger Grant

20:57

father, my father was in the Navy and my father was housed in one of the yes, in fact, the hotel was entirely entirely army. They took over the entire beach. And that was from I guess, like 1942 to 45. What happened was, so many of the soldiers that were training in Miami Beach, fell in love with the whole and I think that's what caused the boom. After World War Two, were people from the north started, that's when there was the exodus to come to Miami. And I know they built there was I'm not certain of the history but I lived in North Bay Village, Normandy Isle, was developed by a French Jew by the name of Henri Levy. And what he did was he was building housing in Normandy, he had the Normandy theme, because there was an entire platoon of Jewish many, many Jewish soldiers that were in Normandy during World War Two. So he built the whole neighborhood. It was a very middle class neighborhood. Most of the houses were probably purchased with GI loans. And of course, all the streets were named after Normandy villages, and it is in fact called Ari levy Boulevard. That's the semi official name. But her

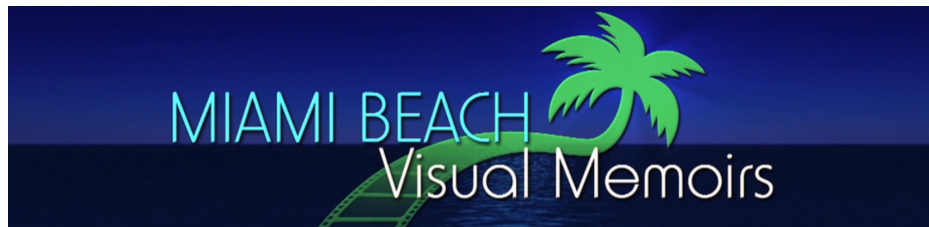
Kathy Hersh

22:31

complaints, specifically the Royal Palm from the Ungers that, that there was a lot of damage and a lot of souvenir taking of the soldiers. That

Roger Grant

22:48



Oh, really that I and I never heard that part. I guess in a sense, it makes sense because the soldiers were most probably draftees. And these were not the normal Miami Beach hotel guests. So what would you expect, but I never heard that. I'm sure it's true. And my father actually was did some he had to go down there, they gave a course or something. My father was a naval engineer. He was an officer in the Navy. He had left the Navy. And of course, as soon as Pearl Harbor, he was contacted out you've got to come back in we have to have, you know, so

Kathy Hersh

23:33

well, you down here. You know, you wouldn't have been born yet. In the war time.

Roger Grant

23:40

No, no, no, I did my first time here I think was 1957. Couldn't be 5657. But you must

Kathy Hersh

23:47

have heard story. Oh, yeah. My

Roger Grant

23:49

parents were here. I mean, my mother. I had the story. My mother and my aunt Helen and my grandmother. They actually flew to Miami in 1939. In a DC three Eastern Airlines, it made like six stops they used to call the milk runs. And my mother said that kind of deterrent on air travel for shouldn't step on another plane for about another 10 years. They were real pioneers people. Their their their Christian friends went to mass to say prayers for them J was went to say prayers for them because they were going to get on an airplane and my grandfather was there but he didn't go. He may have fainted because he thought that was the end. But they couldn't get a train ticket. We're going down. And actually that was I think the first time we and Helen had ever been here. And they were she was the wife of and she fell in love with it. And I remember my aunt telling me I don't know we came



down here we had that miserable plane ride Everywhere we threw up the whole way down and she said as soon as we can and she said she looked at all these coconut palms and the flowers and the orchids and she said, Oh my god, this is paradise. They did not move here year round. Nobody did very few people till air conditioning came in, which was around 1945. They started with room air conditioners, that everybody went back up north for the summer. It was just impossible to live here.

Kathy Hersh

25:30

When did you visit you visited in the winter.

Roger Grant

25:34

I you we either visited during because those kiddos in school either visited during Christmas break. If we didn't do Christmas break then we came for Passover Easter break this one or the other. When I got older, I would come down by my I loved it. And I had my friends here. I would occasionally come down by myself in the summer and just stay with my aunt and uncle. I mean it was hot, but I didn't mind it. It was at the ocean. And we could walk to they lived on 28th Street. Right, right adjacent to the par three golf course. But 28th Street if you keep walking dead ends into the pedestrian bridge that goes over Indian Creek. So for us it was for me and the kids in the neighborhood. It was a 10 minute walk to the beach. So what more could you tell me it was paradise. And, and I never minded and in the summer I will also tell you and I moved here permanently in 1971. The summers were not nearly as hot. You didn't have a solid wall of concrete on Collins Avenue you didn't have the population. You didn't have the global warming up. And basically it was the same almost every day it was 87 degrees in 87 today is considered a cool day in the summer. It almost never hit 90 If it hit 90 It was like oh my god, this is worse than Baltimore. But it was so unusual that it was it was at seven every day and it was at at night and that was our summer similar rain patterns. But it was I found it very livable because you had all the ocean breezes because you didn't have the concrete blocking everything. And there was so much green space.



Kathy Hersh

27:27

You must have seen the beginnings of the Art Deco movement. The campaign Yes

Roger Grant

27:33

indeed. Yes. Even though I was in Miami had been traveling a great deal for business I do remember the Cardoza hotel was the first and a friend of mine that lived in Sunny Isles said I've got to take you down you've got to see the Cardoza we'll have dinner there. And we sat on the porch. And it truly was fabulous. I knew three quarters of the people there which is the way South Beach was even when it started in the 80s. If you were a local and you went down there you do almost everybody because it was all old time people that are celebrating the rebirth of South Beach where their grandparents lived in and then the entertainment all the cool bars were basically on Washington Avenue. That was the entertainment district. Ocean Drive was they were rebuilding the hotels but that really was cafes. It was quiet and then they started with a nice restaurants there but it was a very quiet the Cleveland was the first kind of lounge but it was a blast and if you only possible I did not miss a happy hour there five o'clock at the Cleveland was so much fun the drinks were like practically free they had incredible hors d'oeuvres and since I worked you know I was an independent rep so I could get there early. I could plan my to get the best spots closest to the buffet and then all my friends we had the bar seats and and there was a blast bang I remember when mangoes opened they would pour killer drinks. You'd have two drinks you couldn't even walk to the didn't even know where your car was. It was everything was cheap down there. But one by one the restaurants started to get better. But I don't think it started to get really sophisticated till Tony Goldman came in. And that was already almost to the 90s I think Did you ever meet him? Yes, yes, I did. He had his hair potheads. silver hair pulled back in a ponytail. He greeted every person that walked into the Park Central. He was always there when they opened for dinner at six o'clock. He was always there. It was a fabulous restaurant. It was really one of the first really new wave cuisine. He had duplicated restaurant the owned on Spring Street in Soho. And food was fabulous and the most gorgeous people who



would ever want to see it was Lucky's Yes. Lucky's it was and that was really the first and then it just one after another. I remember while they're still in business, my my parents favorite New Wave Italian restaurant was Osteria del piatra. They were in the CAMEO theater. On the corner it was tiny restaurant that had maybe 40 seats. I remember they did a black ink linguini with a stone crab cream mustard sauce. That was so unbelievable. You know when something and I mean my my parent, of course they only served it in the winter. You know, and they were, but that was if they had it on the menu that was didn't have to even look at the rest of it. And they also made the most incredible wheelchair. We just had dinner there. The one while we go to the one in the Marlon. But we were taken with one of our commissioners took us to a Cuban restaurant that opened up into their spot.

Interviewer

28:31

that's the doorbell

Roger Grant

28:38

But I remember and that was a fabulous restaurant. There was I had my makeup. Okay, just keep rolling. Okay. I had my 40th birthday party at a restaurant called Metzen Otay. It was the number one Italian restaurant in the city. It was the first restaurant that 11 o'clock at night converted to a nightclub where everyone danced on top of the tables. And it said a worldwide trend because we went to Paris to two years later. And the Alcazar in Paris did the exact same. And when I was talking to the managers there said oh, I'm from Miami Beach. And he said yes. Well, we somebody took us to Metzen Otay for dinner and we thought oh my god, what a fabulous idea. I had my 50th birthday at a at a restaurant called Tantra. Michelle Bernstein was the chef it was her first chef's job the club had every week it had actual grass on the floor. They would actually bites grass every week. They had to change it because it died. They had that was the first bar that had hookah pipes. Of course, it wasn't necessarily tobacco in the pipes. And I had my I had my 50th birthday party there in the back because my cousin's boyfriend was the bar manager. And he was a



South Beach icon. So he had the whole thing set up for us when you went to Tantra if Kathy Yes,

Kathy Hersh

33:44

you okay. Delivering

Roger Grant

33:47

directly. Oh, just tell him to leave it. Just leave it in the Yeah, just tell him to just put it in the back room. It's odd sees you shut it off.

Speaker 3

34:00

No, no. Okay. Yeah, but I when when when this kind of thing happened. We just rather than reset the cameras go because we can I can record cat hours.

Roger Grant

34:15

Yeah, and then just splice whatever you need in here, you know when you can even put it on the floor. That's there. All right. Isn't it all wrapped in plastic? Yeah, just you could put it anywhere. Or if you know more and I'm not gonna I was gonna say to get up. Well, it's like when you're on an airplane and you have the air foam things and you forget and everything comes flying. Yeah. So I was calling him out on my birthday celebrate my 40th and Matt's admits in Note where she started the trend of turning a restaurant into a nightclub. And they were the first in the world. And it said, not been within two years. Although cafes in Paris were doing good it was. And my 50th birthday was at Tantra, which was a restaurant and nightclub, the restaurant chef who was Michelle Bernstein's first time as a chef. I can actually remember the food that she did. In fact, I discussed it with Michelle and when she opened another restaurant and was and of course it was like, we were hysterical laughing about all the but they had a that was the first restaurant that ever had that I ever saw had hookah. And they would change. They The floor was fresh grass, they would change, change it every week, they had to because it would die. They had a backroom was



the private for the VIPs. And when you would pull up for valet parking. If your name was not on the list, the valet Parker had a list. You did not park and you did not go in there. That was sell but because my cousin's boyfriend was the bar manager and was not an issue for us. In fact, we never I mean, I'd love to go down the south beach when all the new clubs but I'm not the type of person that waits in line. That's just not my Thank goodness. I had friends that were connected and, and even if we decided to go to somewhere I remember when we went to amnesia, which was, I don't know what it's called now. It's a huge club on Collins and second street, I think what's it called now? And been there near it was a restaurant. But it was a branch of a very, the most famous nightclub in Ibiza, which was the disco capital of the world. And we had walked past it. It opened about it had been open a couple of weeks and my friend who was an actress and was Screen Actors Guild and absolutely knock out beautiful. She says I want to go in and see wh at it's hard to look at this line there's so I said tell you what, I'm gonna get mine go up to the front and see if you know anybody. Two seconds later, come on. Like and it's like and people are getting mad. It's like who but I mean she was so gorgeous. Nobody would didn't matter everywhere we went I mean if you could get people to stare at the on South Beach. You were there. She was a regular in Miami mice. She did. She was the Del Monte girl on television. She...

Kathy Hersh

37:46

...speaking of, you would have been here during the Anita Bryant. No, actually

Roger Grant

37:54

I was in California. That was, I followed it because you know, she lived down the street. She lived in the 5400 block or 5600 block of North Bay. The reason I was in California at the time, and it was the number one story on the in the newspaper every day. So of course I knew what was going on and and you were shocked. I mean it was and of course the husband was nothing but a grifter scammer that ruined her career wiped her out she was bankrupt. I think that house was sold foreclosure on North Bay ugly it was a really ugly arrow and it it Aladdin a very negative image to Miami Beach



because Miami Beach was always the most liberal you know you had money in your pocket you do whatever you want. Nobody cared, it was so open.

Kathy Hersh

38:56

So you think that it it definitely...

Roger Grant

38:59

... yeah definitely killed killed any there's certainly and and that was at a time where there more and more gay gay people were coming out. You know, they were coupled to incomes no kids, which used to be called "dinks" here, d-i-n-k. double income, no kids. Yes. And one place they did not come was Miami Beach. It was... which was really bizarre because Miami Beach always was so open to gay and 22nd Street Beach was the Big Gay beach. Nobody. There were, there were gay sex bars, but that was everything. And it literally stopped that so nothing happened here. That was I think in either 1977 or 7877 because I was in Calif rnia. It's 1977

Kathy Hersh

39:55

It became ground zero for the gay movement. Yeah, exactly. And what We've heard

Roger Grant

40:00

...and it was just a scam. I mean, he was just a scammer. That husband was garbage took it seriously. She did because she did this she was so dumb redneck from Oklahoma. I mean, she would she ever did a one digit IQ. It's a shame bro wonder wiped her out. That was the undercover. And she all she did was apologize the rest of her career. But now Miami Beach has had many dark days. And of course the Mary Alito invasion was I mean, for South Beach. It was devastating. just devastating. When you would go down there it was. You had to be brave to go down there.

Kathy Hersh



40:43

Tell us about that. Go down there.

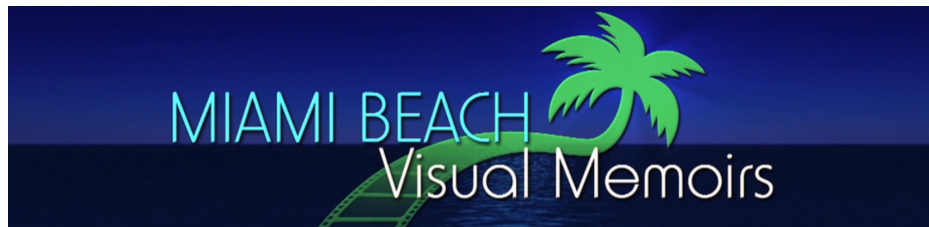
Roger Grant

40:46

Yes, indeed, I had well what was happening was at that period, was when all the artists and the Bohemian culture of Coconut Grove had to leave the developers for coming in bulldozing everything. So the likely place to go and those was South Beach. It was dirt cheap. And I we had friends that rented an apartment in a building on Ocean Drive called the Amsterdam Manor. I had never been in it. I always thought it was a cool building. site and I remember walking in and we were kicking there were always there were soda cans everywhere all over the grounds on South Beach. Because the merrier litres crack smokers couldn't afford a pipe. But you could take a can of Coca Cola, punch a hole in it and use it as a pipe after they were done. They would discard it. We go down there and we're kicking aside all these coke cans with holes in them. Everything smelled from ether. But we went into the Amsterdam matter and I was fascinated by the courtyard and and they had a an apartment. They were paying 300 a month. And I said God one day somebody's going off I said this is one gorgeous I mean it was every I mean she said well there are squatters living in this one and but but I can have the Amsterdam Manor and it was an old deserted I've probably been retirees and but a lot of a lot that I had had friends they rented a place on one of the lives either like Pennsylvania or Michigan or one of the and they had a really and they did it up very Art Deco and they had they were in one of the quads it was you know for apartments to the building. It was very small, but I remember they had beautiful oak floors, wood oak floors and high ceilings. But that was the South Beach of I'm trying to the early 80s When it was just starting to but there was still if you went to eat you still went to the famous or the world Hungarian the famous was not kosher. This one was fabulous. Adam had to be still the best Jewish food and Americans Romanian style. It was so incredible. The kosher one was the royal Hungarian. course they were closed on Friday night. And their food was good. But the famous was was incredible.

Kathy Hersh

43:30



It deserved its name from what it was it was

Roger Grant

43:34

their address. I think it was 671 Washington Avenue. The that location though, when the Famous closed cut forgot the name of the family that owned it for years and years. That became the first cool restaurant hanging out it was called the strand. And they maintained all the original. The funniest thing is when we went there about a week after it opened if that and I walked in and the new I forgot who owned the restaurant. And they were not old time Miami Beach was actually taught I don't remember historica Yeah, may have been sold. I don't know this was 1986 or 87.

Kathy Hersh

44:26

I've been there once.

Roger Grant

44:28

Oh, the food was fabulous. Absolutely Fabulous. But I remember somebody came up and got him. I didn't know who he was. And they said this guy's been on the famous radio show. And I showed him where everything was in the famous restaurant that this was the barrier where you had a weight this was it. I took him on the tour of what it really because by the time he was there, I guess everything had been gutted but they maintain the original terrazzo floors. A lot of the work On, and the food was wonderful. And the bar was it was the hottest spot in Miami. It was another place almost impossible to get in unless you knew someone. But that was the really the first one that was upscale and, and was on the pages of the New York Times. And I mean, anyone that came down from New York all we got to go to the stream. But that was and then it just sort of they started popping up one after another. We started getting a lot of really sophisticated Italian food. There were no longer Mamma Mia restaurants.

Kathy Hersh

45:41

What do you think of the place now?



Roger Grant

45:43

What tactic. Ocean drives the last cause, quite frankly, we never go there unless we have to. In my opinion, I would love to see them pull all the entertainment out of Ocean Drive and put it back where it belongs, which is Washington Avenue. There's no reason they can't do the same things that they do in Rome and where they built complexes of nothing. But rowdy nightclubs, who cares, it's all in law. And Washington Avenue was the party Street. It was never pretty. It was always great. It was the Eighth Avenue of Miami Beach. But that's where you went when you went to a party, all the bars, all the clubs. And I think and Washington Avenue is still nothing. That's what it should be. That's where the entertainment district was. And that's where it should be now, Ocean Drive should be for tourists that just want the beauty. It's okay to have a restaurant. Certainly along the end as long as it they serve food. Yeah, they can serve alcohol, no bars, no more rowdy. It just destroyed the street. And I know I mean most of people I know have lived in a most people in this neighborhood have lived here all their lives. Nobody goes nobody. It's just south beach now is if the west side of South Beach is for locals. And the east side to South Beach is strictly for tourists. I shop in Sunset harbor we all we eat there we go to all the restaurants off Alton road. You go in there you actually it's all mostly local. You don't have any of the issues or it's become to South beaches. And I mean to go east. And it's funny because Alton road used to be the industrial area that was the the area on Sunset harbor was the only industrial area Miami Beach. That's where all the body shops for cars were warehouses. I had friends that were in the wholesale jewelry business. The only reason I even knew the neighborhood was because I used to go over there to their office. And it was just nothing but warehouse. But there were a lot of cool places on Omro. They cater to the locals for food. The Hangout was called the villa. They made them had the most incredible roast beef sandwich that was but everybody met at the villa. The villa I think was around 12th and Alton road or I'm sure we could look it up.

Kathy Hersh

48:34

When it must be past lunchtime. We're talking



Roger Grant

48:37

but the villa was that was the Hangout. But that area was you know, Alton road was low rent district. The buildings on West Avenue because I had a friend of mine's mother retire there, they were all rentals. And it was all old, retire Jewish. The building that my friend's mother loved, they were they were fled the Nazis in the late 30s. They lived they came from Washington Heights in New York, which was where a colony the German Jews colonized. And the building that she moved into, was mostly German Jews from Washington Heights that at all, one friend moved in, and then they all because I remember I went to, to her building. We went to something as a birthday or I think I'm not certain but I think it was 800 West Avenue. The think it was 800.

Kathy Hersh

49:38

The cost Memorial, we discovered was the first memorial to the Holocaust in the world.

Roger Grant

49:47

It was Yeah. Well, you know, it was it was jumpstarted by who I knew a man from Cleveland. His name was as for cats, his parents were checked. They survive. They fled in. They didn't get out though but they were in camps. I think he was he ultimately became chairman of the Fed Jewish Federation here. He had moved here. It's brilliant guy. He made a fortune in real estate and the type of when I met him, he was to just move to here. He was a friend of a friend from Cleveland and Clevelanders all sort of colonized like Baltimore, in Philly, and but I remember when I met him, I felt this guy's brilliant. He's gonna be an extremely, extremely successful and he was, but he was the one that jumped started it because his parents were probably helped fund it, too. I don't even remember when it opened.

Kathy Hersh

50:45



was we just don't remember. We just did a profile on the architect, Kenneth Tracy

Roger Grant

50:56

stairwell once and he also works Cristo because he, he, I stayed in a hotel years and years ago in Jerusalem, and he did the he did some of the sculpture in the lobby of the hotel. Yeah,

Kathy Hersh

51:11

he did the the Mayfair hotel and coconut grove.

Roger Grant

51:14

That was, let's see, that was, that was a fabulous center. They actually had she'll bear lick Kosei, who was the founders of light Bernarda, in New York, the number one restaurant in New York, opened up a French restaurant in there, him and his wife and of course, went there at least once or twice a month. Mayfair was one of the most gorgeous shopping centers in America. The problem was, they didn't really have any customers. It was a very ambitious development. It was absolutely gorgeous. Anybody that came to visit I took it was like taking them to the Design District. And the Kosei opened up that restaurant, it was very successful, but he got brain he had a brain tumor. He had no medical insurance. When you would go to a good restaurant in Miami, they would have a little flyer on the menu, asking you to make a contribution for so of course if it was a fine restaurant, everybody knew who he was. That's how they paid his medical bills from donations of restaurant patrons all over the city. When he died, his wife decided close Maggie and they openly Bernard debt in New York and then I think it's I forgot the name of the Vader Meyer, I think is the chef there.

Kathy Hersh

52:43

Did your family belong to any of the synagogues,

Roger Grant



52:47

my family, the Katz's and the handcuffs were founders of Temple Emanuel. They were the the temple was founded, I think in 1941. But they didn't build the giant temple till 1947. Of course you couldn't build anything during the war. The synagogue was designed after the Great Synagogue of Algiers. Every family event growing up was at Temple Emanuel. My family were on the board that hired Rabbi Lehrman, Irving Lerman, who we knew really well because he was at every family. And for some reason, he absolutely love my mother. So whenever we went to a family event, a wedding, a bar mitzvah. My aunt always made sure that Rabbi Lerman sat with my mother and father because they just go on and on and on, and they were into baseball. But I remember going I remember the first time I ever walked into temple manual, which was 1957, looking at that big dome, and they were, so everybody in the family belonged to a manual. My cousin still belongs there. Her kids all had their baby namings, bar mitzvahs, Bat Mitzvahs, and weddings there. I've been to so many fabulous parties in that in that temple. I even remember the they used to have the top kosher caterer or they had under contract. And I can remember the name Hola. sommerstein was the name of and they were the most prestigious kosher caterers. Yeah, the food was so good. You didn't know it was kosher. And see they're accustomed to coming up. We're not religious and they were accustomed to coming to Baltimore. For Anna we belong to reform temple, and there's crab and guide, shucking oysters and so we were like I had seen my father would say we better eat before We go, it's gonna be kosher. You know, normally they were It was awful. They were fabulous. I mean, you'd like I said you didn't know it was kosher was so good. But you had all our family. What they would do is they would have the only thing was my cousin didn't get married there. She got married at the fountain. Because that was you know, if you're getting married, that was if, if you were prominent Miami Beach that in the she got married in 1966, the Fountain Blue was the place. And I remember them taking the photo, you know, the fake stairway. That's where they would take all the family pictures, because I remember standing there watching and I said to my mother, where's the door to go up Jesus now it's just this is a fakes that staircase, which, but, um, and I went to I went to a very good friend of mine married the son of the owners of the Deauville, the Landsbergis. And they were originally in Baltimore family. And I was Maurice Jr. Mickey. And that was one. I went they had the most I



went to the engagement party. So you figure an engagement party. It's gonna be in a small room with 50 people were like 300 people 10 piece band, and the wedding was even bigger. It was in the room, that round room that looks out to the ocean. I don't think I've ever been in the mountain. But no, that's that was the Deauville of the Deauville, because he owned the Deauville. My cousin at the time, Hank off when they sold all their hotels. He was the man he went to work for Landsberg. He was the managing director the Deauville. He didn't move over to the hidden rock. But I remember at the time and oh my god, but boy, what a fabulous parties.

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