

Miami Beach data, possible broadcast material

"Life begins at 40 in '55" is the theme as Miami Beach celebrates its 40th anniversary ... It will be a year-long party for vacationers with the city planning special events every week.

In 1900 good farm land at Miami Beach sold for \$100 an acre. Thirteen years later the same land brought \$300 an acre. Platted into lots in 1914, it brought \$3,500 an acre... Now \$3,500 a front foot is not unusual for oceanfront property ...

The late Carl G. Fisher, Heesier who made a fortune with his Prest-O-Lite company, put Miami Beach on the map between 1916 and 1924 with the expenditure of less money than was spent in building the city's newest hotel ... It is believed Fisher invested less than 14 million in Miami Beach ... Incidentally, he did not lose his fortune here despite collapsing land prices after 1926 ... His heaviest losses were in attempting to duplicate the winter resort as a summer resort at Montauk Point ...

Miami Beach's summer vacation population is greater now than its winter tourist population before the war ... The first hotel operator to advertise Miami Beach as a summer resort was Amelia Reineking, now retiring after 27 years in the business here ... Her rates, incidentally, were eight dollars a week -- American plan ... Now 90 per cent of Miami Beach's 375 hotels are open the year-'round.

Half of Miami Beach's nine square miles of land area once was swamp or baybottom ... Dredges were operated day and night for more than 10 years making the fill ... Boys were paid one dollar a day and all the watermelon they could eat for planting grass on the newly filled land when work was started in 1912 ... Movie theaters didn't start the fad of giving away dishes to attract customers. It was done at Miami Beach lot auctions as early as 1913.

(more)

Miami Beach was a site for training airplane pilots for the first World War, the school being operated by the late Glenn Curtiss ... During the second World War the city's hundreds of hotels were used as barracks to house thousands of Air Corps men during pre-flight training ... Now airplanes are not permitted to disturb the vacationers. Airports are on the mainland, 10 miles and more away as the jets fly...

New Jersey, which now sends Miami Beach nine per cent of its visitors, also provided the island with its first developers, who started a coconut plantation ... Despite multitudes of rabbits and raccoons that ate the young trees, the plantation thrived but falling prices for the nuts deemed it to economic failure ... Winter fruits such as citrus and avocados proved more successful when planted around 1900 ... Pine Tree drive, one of the main thoroughfares, takes its name from trees planted at the turn of the century to protect the avocado groves from winds that scarred the fruit by rubbing it against branches ... It is only around the southern coastal rim of Florida that coconut and royal palms and other tropical trees can be grown successfully ... In winter Miami Beach frequently is 10 degrees warmer than areas directly west on the mainland ... Surrounding waters cause the difference, and likewise cool the city in summer ... So nature has air-conditioned Miami Beach... The city has fewer days with the temperature over 90 degrees than does New York.

Although gifted with eight miles of excellent beach, Miami Beach has more than 300 swimming pools ... As early as 1900, mainland residents sailed to what is now Miami Beach for the ocean swimming ... It was ~~was~~ not unusual for their sailboats to "run aground" on sea cows in the bay, harmless but bulky creatures that feed on seaweed and sea grasses.