



## Ben Grenald Interview

**Kathy:** We are interviewing Ben Grenald and the date is January 12th, 2016. This is for the Miami Beach, Memoirs Project, Visual Memoirs Project. So, Ben, you've had a very interesting life, but lets start with, when you first came to the beach. What brought you here?

**Ben G:** I'm a local Kentucky boy, a pharmacist. I graduated University of Kentucky in Louisville calls their pharmacy. And then, I was raised in the automobile business in Kentucky with my father and family. But I fell in love with Miami Beach and it was my aunts place where I stayed the first time I came. And I called my mother and said I'm madly in love with this place and I want to spend the rest of my life here. And my mother said don't make quick decisions. We're in America there are a lot of wonderful, beautiful places I said I don't want it to be anymore beautiful that what I see. I'm gonna spend the rest of my life here.

After that time I made about seven different trips here. Every year, usually on August the 15th or 20th, cause I have hay fever in Kentucky and I was used to going up to Mackedolre Island, Michigan. And but then I came the year, that year for the football I was perfectly well. Never had any problems. I felt so good I said I'm coming back forever.

So I, this, I come back every chance I had and the, and then in 1941 on a trip here I met a, some woman, and I fell in love with her, found out she was only 16 years old I was 21, I told her we're gonna get married in 2 years and we did. And in the meanwhile that was June. That was matter of fact that was in June, August of 1941. And, September. And I finally came over around October the 1st and December the first, the seventh was the, situation with Japan.

**Kathy:** Pearl Harbor.

**Ben G:** Pearl Harbor, on a Sunday. I was studying my pharmacy in my bedroom and the next morning I got up, I didn't go to school. I went to the Post Office at 6th and Broadway in Louisville, Kentucky and I signed up to join the Navy. And they didn't take me until I finished school in 1942. I finished the pharmacy school in June and the next day I was in midship school and the first class of, of land, Land Grant colleges which they gave Notre Dame and I was there till December the 28th, and Selma had come up to visit me on Christmas. And they cancelled all the leaves there so Selma came up with my mother to South Bend, Indiana cause she wouldn't leave without having — her being checked over.

You know. They're not gonna leave them.

**Kathy:** You're mother knew that you were going to get married.

**Ben G:** Yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah. She came with her and two days after she left to go back to Mi-, to Miami, after school she was in school in, in Tallahassee and so she went back to the family, that's the school. And I, I was sent from then on to Little Creek, Virginia which is where the amphibious, the base was. And I came out as an Ensign. In 1945 I left the Navy and I came to Miami I was planning originally to stay in Panama cause I liked it over there. And there was no drug, wholesale drug companies and I thought I would start one.

And I sold my interest in there, and I came to Miami and took a job, pharmacist only made 55 dollars a week for 60 hours and I, I told them I had, need to work 120 hours cause my rent was a hundred dollars a month and plus my wife was pregnant cause she came to Panama and she got pregnant in Panama. So my daughter was made in Panama. And anyway, I they, they got pharmacists that work both shifts, seven days a week and they paid me a hundred dollars a week for the seven days a week.

And a matter of fact I have an ex-pharmacist who told me that, that he, some days thought that a pharmacist would make five-thousand dollars a year. And I said I hope god's listening. But anyway, it's been good to me, I, I've been in pharmacy. But you know, after a number of years I decided I love Mi-, I love Miami Beach. I love Miami. I'm happy, I'm 95 years old now. I am happy I had the opportunity of living both in America which I love. And being living, and to be able to live in Florida which I think is the best place to live year round. I think it's been a real blessing.

My wife and I have traveled to over 90 countries in our lives. And we have a lot of friends all over. And, and I... decided when I was about 50 years old that I wanted to do something for Miami Beach, I thought I could do and I ran for office and I became the Vice Mayor three times.

**Kathy:** When was that?

**Ben G:** 1982... every three years. Every three years, I don't know. three years. And they would shift those around. But anyway I, but before that I was in 1969 I was appointed to the, TDA, Tourism Development Authority, which then became the Visitors Conventional Authority and then I was, was lucky enough to be able to have some wonderful pharmacists and stores, I'd opened a number of stores in, in Miami Beach, in Miami or greater Miami.

And I devoted myself to doing what I felt like I do best. I, I almost immediately went to Atlanta where President Carter at that time was the Governor of, of Georgia. And I got to address the platform committee of the Democratic Party and I learned a lot there and I couldn't believe when I started this to find out whether tourism was, was considered an industry. And I spent the next ten years of, of practically begging everyone that was in office that I ever met. Please, tourism is an industry.

One out of every four jobs in Miami, or Florida are tourism oriented. One out of every four jobs. I said, I'm from Kentucky, I've been called... it was, ten... banks here, on Miami Beach and I advised everyone one of those to send me someone, they sent me 14 representatives and we met at the, Eleven-Hundred it's the Sun Bank on Lake, on Lake and Alton Road. And when I got these people together and I had, I had a manager for the Visitor Convention Authority a wonderful man who later became the manager of... What's the name...

Some up on 96th Street that, feels like I'm telling you. A Mister Hal Corn. And we met with 14, bankers and sitting there I said gentleman, I want to ask you a question, respectfully. I said is tourism a, an industry. And this is what I got, everybody looking at everybody else and nobody giving me an answer. And I said I want to ask you, I'm from Kentucky. Is tobacco an industry? Oh yeah! Is liquor an industry? Oh yeah! Is coal mining an industry. Oh yeah. Is horse racing an industry? Yeah. Is, is citrus an industry. Oh yeah. Is tourism an industry? Again, it took me 11 years and the last voting of the meeting in 1979, in Tallahassee. I was able to sneak in a, a respect for tourism as an industry.

**Kathy:** Why do you think there was such reluctance?

**Ben G:** I think everyone felt because it, it meant fun and people enjoying themselves and, I kept saying out of every four jobs I says. If you check the records the Bahamas have spent 10 million dollars a year just in Florida and steal some of our people to come down to bring them money, I said and, and the United States government is spending 3 and a half million dollars a year to promote people from the rest of the world coming to Florida. It doesn't make sense. And you know, and I say what difference didn't does it make.

I have an educated. I have to try to educate them now, that when you, if you are building a new hotel and we went there for thirty years without a new hotel on Miami Beach the first hotel after the war was open, opened by a man from Chicago. Matter of fact it was, Sachs. Mister George Sachs, opened that up, and that was the first. The second hotel was built in Miami Beach after the war was the San Souci built by Ben Novak the man who built the Fontainebleau, as a matter of fact.

The San Souci was a miniature Fontainebleau which was built in 1954. Took almost two years to build. But that's when he built the Fontainebleau. And Eden Roc who was one of his partners that he didn't get along with was built next to the Fontainebleau. After that, I had drugstores in the Fontainebleau, the Eden Roc, the San Souci, the Carillon, the Ivanhoe, I had 8, 8 hotel stores. I also had the first 8, the only 8 drugstores in Over Town for black people. And I'll show you some pictures of my hotel. that's where a Clinique Pharmacy. Douglas Drug. Harlem drugs. Stone drugs. Uh anyway you want to call in Coconut Grove, that one was one of the best stores I've ever seen in my life.

It was called?

**Kathy:** Was that Allen's?

**Ben G:** No, no. It, no Allen's store was the Red and Bird Road, that was a beautiful neighborhood. And by the way Tropical Park was a racetrack then. Tropical Park was a racetrack. Hialeah was a racetrack and the one on the beach were, in Miami. But Tropical stopped being that about 19, has to be 1952 or 53.

**Kathy:** Where was your first store?

**Ben G:** My first store was, well when I got out of the Navy I went to work at a store at 9th and Washington, which I was at from 19, 1945 and my daughter was born in 1946 and then I, that's the, there I went to work at, my second store which I kept for 57 years.

**Kathy:** You were the pharmacist.

**Ben G:** I am a pharmacist, I have a Doctrines Degree in pharmacy. Anyway, I, went. I went, my [inaudible - 00:13:20] pharmacy. And about. And I started opening stores in this like in the San Souci Hotel which were really not drug stores, they were the stores that the hotels were really. Stores where you could buy your shoes, your sunglasses. Your suntan oil. Your sunburn, I have a lot of trademarks which I, which I've been fortunate with. But meanwhile I was.

**Kathy:** So you were chemist as well.

**Ben G:** I'm a chemist. Matter of fact I was very friendly with Ben Greenberg, whose the man who invented the name Solar. no, no, Coppertone. Coppertone and he sold it to two gentleman, two German fellows and they took the money and they sold it to Mister Ben Greenberg from Cleveland, Ohio. he sold it to these two people for 60 thousand. They got a million from a man named Abe. Abe Clough, C-L-O-U-G-H, who owned the Clough Chemical Company in Memphis, Tennessee. Also a pharmacist and a very good friend of mine.

By the way, he's the one that had the big thing for Coppertone, that you had on Biscayne Boulevard. Of the little girl dropping her diaper. The Lap Band was the only drugstore in the world to have a Coppertone sign on it, 905 Normandy Drive until about ten years ago, they took a, they canceled them all, which they had none. Cause anyway.

**Kathy:** That was a very famous sign.

**Ben G:** Very famous and I had one on my store at 905. I still own the building but I wish I still had the sign up there. But anyway I, I was dedicated to the, I love, I love that thing. There was so many years that we had, in that some new hotel. And one of the reasons was, because we weren't recognized as an industry tourism. Being recognized in an industry meant that you could, like the lowest people who built the first big hotel in 1987 or '88 or '89, in that area. They built the. Those, maybe 1990, 1991 or something.

But they build them because they could borrow money for 3 percent, because it

was an industry. Before that it was 18 percent and before you got your building built you had to lose it. Because nobody wants to do it. And then we had so many years when there were, weather was bad and there was and I worked out with, we had three different airlines that went broke.

That, National Airlines. Pan-American, Eastern Airlines. As a matter of fact when the Pope came to this country in 1987, I had an older Pope from New York when I was a little boy. But when he came here I was working one night, and Maynard Clark had asked me, at that time I was already through my tourism thing, working as a, I was the Vice Mayor of Miami Beach and he asked me if I would help dress up the Julia Tuttle Causeway which was opened in 1957. There was no causeway there originally. But it opened in 1957.

And they asked me if I was up for dressing, and I was able to get a lot of, of cooperation with all the strawberry that you see on there both sides, when you drive over the tunnel the causeway I used to love to see the buildings all around but the, the strawberries so high now is all you see is strawberry. However it was very neat and amazing. It was really to welcome the Pope.

**Kathy:** So you were responsible for getting that plan site.

**Ben G:** Yes you could check that. It such a waste how much they called Keep America Beautiful, and I was for three years I was in charge of that.

**Kathy:** Was the Pope surprised to see you?

**Ben G:** I wouldn't say he was surprised. He was uh, he's 42 days younger than me. And when I was only 6 years old my father had sent along a truckload of toys which had an American bicycle, and American bicycle that had three wheels. And all the kids wanted to sit on it, they'd give me what they call swatzka and just to sit on my bicycle I was only six years old. But and I left my bicycle there. But anyway they...

**Kathy:** The Pope?

**Ben G:** Yeah the Pope gave me uh. We played together I, his mother always come out with beautiful white, smock and his, nickname was Lolick and so I discovered that I knew him and I said, yeah Lowlick that's my friend. I checked and we're from the same town a little town in Poland, which was called Tarnow, Poland. I have pictures of my grandfathers furniture factories there, that my own father worked for my mothers father, learning to be a upholster by trade.

And when I went to Europe it so happens I went to my fathers home there which was dirt floor with a Billy goat and three different Daschound breeds, how many they had those little creeks outside where all the little duck used to swim when I was a kid. Anyway, when I saw him, I went over and I said Low lack, they made him into a Saint, just last year or two the new, the new Pope made him a. His real name is Carroll Witholup. And eh...

**Kathy:** So what, what did his face look like when you called out his childhood nickname?

**Ben G:** I walks up to see him and so, lot of people was up, Catholics. So happy to have some, I'm Jewish, have Catholic Father Barry who was, was over in Miami Beach

used to have breakfast with me every, morning. Someone once called me a says she's says I may have. I says honey I'm having breakfast. Who you having breakfast with? I says I, I said we're married nine years I said I've had more breakfasts with Father Barry than I have with you.

But he'd come in every morning, my store off of Gottfried Road, has 27 seats into it. And that all some restaurants most of them didn't have it. By the way my stores in Overtown are beautiful stores, beautiful wonderful stores that I always took one or two officers or, places where I could give it to doctors to use without paying rent to examine black people who needed attention. And there's one very famous fellow who became the, the fighter, the prize fighter, Doctor, a very wonderful, a real genuine artist. Was whose, whose paintings go for hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Philip, god bless him he's still alive and he's also a doctor who used to check with all the prize fighters at the drugstore on 5th and Washington on the second floor, which had a gymnasium on there.

**Kathy:** That was where Muhammad Ali.

**Ben G:** Now that's where, well Muhammad Ali is from Louisville, Kentucky. Where I'm from, his, he's from originally. And I was very friendly with him when I, when he first came out we were both from Kentucky. And my store was the 901 Washington Avenue and that was on the corner of 501 Washington Avenue and I used to go over and spend some time with him.

**Kathy:** You spent time with Muhammad Ali.

**Ben G:** Yes, When he first came down here.

**Kathy:** When he was training.

**Ben G:** And I have a friend here an Israeli friend who had a black fighter who worked for him and we used to go up there all the time. So I was there frequently and I used to take care of the, all the fighters when they got all beat up. So far. But anyway the, I don't know why I. For, for.

**Kathy:** Ferdie Pacheco.

**Ben G:** Ferdie Pacheco and you can call him and ask him if there, at 900 Northwest Second Avenue we have a store there called Stone Drugs. I have a picture of Stone Drugs. And two rooms behind there you'd never have to pay a nickel give the people had there.

**Kathy:** So Ferdie Pacheco opened a little clinic. Free rent.

**Ben G:** It wasn't free for him alone. Any doctors that wanted to use it they would tell I need it for two days, come in and use it. They can sit down in one room and the other one would examine and they'd send them over to Jacksonville or they wanted to go.

**Kathy:** Selma told me a very interesting story about integration of a lunch counter at one, at your pharmacy, one of your pharmacies?

**Ben G:** That was in 1946 and it was a. After we named again, the name Arthur. Arthur Gottfried was a very good customer in my store and he was one of the owners of the Kennelworth Hotel. And in the front of the Kennelworth Hotel was some kind of a sign there, No Jews and No Dogs or whatever. I don't remember that, but I was very friendly with him as a matter of fact. He had a, a friendship with a fellow name Meyer.

Meyer...

**Kathy:** Meyer Lansky?

**Ben G:** From the city of Miami Beach, public relations. And if this fellow Meyer had a mother who was remarried.

**Kathy:** Hank Meyer?

**Ben G:** Huh? Hank Meyer was a good friend he lived at 58th and Plantree Drive with his mother and he, and he got his father, stepfather had an airplane and used to pull a sign down the road every Sunday. It says hey mothel get the shovel for your sunburn. For a product called Shovel Lotion and they charged me 25 dollars to pick the thing up, the airplane up in Hollywood, where the dog track was and fly around and go back pulling this, the sail with the sign that says, I have pictures of that. Matter of fact behind sitting.

I forget I'm talking. I think I'm just talking to you so I hope I'm...

**Kathy:** Can we go back to the scene. When the, when the drugstore. When the people came to integrate the counter.

**Ben G:** About 5, 4 or 5 fellows came in. What happened in the back of us behind the drugstore there was 3 fountains. There was, and the fountains said whites, colored, and I don't know why there was 3 but there was three there. And if someone wanted to come in after 6 o'clock, if they had a, a identification if you were black, if to be on the streets of, of Miami Beach and you weren't allowed to go sit at a fountain.

I didn't even know that, I saw these people come in and somebody says they can't hey you gotta, you gotta get rid of them. And I was like what are you talking about? Anyway I went over sat down with them and I thought I was gonna, a lot of people were gonna get mad at me. But it changed very fast.

**Kathy:** So you allowed them to be seated.

**Ben G:** I sat with them. I was glad to be, I would. I was glad to be I couldn't I never, I never had that in Kentucky. I worked at a drugstore in Kentucky at 1st and Orange Street and right behind the, high, high school we had, we had all colored fellow that never even, what. So it never, it never had anymore problems, and the.

**Kathy:** So was that written up. Your wife said it was written up in the newspaper?

**Ben G:** It was written up in the Miami newspaper. Mister Kassel wood so he wrote the, a man name Kasselwood. he says well it's about time somebody does something like this. And he's sitting with a younger naval officer who has an excellent, whatever he said there. It was very sharp.

**Kathy:** Referring to you.

**Ben G:** And by the way I heard about the coffee. I raised the price of coffee from a nickel to a dime. And women who went out and got the boards front and back and said do not go to the Modern Pharmacy they, they raised the price of coffee a hundred percent. And I when I, once bought the drugstore at Lincoln and Alton Road, called the Hotel Pharmacy which was there about twenty years before I bought it.

**Ben G:** By the way on Miami Beach I had about 8 or 9 stores. I had Grovers, Jarvis, Clark Snyder, Modern Pharmacy, Renault Properties. I was one in '73, 53 Collins Avenue, called King Rexall, 74th Street Drug. 905 Normandy Drive. 9501 Harvey Avenue which I opened up the store and sold it the second day it was open. And that was for a. Sky Lake another one.

**Kathy:** This was your. Your investment.

**Ben G:** It was. the store and in Coconut Grove there was a drug store there you, you say 36 years you been here, you still remember that one cause it was called, Le Drug store. L-E drug store on the corner where the stores come together there. This was a magnificent store, owned by a man, by me. he was partner, was Mister George Engel he's the one, he came from Kentucky and had gas things and coal log and he knew my father. And he came here and looked me up and he, he wanted to buy a drug store wanted to open a store I'll be your boss, your partner. And then he also had something to do with the theater that was there.

But my wife he asked her about, about a...

**Kathy:** Actors Playhouse? The Actors Playhouse?

**Ben G:** My favorite singer. Frank Sinatra. Yeah I once can I tell you a little fast story.

**Kathy:** Sure. Did they know that your wife was the one that remarked about the shoe polish.

**Ben G:** No. by the way when he did that, when she did that to him. He turned and he says you're a bitch. And he said, he was angry cause she said you know you, your hair stuff is running in the back here. And, it's funny, but there's other stories with them. You'll see pictures inside my kitchen of that whole group of guys. There were Sammy Davis, I was with Sammy Davis and I could give the date and give you the. With, with Ben Novack, who was my friend, my landlord. Owner.



Not the nicest man but he was very good to me. Anyway he, what's I heard uh him say if Sammy Davis can't sleep here tonight I will not appear.

**Kathy:** You heard him say that?

**Ben G:** I was there. My store was maybe, right next to a little restaurant right on the main floor.

**Kathy:** So it's Frank Sinatra telling Ben Novack.

**Ben G:** Absolutely. And they can just check to see the dates when I was in there. Anyway, I was.

**Kathy:** You overheard this conversation?

**Ben G:** I was there. I was absolutely there. By the way I can show you Miss Sammy Davis Junior was a customer in my store, Stone drugs. And I can show you right around the corner was a, a hotel where they all had to stay. It was, what's the name, it was the girl that woman singer married to a fellow who was a pianist.

And she was, matter of fact. She would see me working at my store and selling drugs and seeing me over there said do you have a brother? I said yeah I have a brother I do have a brother, in Philadelphia. But he's a, at something else. But I never told her, she said you know your brother's nicer than you. And I says what happened, like I never talk to her, I always talked to her at Stone drugs. I never had time to talk I was always busy so. That was a. I forgot. I know what it is.

**Kathy:** Let me go down some names.

**Ben G:** Yeah go ahead.

**Kathy:** Jackie Gleason?

**Ben G:** Jackie Gleason was a good friend of mine, a customer of the store. And a man who managed his music and so forth was a Jewish man married to a gentile girl who lived at 54th and Lagorsh Drive. 5408 Lagorsh Drive. And when, I and a fellow who just had recently, Bill. Billy... Think it was. We were both officers of, commissioners in Miami Beach. Bill Shockett and I made a proposition to name the theater, Jackie Gleason Theater. And it's still called that, Jackie Gleason Theater on Miami Beach.

And you can see by looking up you'll see, you'll see the first name on there is, Bill, Billy Shockett. My name on there. What other questions?

**Kathy:** And so.

**Kathy:** So sidewalk cafes, what did you have to do with that?

**Ben G:** Everything. Everything.

**Kathy:** How did that start?

**Ben G:** I tell you. There's a story that I was told. When I was studying some economics that the people named Jacobs Family. The Jacobs Family in Atlanta, Georgia owned the Coca Colas. And they used to have a push cart, in those days push carts were big things, back in New York, and they, they sold all the different drinks there. That way a man used to come in and sell them. I will say out of a couple millionaires put together give me 3 percent of the company. Of the sales. Of the sales.

And they wouldn't do it, they kept talking to them and nothing happening. Finally according to the story, they, they finally gave it to him and he sat up and he said I want to tell you a few words. And he said bottle it.

**Kathy:** Bottle it?

**Ben G:** Yeah. I learned. And everywhere I went, I, I've been there. I was. A dozen times France. England... but by the time I was a year, six and a half years old. I had 14 countries. I can show you my passports from my mother, my self and my sister. 14 countries, in those days if you went there for one minute they stamped your things in Europe.

I went on the Queen Mary... I went on the. I went on the George Washington to, to Europe in 1925. On March, something. And it, it, it the ship had all German [inaudible - 00:44:50] And I used to laugh very hardly cause they, they would. These thing would smack each other. And there were three people, on that ship there that, my mother got to know. And one was, was... Pavlova the dancer.

She was a Polish girl, never married. I had a contagious laugh and Pavlova and Pasdrovski, the fellow who became the Polish president. HE was a pianist. And, and Paula Negra is a big actress, the first place we stopped in England they took off a yellow Rolls Royce and she came out, I was only a kid I remember like that. With a cigarette holder this big and a hat that had little things on there. And went down, they took her Rolls Royce off put it on the thing there and washed it off. And she came down the thing there and got in and drove away. Women didn't even drive cars in those days. Anyway.

**Kathy:** So we were, we were talking about Jackie Gleason, you said you were, became good friends with him.

**Ben G:** Sammy Davis Junior became very close to me, the first time I saw he was dancing he had. He didn't lose eye until after that. With his uncle and his father he was at the, the nightclub, we used to see him a lot. And he used to stay over and that's how I got to know him, he's a young kid.

**Kathy:** He came into your store.

**Ben R:** All the time. It was all the place, the store was beautiful store. IN a poor a very poor neighborhood. There was not another black drugstore around.

**Kathy:** This was in Overtown?

**Ben R:** This was in Overtown. 1400, that, that was 900 Northwest 2nd avenue. I had one at 1400 3rd avenue. Called, eh. After the one in New York City. Begins with an H.

**Kathy:** It's okay.

**Ben R:** I had another one called Lennie's Drugs. 17th Street and 35th Avenue. I have pictures of all these. I have all the. That. I also built 3 or 4. I built a building called Douglas Apartments for 9 units. Each with one bedroom and one. And a, for 30 thousand dollars I sold it for 9 thousand cause everybody would break out all the plumbing. I would pay more for the plumbing then to build a place there.

Oh. I had a friend of mine, that I was, from Louisville, Kentucky named Morris Pearlmotor whose name became Maury King. And Maury King was in the Stardust, Stardust Room of the Asterisk Hotel for like 7 years as a violinist. And he came to Miami stayed in Eden Roc Hotel, stayed at my home for 7 weeks while he was in there with seven, ten other violinists, and one pianist.

Who I knew, her, her brother from Louisville, Kentucky. And the man that saw him playing up there came up he said "look I love you, you're a great violinist. He says if you'll change your name to King I will buy you a Stradivarius", which he did for 30 thousand dollars when 30 thousand was 20 million. And he walk...

**Kathy:** Why did he want him to change his name?

**Ben G:** He had no son and we used to go up there and eat all the time and he said, Maury King. Maury King lived at 961 uh Desert Inn Boulevard, in Las Vegas. That's where he made his headquarters and married a woman named Estella and I became the best man at his wedding cause I was walking down the street on Lincoln Road and ran into him when he was performing here and I wasn't married even that time before, I was married. And he saw me and he said Benny what are you doing here? Maury says I have a place here. He says I want you to be my best man we're getting married this week at the Russian Vera place there, he says I want you to be my best man I was best friends with his baby brother name Sully Pearlwater, who was killed in amphibious service in North Africa.

**Kathy:** Let me go down some other...

**Ben G:** Yes please.

[Crew chatter - 00:49:41]

**Kathy:** Were you involved in making it possible for the streets to have cafes here, on the beach?

**Ben G:** I'm glad you asked me because for months and years, I said ladies and gentleman, I was running for office from 1981 to 1982. And I said I, I want to tell you I'm gonna beg you to do something for 6 months and it effects, if I'm wrong I give you my word of honor I will never ever mention it again. I said everywhere I've ever gone. Sydney, Australia, Argentina, whatever. I said everybody when there's good weather, there's outdoor cafes, outdoor cafes

everyday.

You can't buy a cup of coffee or Coca Cola on Ocean Drive. And all we did on 10th avenue or 10th street and Ocean across from Cleavelander where we fed all the hungry people. But that's another story. But anyway, they, I said give me an outdoor cafe, let people sit outside in front of those hotels I said if it doesn't work, I, 6 months went by it was almost like a flashlight cause it changed everything. Now I didn't invent the outdoor cafes, I invented outdoor cafes for Miami Beach which should of had it for years.

You went, you, you go and somewhere out, in places in Italy, northern Italy. Everywhere you went regardless the weather, there was hundred of thousands of people there till late at night. So this yes, a matter of fact wait a minute. Janet Reno in her apartment, in her office. I have a paper, I was sitting, I was sitting with there, with, with what. Barbara Capitman, who was a very nice lady. I spoke. She was three days younger than me. April 6th, yeah April the 9th is her birthday. She has two sons or three sons, I was with her and one son in Janet Reno's apartment and Janet Reno's still alive god bless her. And she said, she said I Barbara Capitman are the mother of outdoor.

I'm the mother of...

**Kathy:** South Beach? Art deco?

**Ben G:** Art deco. And Ben Grenald is the father of outdoor cafe and our baby is the, is the what do you call it? What do they call South Beach. now they have a cell phone sitting there. What do they call the beach? I don't know...

**Kathy:** You're acknowledged as being, Barbara Capitman acknowledged publicly as being the father of sidewalk cafes.

**Ben G:** Yes you can call her son in New York City and talk to him very frequently.

**Kathy:** We're gonna be talking to him this weekend.

**Ben G:** You can. He's a wonderful man and he doesn't, copy of that thing there. And by the way my wife interviewed Janet Reno one time. And when she got through he said some day this long before that was even knew about Billy what's his name. He says someday you'll be the, she wrote this. She was a top notch person. First, and she said somebody you'll and sure enough she got apportioned.

**Kathy:** Attorney General?

**Ben G:** Attorney, she kept that in her office in Washington DC, Janet Reno had a copy of that thing, it says I hope. When I got it I said I hope god's listening. And I see it the only thing on her wall in Washington DC.

**Kathy:** You know that this weekend they are dedicating a memorial to Barbara Capitman. On Ocean Drive.

**Ben G:** Somebody told me that this week, and I, I says, I tell you one thing. I knew her she deserved it. She bought the Cardoso Hotel where someone made the movie, Hole in the Head. Benjamin Nathan Cardoso, 1400 Collins Avenue. matter of fact when I met Selma I took her over to a place about 3 doors away from there, there was a big outdoor opening place with a hot dog stand and first I have pictures of her, when I bought her, the first thing I asked her was lets go out tonight. And she says I have a date but I'll late date with you. I said no you won't late date with me and you won't date, late date on me.

That was the first conversation we had. And I was a great dancer. And the next night we went dancing at the Aires Dales place on, on, I think it was southwest 8th street, right across from the, what's the name of that hotel there? Selma and I checked in for 6 dollars a night when we got married. It was the only it was a French Hotel. French hotel next to 34 and Collins Avenue. And they have a, there's a restaurant over there around 27th Avenue or yeah 29th Avenue. Called the, do you know?

It's a very big restaurant, Spanish restaurant now. Versailles! Do you know where the Versailles restaurant is? Across the street, one block, you got further west and there's still a big, a big. That used to have a opening in the roof, they open up as you dance there and let you come up and lead the orchestra. I played the violin, I used to be able to dance, that's the first place we went to dance.

**Kathy:** It says on the list here, one of the things that it mentions, that we haven't touched on is Venetian Causeway.

**Ben G:** Venetian Causeway was bought by two German people with, some of the money they got from the man who sold them Coppertone. They paid 60 thousand dollars sold it for a million dollars. Ben Greenberg and they, they bought the, the, the right to charge 10 cents or 15 cents for the, driving through the Venetian Causeway.

**Kathy:** The Germans did? This was a German company?

**Ben G:** No, two German people living in, I have a name somewhere. They own the, the right to collect the money. they must have, I don't know what they did to do it but they did. And a matter of fact when they raised the price to 25 cents, and I was going through there I got angry and came back from where I was going, and I got out I said you have no right to do this. And I raised a big stick and now they got a dollar and a half, and one of my dear friends, I'll take you downstairs to show one of my dear beloved friends was Claude Pepper, he was a senator and a congressman, and I got him and they wanted to build a 8-lane highway on there and I wouldn't let them.

I would not let them build that, and that's all a matter of record, not only me but there was a guy, named, Rueben, Harvey Rueben. He pays the bills for Miami. He, and Claude Pepper, Claude Pepper's gone his wife name was Millie, but Harvey Rueben is available if you want to check and I wish you would. And we also, the you may not know it but all the, all the sewers south of fifth street on Miami Beach, all the sewers were wooden.

**Kathy:** Wooden?

**Ben G:** All the sewers on south 5th street, when they built it, they only made wood ones. And we finally replaced with them with 10 million dollars that the, that by the way the man who helped me get tourism recognized as an industry was the, a, a Barry, I think Barry Coutin a representative of the state here, he was a friend of mine. The customer in my store is from St. Louis, Missouri and he, that's where he was. Barry Coutin you can check him, he's still alive, still lives on Collins Avenue. I don't know.

**Kathy:** What was Claude Pepper like? You said you were very good friends

**Ben G:** Claude Pepper was an angel, if there ever was a man who was sincere, honest, honorable. I was on the same board of directors the Washington Bank on, on 5th on 5th. I had a drug store on 8th, 1680 Meridian, called the Meridian Apothecary for 38 years with a man named Hermann Pomerantz. And his daughter is the sister rabbi at the Temple Beth Shalom, I'm her godfather and she's alive and she has a sister whose married to a gentile a fella whose a manager of a cruise ship line. Pomerantz.

We had a chief of police called Pomerantz. Pomerance. All of his, they have three children. A daughter was my cosmetician, 2 sons are my delivery boys. Jimmy is still talks with me all the time. And his mother, Hope Pomerantz was the best friend of the lady who owns Jesse Weiss Joe's Stone Crabs. And by the way, Jesse Weiss who was my boss when I was the assistant, for the BCA, he was, he was the, president oh wait a minute. Anyway, he was never there he spent all his time in Mayo Brothers Clinic. His whole life was up there he used to love to gamble with the doctors there and he was a good friend of mine.

But he was one of the doctors that wasn't present when I called the police and I said to them he was on the board of directors of Miami, Miami Bank at 9th and Washington by the drugstore was right across the street.

**Kathy:** I want to ask you if you knew Leonard Abess Sr.

**Ben G:** Leonard Abess lived at 5101 North Bay Road, 5101, his wife's name was Bertha, Bertha Unger. Had a father, had a, had a Buick agency at, at 15th and Northwest 2nd Avenue. Northeast 2nd Avenue. Mrs. Bertha Abess, they also did open up the, the Mount Sinai Hospital. they had a daughter they lost and they had son who's still alive and sold his bank for 760 million dollars and the lawyer for his thing was Bill Shockett who died of cancer 3 months ago. 3 years ago.

Here, and, and his wife is Jill. Jill, what, who else?

**Kathy:** Well I just wanted to know if you knew Leonard Abess.

**Ben G:** I think 5130 Alton Road. He lived there.

**Kathy:** You were practically neighbors?

**Ben G:** We were back to back. Except he had the corner of North Bay Road on the water. And he had a pool and two tennis courts. I had a pool I had no tennis courts. And I had, I bought the house from the man who start WKAT, Mister, Mister Wolfson. What's his name?

**Kathy:** Mitchell? Mitchell Wolfson.

**Ben G:** Mitchell Wolfson, yes. He has a son if you'll step with me to my bathroom I'll show you two of his mothers paintings. I mean I paid 500 dollars for one and 250 for the other. And she liked to, to make like the Japanese. I want to show them to you. You brought it up, and they, they own the property at 10th and Washington Avenue which was the OK Storage Place. OK Storage Place, one block up from 9th Street, I was at 901 at 1001 is the OK Storage that's now a museum. All about Colonel. Colonel Wolfson, that's his son, of his other son that he had, was a guy named Louis Wolfson. Very young, a little prince. I was at his bar mitzvah.

**Kathy:** [Laughing]

**Ben G:** I mean I'll tell you I can check and if I'm caught lying I want you to expose me. Please. Check anything you want.

**Kathy:** Anything else Carl? I think we've covered pretty much everything on the list.

**Ben G:** I got off, some of these things. Oh by the way Frank Sinatra, I think I told you. I really liked him as a human being. he was tough.

**Kathy:** Even though he called your wife a bitch.

**Ben G:** Well let me tell you another story. I have, I have a cousin that just left here last week. His name and I watch you to write it down is Barry Primus. B-A-R-R-Y P-R-I-M-U-S. His father, Irving who changed his name Irving to George. But George Primus was a son-in-law to a woman named Fanny Broad. You remember the Broad Causeways here? Well that was my family. And one, one, one.

**Kathy:** Your mother's side?

**Ben G:** Well my mother's side. I kept a very famous family on my mother's side. Called the Borgeniches. The highest awards ever given by the French government and I want to show it to you I'm gonna give you a copy of it the highest awards every given by the French government to any people for helping in against Hitler was to my family, and they have a grandson who is a lawyer in Arizona in, what's the name of that city. In, Phoenix, Arizona. He's a big lawyer. And the man who was the head of CBS, for 60 years was born to a man named Sam Levi, and his, his son's changed the name to Leeds, was ahead for 60 years and you can check it.

I Love Lucy, and All About Jack Benny and all those 60 been at the company for 60 years. His name was Martin Leeds. But his mothers name was Bertha Borgeniches. And that's in Los Angeles and you can look that up.