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Interview with David Dermer

Kathy Hersh: My name is Kathy Hersh. I'm about to interview David Dermer for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project. The date is October 19th, 2016, and we are at Books and Books on Lincoln Mall. You were born on the beach.

David Dermer: Yes, ma'am, I was.

Interviewer: What was it like growing up on the beach?

Dermer: I was born in a place called St. Francis Hospital, which is now Aqua. It's a development off 63rd Street, and growing up on Miami Beach, it was very interesting. The median age when I was growing up was 67, and I know this because when I later became mayor, the city had gotten so young, the median age was 37 in the 2000s, so it was dramatic changes. The population here was senior citizens. This area was a very, very Jewish area growing up here. The area of South Beach that we have now was a lot of delis and bakeries and shoe makers, and those little shops along Washington Avenue were all occupied. Ocean Drive had a lot of senior residents over there. Obviously, they were called porch sitters. They'd be out there conversing and talking all the time. What is now South Pointe Park and also the developments down in South Pointe below 5th Street, there were some buildings down there. I don't quite remember that vividly, but I know we had a dog track down there, the Miami Beach Kennel Club, and where I grew up, off 25th Street, where my mom still lives, was a very nice neighborhood. There were the new Miami Beach High, or the Beach High that we're in now, which moved in the 60s, was there, the Hebrew Academy is there, the par three golf course, which is now being made into a park, was there. It was a nice life growing up, actually.

Interviewer: Did you roam around much?

Dermer: Yes. Roamed around a lot. Not a lot of traffic problems, obviously. Not a lot of parking problems. For young people, the park system was a great system for kids. All the schools were really good. Most of what we have as far as entertainment and restaurants and such was geared towards the hotels. There were, obviously, some out, but it wasn't like it is today in many ways. As a kid growing up, I think it was a really, really nice life. I was very, very blessed to be able, and fortunate to be able to grow up in Miami Beach, no question.

Interviewer: You were aware of that. You were aware that you were growing up in what some people described as paradise?

Dermer: I think so. Well, how much you're aware as a 10, 11, 12, 13-year-old, I don't know, but I know that it was one of those things. You had neighbors. You played with other kids. You had bikes. You went to the park. Everything was basically a pretty, really nice lifestyle, but I guess if you talk to anybody who grew up in the 60s and early 70s, that's probably, in most places that were kind of smaller and less intensity of development, it

was a quieter life, I think. It was still a seasonal place, obviously. What we have out here, Lincoln Road, was not the Lincoln Road of today. It had gone into decline in the 70s, and as far as activity here, there was not a lot of things going on. I remember there were only one or two pizza places, for argument's sake. You didn't have anywhere near the urbanization of the city that we have today.

Interviewer: What year, and how old were you when your father became mayor?

Dermer: My dad was mayor in the late 60s. He got elected in 68 and served until 71, so that would have made me five, six years old at the time, and probably by the time he had run for Congress, probably nine, ten, somewhere in there. He had run against Claude Pepper, which was not such a good idea in retrospect. He thought, since he could beat a Roosevelt – he became mayor by defeating Elliot Roosevelt, who was the president's son, FDR's son, in 65, and I guess he thought if he could beat a Roosevelt, he could beat a Pepper, but that did not come to pass, and as I recall, I think he got the most anyone ever got against him, but it was only 40 percent. Pepper was an enormously popular congressman. I'm sure you remember him. Probably, he and Tip O'Neill at that time were the two most powerful congressmen in their district. He was the head of the Rules Committee, and that was basically the campaign of the day. After that, he continued to have a private law practice. He worked on Lincoln Road, right over here in the 420 building. Was active in the anti-casino campaigns while mayor and then after mayor with Floridians Against Casino Takeover.

Interviewer: Explain why people were against that on Miami Beach.

Dermer: During his time, in the 70s, there was a straw vote on it that was defeated. I think that there was – at that time, there weren't a lot of models of casino gambling. You either had the Las Vegas model or the Atlantic City, and the argument was that we were probably closer to Atlantic City in that sense, because we were along the water, the oceanfront, and the idea was to start having these hotels with 500 rooms or more. To begin to do that – many of the arguments are the same as today. You would cannibalize whatever small businesses that were out there. You would change the entire character of the city. Of course, there were all the issues relating to organized crime and casinos that were even less regulated in those days than today. I don't believe it was a moral objection. I think it was more as far as changing the character of the city, and those referendums were defeated in Miami Beach in the straw ballot. They also were defeated statewide a number of times.

Since that time, in the last, I guess it's about five, six years, we've had casino gambling at parimutuels, which were the racetracks, Jai Alai frontons, what used to be Jai Alai frontons, dog tracks, and that has, I think, been more acceptable. I believe today, if you were even to have a referendum on Miami Beach, the majority of people would vote against it because of that fact. The idea that we have a city now that's so diverse with small business that you just do not want to capture people within one particular freestanding, or a number of freestanding casinos. Patronizing those other businesses, they'd start to tank, and that would not be healthy. Plus, remember, in those days, the proponents would argue you



could roll a bowling ball down Lincoln Road and not hit anyone because it was in such decline. Today, people start saying I don't go to Lincoln Road, there's too many people there, so it's a totally different dynamic that has occurred.

Interviewer: There was an awareness, then, of the scale and the uniqueness of Miami Beach.

Dermer: I believe so. There was always this tension, even back then, between the developer interest, the hotelier interest, as it was called more, and the residential interests, and both, obviously, there's a synergy as far as the economy of the city, but it was always, we don't want to get it so big and intrusive that our quality of life is going to suffer. I think that's been a theme throughout the history of Miami Beach, and it is today as well. It became more of an issue of development with these high intensity condominiums that came later on after the 70s.

Interviewer: As a child, did you get teased because your father was the mayor?

Dermer: Not really. No. I think we were still – Miami Beach is still kind of a small town, even though we had a lot of international celebrity coming in, the conventions were coming in. He wasn't in office for the 72, but he was for the 68. In 68, we had the republicans. In 72, we had both the democrats and the republicans, but he was there for the lead up into 72. No, it wasn't any teasing or anything like that. It is funny, though. I remember that after my dad was in office, he had pictures with all of these governors and senators that would come in, so when one of them would become president, you know, Jimmy Carter become president, he'd just look in the file, and he'd put that picture up with him. He had Reagan. He had all of them, had been through town. He may not have been mayor for 10 years, but already was able to throw the pictures up of whoever would later become the president, so that was always kind of interesting.

Interviewer: That still goes on.

Dermer: Absolutely. Absolutely. The political dynamic today- obviously, you don't want me to get into that. We're before the elections of 2016 for the archivists, and I guess there's going to be plenty in that world for them to deal with, that's for sure.

Interviewer: What made you decide to run for mayor, or did you go on the commission first?

Dermer: Yes, I did. I had been active in the city. I had been a prosecutor, and then I got into defense work, and I even was on Lincoln Road with my law office. Also, I was in private practice. Same building, 420 building, not the same office. I think that my dad definitely had an influence on me. The family I grew up in was always very community oriented and active, and I started a movement, along with others – I was actually fortunate enough to be able to lead that movement, called the Save Miami Beach Movement, and that was a movement that was a citizen's initiative to amend the city charter, so that if we were going to increase the density along the waterfront, it had to go to public vote. We worked through it.

We got our signatures. We got our 6,000 signatures, and we got on the ballot, and it gave birth to an election. It was a very volatile election. There was a gentleman named Thomas Kramer that was fighting us. Basically, everybody in the establishment was fighting us at that time, though they later reinvented themselves, but hey, that's politics. They spent- I think the records on this, I think it was one of the biggest, lopsided money spending, where the small money won on a citizen initiative. They spent somewhere in the neighborhood of two million to our 25 thousand, and we were able to win that election.

After that, I think the public mood had changed. At least, the people who governed understood that the public mood had changed and recognized it. They began to change. I was elected to the commission in 97 and served until 2001, and then was elected mayor, and was in until 2007.

Interviewer: In that time, you had to run for reelection.

Dermer: Yes, I had two reelections.

Interviewer: Two reelections. So you were the three-term?

Dermer: Yes.

Interviewer: Your dad was -

Dermer: Two terms.

Interviewer: Two terms. All right. So you must have been doing something right.

Dermer: Well, my dad did get me on one thing. When I first got sworn in as mayor, the clerk told me, "You know what? You're the second youngest mayor in the history of the city," and I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "Your dad got you by six months." The old man upstairs was looking down on me and probably wanted to show, don't get too big-headed. It was a good time in the city as far as economically. We had some struggles initially during my tenure because of 9/11, and one thing I think many people did not realize was how connected to air we are. Ninety percent of the people who visit here come by air, and when that got shut down for a brief period, fortunately, the hotels and the tourism industry in general suffered dramatically. There were layoffs, and though it was a difficult time economically, that brief two, three-month period, the city really came together in a very, very strong fashion. It was very unified, and we did everything we could to attract business to the city and, fortunately, when people started traveling again, the city boomed, and we had some very, very good economic years during that time.

In fact, we had so much of a surplus on revenue from our resort tax collections, property tax collections, that for two years during my tenure, we gave back money to the people. We sent them checks. Every homesteaded property received approximately three hundred dollars, and people were in shock. Some of them were calling the police department when they saw this check from the city of Miami Beach, and said what is this all about? Is this some sort of a scam or Publishers Clearing House, or whatever it is? But we did do that, because we had such a surplus that we



lowered taxes. We gave money back to the people, and actually, our bond rating increased, so our debt service was less. The city was doing extraordinarily well, and is it the mayor that can take credit for it? Absolutely. But is the mayor responsible for it? Who knows? I was just fortunate, I think, to be there at a very, very good time. I was lucky.

Interviewer: Had anyone else ever done that before in any municipalities, where they-

Dermer: Not to my knowledge, no. Interestingly enough, out of what's remembered by people on the street that approach me, they always remember that.

Interviewer: Of course.

Dermer: That's one of those unusual events. They say, you know, Dermer, I always remember that we got checks when you were in office. It was a very, very interesting thing and, believe it or not, it's a little bit of a battle from others to give government money back to the people, even though it's their money. When that proposal was making its way through, people were coming to the commission and saying, "You can't do that." I would say, "What do you mean, we can't do that? It's your money?" He says "No, you got to give it to education, you got to give it to transp- you got to give it here, got to give it there". I says, "Well, when you get your check, if you want to endorse it over to the code enforcement people or sanitation, you're welcome." "Well, I won't do that." I says, "Well, it's your money." There has been such a disconnect, unfortunately - it's a lesson in government, with people understanding that this is their tax money, and it doesn't just go into a black hole. If a city has met its obligations and needs of a community, you give it back, and there's no shame in doing that. It's the right thing to do.

Interviewer: But seldom done.

Dermer: I haven't heard of it done anywhere else.

Interviewer: Is the city in pretty good shape now? What's your assessment of it?

Dermer: I've been a bit disconnected from the politics of the city. Highly disconnected, actually. I'm just Joe Citizen. I've read about it. I've been out of office for 10 years. I know that the city is facing some struggles now that when I was in, I didn't face. This whole issue of the sea level rise and the flooding, which is a major issue for us. I wish everybody in office who's battling that issue and working to try and solve that problem through pumps or through raising the streets or raising sea walls, this is a tough one. In my day, we did not really have that issue. Yeah, you'd get a little backup here and there in the city, and you'd make sure that the storm water was cleared, but I think in the last decade is when that really has started to hit home with the tides and everything else, plus the intensity of development. The more concrete you have in a place, the more you have less drainage, and that creates a real problem. I hope we don't have, in another 50, 60 years some underwater archeologist looking and diving and seeing all this cement, and Miami Beach under the water, and saying, "What were these people thinking?" but I guess that's what these archives are for that you're making this program about, so they can go into it and see what people were thinking.

Interviewer: Yes, we're putting them in waterproof containers.

Dermer: Yes, good. That's a good idea.

Interviewer: Tell us about your experience at Beach High. Was there a diverse mixture there at the time?

Dermer: Yes, there was actually. Actually, we were about a third African American, third Hispanic, and a third Jewish, I would say.

Interviewer: How did that work?

Dermer: It worked out pretty well. The school was good. I do remember in my last year there, we did have a lot of turmoil in the greater community. That was 1980 when I graduated, and if you recall, we had the McDuffie riots [Arthur McDuffie] and we had Mariel, and we had a lot of things going on at once, and I remember when I went to school, there were no fences around the school. That's when the fences came up, after the McDuffie riots. I try and actually show and teach the kids about McDuffie, because with these current issues that we see around the country, people forget the intensity of the rioting within our area. There were a number of people that lost their life in those riots. That year stands out in my mind as pivotal to great changes occurring in this city and the surrounding area.

Interviewer: That's a double whammy after you've grown up in a virtual paradise to be hit.

Dermer: Yes, there was a lot of media attention. I'm sure some of your other interviewees have talked about the "Paradise Lost" *Time Magazine* cover, which was quite famous at the time. That was all happening at that moment. We had a lot going on with the cocaine wars, too, obviously, and other things, and the city had been in a bit of a decline into the 70s, and then, of course, we had, as you know, the Miami Vice and this rediscovery of Ocean Drive and the Art Deco movement, and all of that, which helped bring back the city. I think that, though, the underlying foundation of what makes this place so popular doesn't change, obviously. The climate - hey, you can't beat it, obviously. The beaches are magnificent. The culture now that has been added to the city through the arts has been tremendous. All of these things are great draws to the city.

In my dad's time, believe it or not, they were fighting over the beaches, as to whether or not - I don't know if many people talked to you about that era, where the hoteliers had jetties in the beaches, and they basically wanted, for all intents and purposes, to make it private beaches for the hotels, and there was erosion that had occurred on those beaches, to the point of where it was almost at the hotel seawall, and they would not allow the Army Corps of Engineers to come in and rebuild the beach. Eventually - in fact, my dad was going to sue them to allow it to make sure that it was all one public strip of beach so that it could be rebuilt. There was quite a lot of elements of greed in the history of this city, and that's a pretty stark one.



There was a case that came out of Oregon at that time that declared all the beaches public, and that's when they finally relented, and the Corps came in and rebuilt the beach. The beach that you see that is above South Beach all the way north into the 70 Streets, 71st, 76th, 73rd, are rebuilt areas. If you go to South Beach, the sand, you need a camel to get to the water. That's not an issue, but because of our tides and the erosion element, and building on the beach, which was an early mistake that was made in the history of the city, where we didn't do it like Ocean Drive, where the road is between the hotels and the beach, or in Fort Lauderdale, which did that. We have that little strip of Ocean Terrace, which did it the right way, but whenever you build on the beach, you create even more erosion, so the hottest spot, and to this day, it's the same case, the hourglass of the city, when it comes to its shore line is that Fontainebeau area with the high intensity development on the beach.

To this day, we still continue to move sand from south to north. We don't have the pumping projects, because our sand reserves have been pumped out to rebuild this beach, but we do move sand from the south to the north to this day to keep replenishing the beach. Storms, of course, create erosion as well, so that's always been a big challenge, but in those days, that's how difficult it was to ensure that you had a public beach, which now, I think, we take that a little bit for granted.

Interviewer: Thank goodness for that.

Dermer: Yes. I think that Dad did a good job with that one. I think that that worked out.

Interviewer: We heard stories of back in World War II, speaking of greed and things that should have been done that weren't, and it took a while, is blacking the beach out at night so that the ships weren't sitting ducks out there with taking supplies to Europe, and there was resistance to that. That just amazed me when I read about that.

Dermer: Oh, yes. This was a massive training ground, also, for all the troops and – was it the leading training ground for the Pacific Theater? It may have been. I know-

Interviewer: I'm not sure. For the Air Force, I know it was major.

Dermer: Yes. That's the first I hear of that. You're teaching me things through this. I did not realize that it met with such resistance back in World War II. Greed has always been a driving force, and that battle many times of the public good versus a handful of people wanting to make an enormous amount of money has always been a battle that lingers, or I should say that is a thread through the city's history.

Interviewer: Back to your deciding to run for commissioner. Was it a reaction to greed or reaction to anything particular that you can recall?

Dermer: I'll tell you my main thinking on that at the time. I was practicing law, I had a family, children. I was not really focusing so much on the inner politics and such, and there were a group of activists who approached me. I don't think they approached me because I was their first choice. I think I

may have been the last choice out there. They had known me as being someone who had been active in the community and was a young lawyer, etc. and the thing that aggravated me the most was the way these activists were treated by the government that was in charge at the time.

Interviewer: What activists are you talking about?

Dermer: People like Mark Needle, who would be an interesting guy for you to interview, actually. He was the one who authored the amendment that we wound up getting through, and there were others that were very, very much involved in that. They had been people who had been living down in South Pointe. The issue really centered around a parcel down in South Pointe first, and then we expanded it to the whole waterfront.

Interviewer: That's where they wanted to put a casino?

Dermer: It wasn't a casino. It was a high intensity development.

Interviewer: This was over density of development.

Dermer: Yes. This was over density, but they were really just being sloughed off and shut out, and it disturbed me a lot. Basically, it was a matter of respect. They were disrespecting these people to an enormous degree, and I would watch some of these meetings, and I would just- it was like these people were just riffraff, and there's no sense in talking to them. We got to keep moving with what we're doing. That disturbed me a lot. Though I came from a family that was politically active, but I always was raised to understand that you always respect people, and if you're ever fortunate enough to be in a position of power, and you do make decisions that affect people, you'd better listen to them and treat them with great courtesy, and I didn't see that happening, and that disturbed me a great deal.

That's probably the real reason that I got into- that is the real reason I got into this thing. If you asked me at that time to define floor area ratio, "FAR," that deals with a formula for density. I know it well now, but at that time, I was a criminal defense attorney. What did I know about floor area ratio? I did know about respecting people and making sure that their speech was heard, and that's the reason that I was able to take up their cause and, and like I say, if you talk to them, I wasn't the first one. They had gone through many people who were very, very much in the government, and they just would not have anything to do with them. That whole process of development had been completely wired. Their influence was there, and you had to battle it through the public to be able to overturn it. It was a revolution of sorts.

Interviewer: Very interesting. Do you think that there's still a battle today?

Dermer: Oh, yes. I think these tensions do exist. When I was in office, we were able to extend the city of Miami Beach to be the whole city now, so if you're going to increase the density in our city, everything has to go to public vote, and we were able to downzone pieces of the city. It's hard to see in the south section the impact of that, but in the north section of the city, it's very, very clear, because that area was going to have high, high



intensity development, and there have been battles since then. It has only been challenged once, interestingly enough, where a developer did go to the public to get an upzone, and that was to increase the density, and that was on Ocean Terrace about a year and a half ago, and it was defeated in an election. The amount that it has prevented has been enormous. Why would a developer want to go and have to deal with a general public vote when they could just get a hold of four commissioners? It's much easier to get four commissioners than it is to get six thousand votes.

Interviewer: That was what was happening before?

Dermer: That's correct, so we wanted to specifically take it out of the hands of the elected officials and put it in the hands of the people.

Interviewer: Wow, no wonder they fought tooth and nail-

Dermer: Oh, yes. They did not like that at all. They did not like that at all, and then, of course, as I mentioned, once we won, after battling all these roadblocks and – it was a pretty tough campaign, then they suddenly all reinvented themselves and said, "You know, we were with you all along." There is a lot of people who believe leadership is about seeing which way the wind's blowing and getting out in front of it, so I think that's what a lot of them were doing, but so be it. That is politics, and that's how you reform things in a city.

Interviewer: That was a major accomplishment.

Dermer: Yes, it was a biggie. It was a tough election. It was very, very tough, but I had some real good people that I was very, very fortunate to be working with, and we were right on the issue, and we fought our way through it. Frankly, I think, in retrospect, if they didn't go so hard against us with so much money, I don't know if we would have prevailed, but they made it seem like it would be the end of western civilization as we know it if our initiative became part of the city charter, and they said the ambulances would stop, the police department would stop functioning, there would be lawsuits all over the place. They made it into this, and people started saying, "What are these people talking about?" Plus, the developer that was the poster on their side, Thomas Kramer, had insulted just about everybody there was in the city, every ethnic group, every- so, if they had one of these great poster boy developers who had this image of being the great philanthropist and doing good for people that many developers enjoy that kind of imagery, and they didn't go as hard, I think we would have had a much harder time. I don't know if we would have prevailed.

Interviewer: It helps if you have someone who's the bad guy.

Dermer: I think that was not hard to do. Now, by the same token, if Thomas Kramer didn't spend two million dollars, would I have ever got elected to the city commission? He actually- do you understand what I'm saying? His money actually was the thing that in this battle, got me known.

Interviewer: He put your name out there.

Dermer: I mean, I did know people in the city. I grew up here and lived here my whole life, was born and raised, but still, when you battle these intense forces of money, it was fortuitous the way that it worked out all around, but was it a battle? It was a battle. Yes, it was.

Interviewer: Did he get down and dirty in the campaign?

Dermer: It was rough. It was a rough campaign.

Interviewer: What kinds of things did he say?

Dermer: Aside from that kind of advertising and everything else – what’s the saying? You want to forgive, but you don’t forget kind of thing, and I believe that to be the case. There were people in the government- listen, when you win, you win.

Interviewer: They come around your door.

Dermer: They sure do. That’s the way it is, and that’s our system in America. Better to do it this way than with guns, right? We’re very lucky to have the system we do. We’re very lucky that the progressives- I don’t mean the progressives of today that are the old liberals that call themselves progressives, I’m talking about the progressives at the turn of the century, when they put in these citizen initiatives into state constitutions and city and county charters, I really appreciate that. Having gone through that process, to be able to give the public and the people an outlet when the government doesn’t represent them is a big, big deal, and they did that, and we’re better for it.

Interviewer: What made you decide to go into teaching?

Dermer: After I did my mayor’s thing – and I had a very good run there. I enjoyed it a great deal, and people were kind – I didn’t want to continue on in politics, because politics, you have to become more of a partisan. It’s all about raising money, and that was something I disliked intensely. I don’t like asking people for money. Asking people you don’t like for money is one thing. Asking people you like for money is even worse. Just the whole thing. I never was good at raising money. I didn’t like spending time doing it, and 90 percent of that game, unfortunately, is that, so I decided to look for another career. I didn’t want to continue practicing law. I had a really good run doing that. However, when you run a law practice, there’s a lot of intensity. You’re running a business. You got to run after people for money. You got to go and you got to hustle with clients. You’re running to court every 15 minutes. It’s a tough- so I was very lucky. I was looking at getting into teaching, and Rosann Sidener, may she rest in peace, who was the principal at Beach High at the time – she has since passed away – she offered me a position, and I’m in my eighth year now.

Interviewer: Had you had any previous schooling in education?

Dermer: No, I did not. I had been an adjunct professor. I had some – it was more of having a good time thing in teaching Miami politics with Dario Moreno over at FIU [Florida International University], and I did some junior college work teaching a criminal justice class, but to be a full-time teacher, no, I had not, and I went through a program with people who’ve had former



lives. You've got to go through this process to be able to get a teacher's license, and I went through that program. It's been a really, really good experience. I'm very lucky to be where I am in that school, not only because it was the school I went to and my kids have gone to, but the whole atmosphere there. The staff is great. Kids are great. Best work environment I've ever been in.

Interviewer: What are you teaching?

Dermer: I teach history and government. I try and give a more positive view of government than I'm giving you here today, but I try and give the kids a realistic- I learned, you know the old saying that you learn a lot more from the students than they learn from- in many ways, it's true. I learn a lot from them, and to be around young people and get that kind of feedback, it's very special. It really, really is. I know people are poo-pooing public education all the time, but there's nothing more rewarding. Does it have its moments? Of course it does, like any job, like any career, but it's really been a blessing to be able to be where I am.


Interviewer: Carl, do you have your cell phone handy? Can you take a production still?

Carl Hersh: I will, but I have a question, if I may. It's interesting. We've heard from a number of people this kind of trajectory between the larger interest and the local interest. One of the things that we've been seeing as we've gone back through some material as we've been developing this video on Barbara Capitman, is that there was a strong political element to what she brought in. First was to develop the nucleus, but then to actually get people in place. I'm hearing in your conversation the same kind of development of an activist people becoming- I'm wondering whether, in some way, is Barbara a catalyst in part of this? It sounds like there was a change at that point.

Dermer: That is a very good question, and I neglected to mention something that is very important, especially when it comes to MDPL [Miami Design Preservation League]. This is the truth. This is factual. When I mentioned that every one of those governmental institutions was against us, I'm talking about the mayor, the city commission, the manager, the fire department, the police department, the chamber of commerce, the *Herald*, the news media, everybody, there was one group that was with us, and that was MDPL. They were the only one, and George Neary, who you may have talked with, to his credit, was leading that organization at that time. They endorsed us. They were helpful to our referendum.

Whether there's a synergy from the preservation movement to what we were doing, absolutely, because the natural course is when you preserve something, you're preventing the overdevelopment. There was an overlap, and those activists, many of them from that world, did join us as well. It was a good question you asked. Very, very good question, and I'm glad you asked it. I didn't want to forget MDPL. I would have probably woken up at night and said why did I not mention MDPL? I got to call Ms. Hersh and let her know that.

Interviewer: Yes, they're a pretty interesting organization, and still very active.



Dermer: Great history and great people. Really good people.

Interviewer: Well, they'll love to hear that.

Dermer: Absolutely. That is the truth. Actually, I had the privilege to speak before them a number of times, and I do mention it when I speak before them. You know how this history thing goes. People forget it very quickly, and I'm glad you're preserving it, but they were there, and I hope the record does reflect that. Very, very important that people know how they- when we were alone, they were there.