

Interview with Gregory Bush

Kathy Hersh: Today is April 25th, 2017. My name is Kathy Hersh and I'm interviewing Greg Bush for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project. Our subject is 'Public Space and Beaches and the Importance to the Black Community'.

What I'd like to ask you first is, in your research for your book, 'White Sand Black Beach', it seems that you came to see the importance of the beach environment to black people, which they were denied Miami Beach. Can you tell us a bit about some of the people you talked to and their memories about how important Virginia Key Beach was to them?

Greg Bush: Yes. One person in particular, named Enid Pinkney, her father used to have all sorts of baptisms out of Virginia Key Beach. She had fond memories of going out there as a young person and also concerts out there.

I think that beach really provided a place of solidarity for the African American community, the way no other place in southeast Florida did. That, I think, is really important. Family, the association with the natural world, a lot hadn't been out of downtown Miami in particular in many instances, or south Miami or Coconut Grove or whatever.

You just see some of the pictures of the kids running among the palm trees. You see large numbers of people. Some of the photographs I'm sure you've seen of cars, there are hundreds of cars that are parked there for different occasions. I think it became, how should I put it, a symbol of the African American community. It was identification of place.

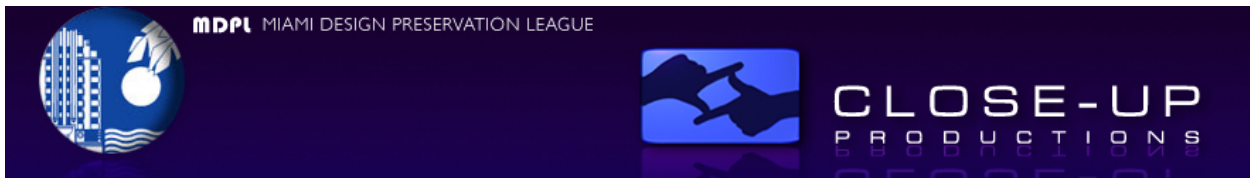
As you know, that went away. That eroded over time, especially with desegregation by the 1960s. By the '70s and '80s, there was almost no one going there. They could go anywhere so you can fully understand that. Then a number of African Americans had a sense that it was a second-rate place for them. It wasn't as nice as other parks.

It's almost like repressing a sense of memory in relation to it. It's interesting to me. I think when a number of us started to try to revive or keep the park a park, it came flooding back to especially older women. I noticed that absolute gender difference.

Kathy: Why do you think that is?

Greg: You could probably make some associations even beyond African American community, I would think. Lots of times, I would say in this instance, older women who were professionals, Eugenia Thomas, Enid, even Athalie Range in a different way, they were dedicated.

They were preserving a piece of their past. They could see the value of it whereas a lot of, I don't know, this is a gross generalization. Maybe a lot of older men were doing other things. They're either in business still or



just didn't have the association, maybe with maybe the sense of solidarity and collectivity. I'm not sure.

Kathy: Well, perhaps it's the women who passed down the family stories.

Greg: That's part of it too.

Kathy: We just saw a very beautiful Oprah Winfrey production on HBO about the life of Henrietta Lacks whose cancerous cells kept multiplying and these cells are being used today for research. It seemed that the women were the real caretakers of the family history. Maybe that has part something...

Greg: It's not always the case. It depends on somebody like Gene Tinnie, for example. There's a counterexample of that, although his memory wasn't as old and he didn't know Virginia Key back in the day as much. He has a deep sense of identity with the past in a number of different ways and with Native Americans in particular. He saw the value of that overall, I think, and as dedicated as anybody in working to preserve that place now.

Kathy: Well. Let's go first to the action that created Virginia Key Beach, the wade-in at Haulover Beach. Did you get to talk to people who had participated in that or had memories of family memories?

Greg: Only obliquely. I think I used Kirk Nielsen's article as much as any of it was fairly extensive. I talked to Eugenia Thomas and she said that her husband, lawyer L. E. Thomas went to the beach with, I think she said a wad of like \$500 in cash because he was expecting a lot of these people who had waded in. There weren't very many.

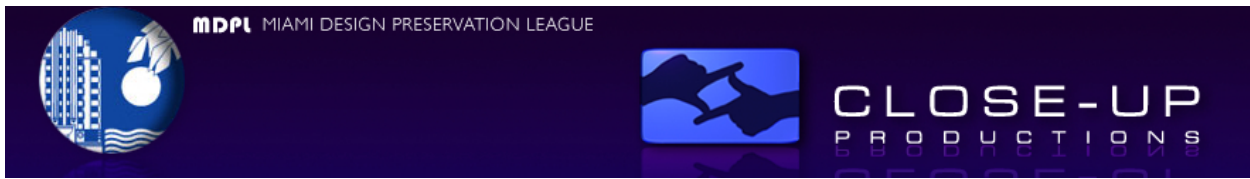
This, again, was the first post-war civil rights demonstration, as far as I know, in the nation, which I think is pretty significant but there were probably only, I've heard different figures, like six, seven people, something like that, several ex-service people. They expected to be arrested but they also had something of a clever plot because they were going to be calling longshoremen down in central Miami to maybe come up and assist them.

I guess my read of that is that the sheriffs would come and say, "You guys get out of the water. You get out of the water" and they said no. It was like something of a standoff for a while. Then I think it was, if I'm not mistaken, the sheriff who called county commissioner Charles Crandon.

Then he said, I may have some of this slightly wrong, "Put Mr. Thomas on", because they'd been having some discussions about the possibility of a beach during the war. This clearly brought that to a head. You needed the demonstration to get it done quicker. Finally the beach was opened in August of that year. I think—

Kathy: What year was that?

Greg: 1945, right when Garth Reeves came home. We have some quotes attributed. I used other people's oral history in this about his reactions to getting back anyway. I think it was a place that was difficult to get to in



the beginning, as you may have read. They had to take a boat to get out there. There was no causeway.

Kathy: You're talking about Virginia Key?

Greg: Virginia Key, I'm sorry. In terms of Haulover, that faded. It was a place where the demonstration took place miles north, as you know. Other than that, there's no direct relationship between the two locations but it's important, I think, in the overall history.

Kathy: It was the catalyst.

Greg: Yes. What I guess I did discover is there was a lot of stuff going on. We don't have a complete record of it yet, of interracial discussions going on during the war and even earlier. That, I think, is an important part of what I tried to write about or uncover some of that because the classic histories of the civil rights movement, the Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King in the mid 1950s and then the confrontations, of course, in the early 1960s and all very important to our history.

I'm not in any way trying to denigrate that but there were places like Miami, and probably not that many. This is why I think makes Miami fairly unique, where there were some ongoing negotiations between African Americans and whites, some of which I didn't get that much out of it until they used demonstrations like this.

Interestingly too, Thomas was a follower of Gandhi. Mrs. Thomas gave me a lot of his speeches and I had a long talk with her, although I wished I had taped it. I got so engaged in the conversation. I'm sure this has happened to you. I didn't bring out my tape recorder, which I had brought along to do. It was stupid, but anyway. She gave me these speeches and so I learned a lot about him through her. That was very useful.

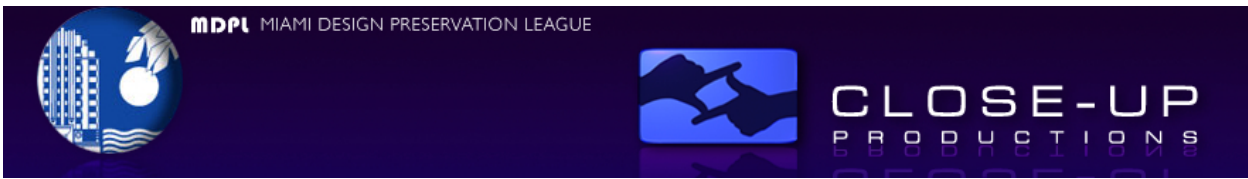
Kathy: Lawson was a Gandhi follower. Very nice.

Greg: Speeches, I still have them. I think they're in my collection. They're really stunningly wise. It seems to me I have snatches of them in the first chapter of the book, but a very thoughtful man.

Kathy: Some people have interpreted the difference in Miami and why Miami wasn't a Birmingham or a Selma, attribute it to the fact that there was at least the mayor, the governor, the powers-that-be wanted to preserve the peaceful image for tourism reasons. It would have probably impacted negatively on tourism if they'd seen rioting and things going on.

Greg: Oh, I think that was a major, major part of the motivation of a lot that went on, including, as I detail a little bit in the book, the 1956 incident at Delray Beach, which is now Miami, of course.

WTVJ and Mitchell Wilson and, I would probably argue, Hank Meyer, the public relations guy from Miami Beach, they sent Ralph Rennick up there with a film crew to shoot essentially a discussion between blacks and whites, white power structure and essentially the black power structure.



They worked out a deal to allow the beaches to be desegregated and access to the pools by African Americans.

Kathy: In Delray Beach?

Greg: In Delray Beach. Even the dynamics of that are interesting because Miami leaders were involved in those discussions too, I think Reverend Graham in particular. There was a regional discussion going on and they did not want Martin Luther King coming in because he would take all the spotlight, have all the spotlight on him then when he went away things wouldn't change. They used television.

Kathy: You're saying the black community didn't want Martin Luther King here?

Greg: Correct, correct.

Kathy: That's very interesting.

Greg: Correct. That's what I heard from Spencer Pompey in the interview that I did with him.

Kathy: Who was he?

Greg: He was the history teacher who was, I guess, one of the lead African American negotiators in the city of Delray Beach. I interviewed him. I think it was 1999. I found that interesting. I found the regional cooperation interesting. Then the third part of the element here that I think is significant is that they beamed that broadcast, half-hour broadcast to all of south Florida.

It's a none-too-subtle message as far as I'm concerned. We want peace. We don't want riots here that would upset tourism. It's quite an interesting program because Ralph Rennick is right at the middle and listening to this side and listening to that side. I think it was all set up that there would be a peaceful resolution. It was important that it was beamed to everybody, it seems to me.

Kathy: Do we know what kind of impact that had down here?

Greg: I don't in any detail. I think you can probably find a piece of historical investigation, maybe even the aftermath. I doubt that I looked too far after the incident or after it was shown on TV but there was an awful lot of stuff before that. It went on for weeks beforehand. It was in the Herald. It was in the news. People were going to look it up online. There was a major instance. Also, there was a bus boycott in Tallahassee. It was a dramatic period of time.

Kathy: It's interesting that they chose Haulover and not one of the Miami beaches. I'm wondering if maybe that had been worked out in advance somehow.

Greg: I never heard that but it's with Crandon or somebody like that, they wouldn't put it. I never heard that. It's possible.

Kathy: Miami Beach was so anti-Semitic in the beginning and they had things like 'Great views, no Jews', some of the slogans in the hotels. They had protected at various points very clearly that this was for white people, the Miami Beach.

Greg: You had to be carded, as you well know, if you were African American, to go on the beach and be out there.

Kathy: Anybody that worked on the beach was carded.

Greg: Right.

Kathy: That came in even white people if they were just day workers. They were apparently, the police were more conscientious of making sure blacks met the curfew than the white people holding cards.

Greg: Sidney Poitier, as you may know, wrote about that in his autobiography. When he was young and working, he had to take some [Inaudible] [14:28] of what he was working for to somebody's house. I think he went by mistake to the front door or something like that and it was terrifying.

Kathy: This was Miami Beach?

Greg: Miami Beach, as I recall.

Kathy: It's in his autobiography?

Greg: Yes.

Kathy: Okay.

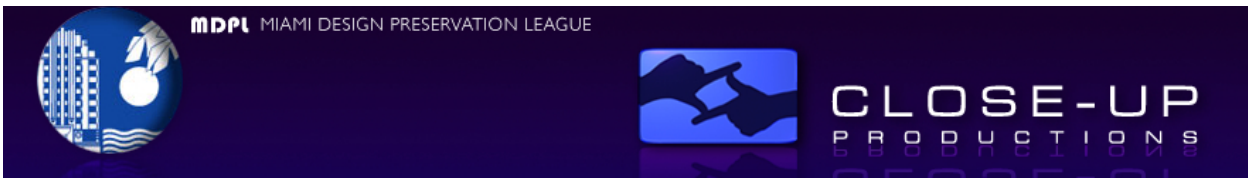
Greg: I think 'My Life' is the name of it.

Kathy: I'll check that out. One viewpoint might be, from a racist point of view, "Well, blacks didn't know how to swim. They didn't need to go to the beach. We'll give them this little Virginia Key Place". I heard that there were currents that were rough there. It wasn't an ideal swimming beach.

Greg: It was very dangerous and a number of drownings. There was a couple that I found on video from, I think, WTVJ archives of aftermath of drownings and what-not. It's a very interesting spot for multiple reasons why they chose that. There was almost nothing else on the island at that point. Here, this is not going to upset real estate development at that point at all.

Then of course they developed Key Biscayne after 1947 when the causeway went out. Then you could, I guess, make the cynical case that with some exceptions of research facilities like what eventually became the Rosenstiel School and what-not.

It was like Dumping in Dixie of environmental hazards going on at Virginia Key. They put the waste water treatment plant there. There's a huge, to



this day, huge toxic dump in the middle of it, right near the beach. Here this is a beautiful island right off the coast.

There was, right after the war too, fighting over it between Miami Beach, Miami Dade County because they wanted to put a port there, an airport there, all sorts of stuff. Then Miami Beach didn't want the airport or the planes flying over. The political machinations of what to do with that island around that time, quite interesting, it seems to me, although sad because it was just because of the nature of fragmented politics, I guess it's safe to say, in Miami, in what's now Miami Dade County.

The will to pull it together to do interesting things just wasn't there, it didn't seem to me, so that it languished. They gave blacks a beach for a period of time. Then they allowed the research facilities and what-not to take over nearby. The rest of it, it was just a sad history of just absolutely bad planning over decades.

I'm getting ahead of the story maybe, until 1982 when the county, in a global deal with the city of Miami, transferred the property, 80 acres of Virginia Key Beach to the city of Miami with explicit deed restrictions that it had to be used for public park purposes only or it would revert back to the county.

It was promptly closed down after the city took over. There was almost no oversight by the county or the city of the deed restrictions, basically until a lot of us came into the scene in 1999. It was used for police target practice, movie locations, but it was closed to the public.

Kathy: Do you think, well, I can't say for sure, but the fact that it was identified as having a black beach on it has somehow...

Greg: Tainted it?

Kathy: Tainted it.

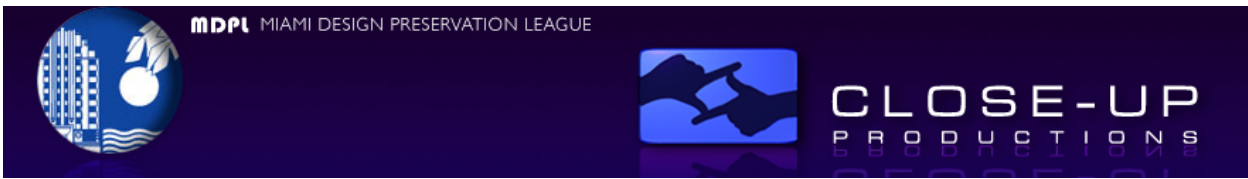
Greg: I'm sorry about the words.

Kathy: No, that's the word I was looking for.

Greg: I think some of it was also economic. I think it could well be. You're probably right to some degree. I think some of it was economic in the fact that African Americans weren't going there in large numbers anymore because they could go anywhere.

Then I don't think people were going as much in general, so it wasn't as popular. Therefore staffing and costs by the county, they said, "Why are we having this staff here?" et cetera. You read some of that stuff. Then there was a food concession building there through a lot of it. There was a carousel. There was a train that have all come back, as you probably well know.

I guess there must have been some rationalization that this park isn't paying for itself at all. There wasn't the historical identity in that period of



time. I think I'd say by the '70s, even though somebody like Dorothy Fields had come along by the mid '70s and creating the black archives.

Americans were seeing *Roots* so there was increasing sensitivity to racial issues and yet somehow, to a lot of people, this was a sour memory from days of segregation so it wasn't valued as much for a chunk of time, until the late '90s.

Kathy: Did you talk to any people who ventured onto Miami Beach after desegregation that had previously frequented Virginia Key Beach but then decided, "Okay, now we can go to Miami Beach"?

Greg: Not really, no. The only thing, this doesn't really answer your question. What's the value of oral history actually is, Enid Pinkney, whose parents worked for a prominent hotelier on Miami Beach. I'm not sure where she lived or whether she lived with them on the beach at all. Probably not. Probably living in Overtown or Brownsville. Her parents worked out there. Whether they stayed there or not, I don't honestly know.

What was fascinating to me, again, it's a little off the subject, was her shifting memory from discussion that we had about access to Bayfront Park, which she couldn't go into either in Downtown Miami. Then she remembered a story about going with her father and her mother up Route Nine and being accosted. This is a fascinating story. I'll get you a copy of it or something like that.

Police had the father stop the car and said, "Sir, get out of the car. Take your hat off, please. I'm a police officer". Her father said, "Where in the constitution does it say I have to take my hat off?" The policeman was furious, slapped his hat off. He put his hat back on. They took him away. Enid, her mother and brother were in the car for like an hour sitting, waiting, not knowing what to do.

He eventually came back. The policeman, as I recall Enid said, said, "Madam, would you tell your husband to please respect a police officer and take his hat off?" It turned out that he had apparently made a call to this hotel owner and his boss, white guy, that made all the difference, that basically told him.

He had the power, in other words, to protect his butt, so to speak. Interesting to me. It's oblique to Miami Beach but it's a fascinating association that you can pull out, which I'm sure you've experienced with oral history in different ways.

Kathy: Enid did tell us that story.

Greg: Okay. Sorry.

Kathy: No, it's good to hear it, the oral history. It's great to hear it.

Greg: Sure.

Kathy: Retellings and different angles. They were terrified, of course, that he



wouldn't come back.

Greg: Right, right, right.

Kathy: It was all the difference. He came back because of that phone call.

Greg: It's also the power of her memory, even in retelling the story of his respect for the constitution and his constitutional rights and more and more African Americans. He was not an ignorant man at all because he was also a minister. More and more, we're becoming far more aware of that and asserting it in all sorts of different ways, a beach, leisure location, golf, access to golf courses, which was another place, leisure spaces, which is interesting.

That's why Miami, Miami Beach arguably, I think, tells somewhat of a different story in the civil rights movement because it's not necessarily just schools or voting per se but it's leisure spaces because they're strategic, in one sense, to a tourist city.

Kathy: I'm wondering if there were ever any white people who went to Virginia Key Beach.

Greg: I never heard of hardly any that I know of. I'm sure some did but I don't know of that.

Kathy: Just maybe as an act of solidarity.

Greg: It's a good question, good point. I just never heard that.

Kathy: Let me think. Carl, help me think here. What other angle should we...

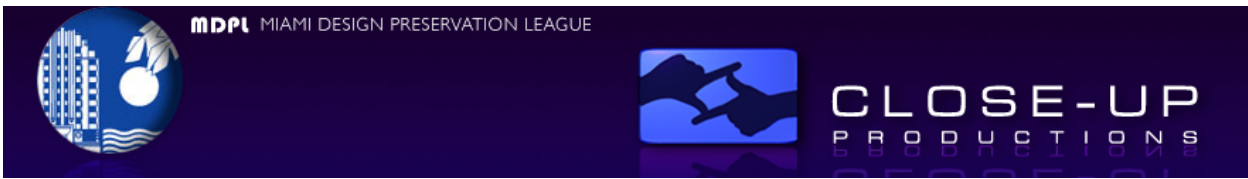
Carl: Well, I'd like to know a little bit more about the Haulover. I think I'd like to have it. Can you set it in time and place from the standpoint of what kind of beach was it in 1945? Would there have been a lot of public there?

Greg: I came [Inaudible] [24:43]. I can tell you this. It was a relatively new county beach. Matheson Hammock and Haulover were a couple of the most recent beaches that were created. It probably would have been, as a county beach, relatively popular, I would think back then.

This is, again, May of 1945 before the Japanese surrendered but around the time that the Germans surrendered. People were coming home. It was a time of expectation of victory, celebration, things like that. "This is our time", African Americans were saying about this incident. "We've struggled. We've died in this war".

Garth Reeves was a soldier in the war, as were so many others. Coming back and just saying, "We're not putting up with this anymore. We couldn't have any formal access to the waterfront for decades, if ever. This is not going to be continuing".

Using civil disobedience, non-violent civil disobedience as Gandhi had taught and also having, interestingly, ongoing relation with Thurgood



Marshall and AACP because he had come down here and they had had discussions and what-not. They were all, as far as I know, friends. There was part of a national, even international network, one could argue, and yet this was also homegrown.

It was because of location and it was because of strategic issues. That's why I found it interesting, even though it's a pretty minor incident from wanting three people. Okay, it was peacefully resolved, so to speak. They got a beach even though they say it wasn't that great a beach, people drowned in it, et cetera, et cetera. I guess I came to find some meaning within the larger picture of it.

Kathy: Marvin Dunn told us that any town that had the name 'Beach' in it, they were very careful to restrict blacks, black access to the beach part. This went all the way up the coast. Most of the towns in Florida along the coast demarcated the northwest section of each of the towns or cities as the black area. It didn't just evolve. It was very specifically the planning notion of restricting them to northwest.

Greg: Outgrowth of that segregation. Even if they had any access to beach, it had to be a very specific location, probably American Beach, somewhat similar to that. You're probably aware of and then...

Kathy: Market Beach in Jacksonville?

Greg: Near it.

Kathy: He said also that in the construction of Miami Beach and the clearing away of the mangroves, they used black labor. The people who hired them were often cash poor but land rich. They would actually give them, instead of cash sometimes, give them a deed to a plot of land.

Greg: On the beach though?

Kathy: On the beach. They owned, actually owned some of the plots in the early, early days but they weren't allowed to develop them. They weren't certainly allowed to live on them. They just later sold the deeds.

Greg: Uninhabitable.

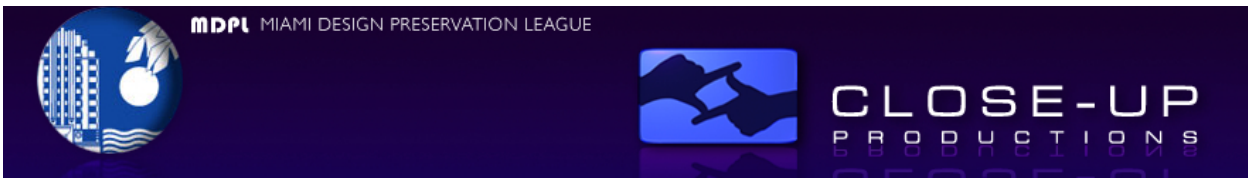
Kathy: They cashed in the deeds later.

Greg: Interesting.

Kathy: That was very interesting, I thought. Should we talk a little bit about the situation now with Virginia Key?

Carl: Sure, why not?

Kathy: While we have Greg here let's get that on the record as to this history you were talking about of lack of good management of Virginia Key. Give us some of your thoughts on that and tell us a bit about your involvement, one, in helping the park trust coming to be and being a defender of that



open space, that piece of land there. Where to start?

Greg: Right, long story.

[Laughter]

Kathy: When did you get involved?

Greg: I can't tell you specifically when I got involved with Virginia Key. A woman named Mabel Miller who was an environmental activist and friend of Marjory Stoneman Douglas came to my house when we had a meeting of the Urban Environment League in December of 19, I think it was 98. She spoke about the fact that there was this activity going on [phone rings].

I got involved in early 19, I always get this, 99. I was the new president of the Urban Environment League and I went to this meeting the city was having about Virginia Key. There were a number of environmentalists there, Blanca Mesa and others. They were angry that Virginia Key Beach looked like it was going to be transferred into an upscale echo resort at the time, which was the plan in the air.

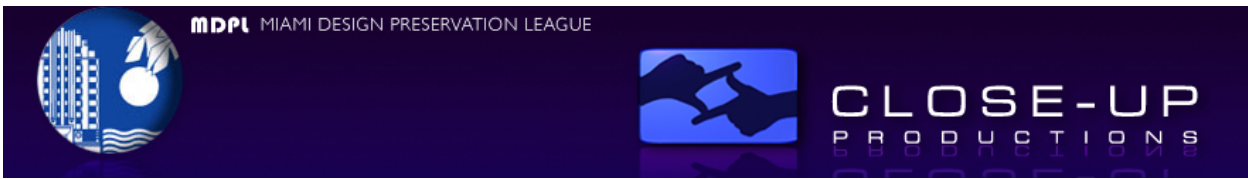
The city taskforce that was sitting up there was listening and what-not. Then I had just read and reviewed Marvin Dunn's book, 'Black Miami', that had just come out. It was pretty fresh in my mind about Virginia Key and its importance in the African American community. I stood up and I said, "Seems to me this should be preserved not necessarily for its environmental features but as part of the civil rights movement. This is really significant to the civil rights movement".

Nancy Lee was there and Bob Weinreb and others. I remember one of the members of the taskforce saying, "Oh yes. That's fine. We'll set up a plaque or something like that. That will be good". I said, "I don't think so. I think it should be preserved as public space for the use of the people in honor of people in the civil rights movement".

Then I went back with Nancy Lee, who had a lot of documents, and combed through a lot of these documents and read and talked to her and to Bob. They had done a lot of work, background work on that. We came up with the notion collectively of a civil rights park. I had just been to Israel, Yad Vashem. I had seen that. Nancy brought up the idea of the Franklin Roosevelt Museum, an outdoor living museum in Washington as a model.

We came back and then I also wrote up, I forget what it is, some kind of principles for public space in the Urban Environment League, I got them to pass that. Moving in several directions but keeping going. Bottom, I was showing up at these meetings. Then eventually I wrote, I guess you would say a fairly blistering memo, I think I quoted in my book, to the chair of it.

They were all white Anglo characters. There were no Hispanics, as I recall. There were no African Americans on it. That was really offensive to me. I really said this. I didn't think that this body really had much credibility in all of this and that their proposal for some kind of echo resort really didn't



make much sense. I had then called Athalie Range and Enid and Gene to try to see if they might get involved and they did.

I knew, as this university geeky, WASP-y person, I didn't have the credibility, at a certain point, to make a stand that would mean much and that others needed to. We all worked together. That's the bottom line.

Kathy: Eugenia Thomas.

Greg: Eugenia Thomas and Enid and there were others so that it was building a coalition that then eventually, again, endless meetings. We went before the Waterfront Board and convincing them. Then getting Arthur Teele who was then a city commissioner to be an ally, having meetings with them, coming up with plans for a charette design workshop, a public workshop of what should go there, getting it before the city commission. Then they had going into lobbying all the city commissioners and stuff like that.

Most people, and I'm not saying I'm great with it. Most people have no clue, if you really want to do something like that, how much effort it takes. Then do the research. I found, for example, that the city of Miami had had a parks advisory board before then but it had gone out of existence about four or five years before.

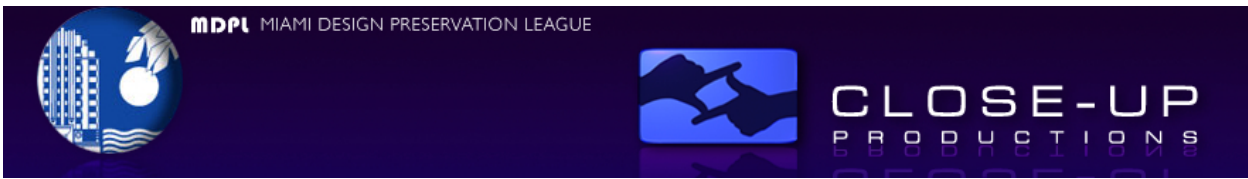
I wrote the legislation and worked with the then park director, Albert Ruder, to get it before the commission. He was very strategic here. This is the city of Miami, not the city of Miami Beach, of course. He said, "Well, take it to J. L. Plummer, who was not really famous for being such a sensitive person to parks because he was up for reelection.

We took the legislation. He sponsored it. It got through and then I eventually chaired that and was throwing myself into park stuff for a number of years. We then came up, I don't know which year, 2003 or '04, with the notion we needed a real planning master plan for the island, for Virginia Key Island, the entire island.

We pushed and essentially got that passed but then the city came along and hired Ed Stone and Associates, EDSA and under, frankly, former mayor Manny Diaz. I guess his chosen firm, it was far more commercial stuff that was going to go into the island. A lot of us got together again and said, "No, we don't like their plans" and essentially, I guess it's safe to say, overthrew in front of the commission their ideas for that over-commercialization.

The city basically gave us, I think it was six, eight months, another coalition to come up with an alternative plan, which we did, which they eventually passed unanimously in July of 2010, which called for park areas and sustainable transportation all around the island and the fact that there should be an oversight board for the entire island rather than just Virginia Key Beach.

Working with Gene Tinnie and others too, so it was definitely coalition building time. Then, as you may or may not know, even though the city commission passed this unanimously, that planning oversight board didn't



get created for almost five or six years. I kept sending memos. I wrote legislation that would create it but the then sitting commissioner of that district clearly did not want such an oversight board and so it didn't get passed. When he left office, commissioner—

Kathy: Who was that?

Greg: Marc Sarnoff. When he left office, Commissioner Francis Suarez was the one we worked with, Grace Solares, myself and several others, writing legislation to get that. He understood now is the time to try to get that oversight board passed. He worked it. He did. There was a new commissioner, Ken Russell, who was supportive of that also. I think it was voted unanimously. It's deference to sitting commissioners in many instances.

I don't know how many direct thing with Marc Sarnoff on that but the boat show was moving forward, for example. That wasn't part of the master plan at all. Even though he had some objections to it, but the city administration was going about its business without any oversight. There now is an oversight board. I chaired it for, what, the last year, I guess it was until now leaving town. I think it's a good [phone rings] step in the right direction with that way. That's a good way to end that.

Kathy: Miami Beach makes the politics difficult. We've discovered through talking to people. There's almost a natural conflict between the needs of residents who actually live on the island and the businesspeople who want to promote development and tourism and obviously an increase in that. There is this tension that gets generated.

It just occurs to me that maybe in the case of Virginia Key, they might have benefited by having some residential. It is uninhabited so there's no pushback from people who it's their home, they have a vested interest, although there's the very active group. Tell us about the group, the Friends of Virginia Key that Blanca Mesa's involved in and what they've been able to do or not do.

Greg: Well, Friends of Virginia Key and Blanca Mesa have been amazing, it seems to me, with her blog and all sorts of other very...

Kathy: Excuse me a minute.

Carl: I hear that. I don't believe...

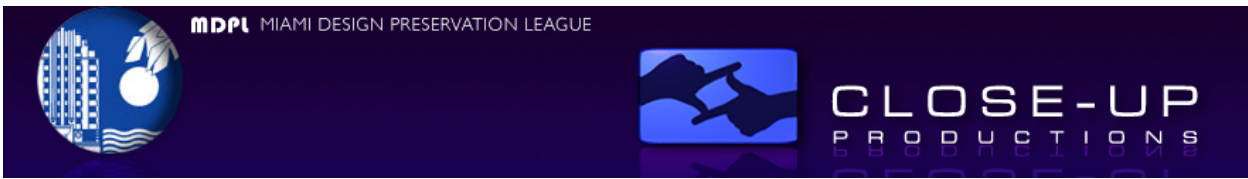
Greg: That's mine.

Kathy: Okay. Is that okay?

Greg: It's ending now.

Carl: Go ahead.

Kathy: Okay.



Greg: Sorry.

Carl: It's okay.

Greg: About Blanca Mesa, I think she's been enormously effective in many ways in drawing attention to important environmental issues through her blog and other things. I think another really important consideration is Key Biscayne. The fact that the island is between Miami and Key Biscayne, Key Biscayne has one highway out of there. There are very powerful interest groups with a lot of well-to-do and nice people or whatever and a very effective mayor, it seems to me too, in Mayra Peña Lindsay.

They're not afraid to sue the city of Miami over traffic issues and stuff like that. Each of these kinds of issues, what I guess I've come to see over many years, takes sitting back and thinking, "Well, who are the strategic partners here and there?"

In our case with the Urban Environment League, working with the African American community, with the environmental community like Blanca and others, with some back then, Key Biscayne, they didn't have as powerful a presence as they do now, I would say, because of the boat show issue.

Everything, the same thing with the Miami Circle, for example, if you remember that issue back in, about the same time, 1999. All of that was working. We were working with Enid and with Gene Tinnie on that issue at almost the same time we were working on Virginia Key. It's different partners there and different media structures and different appeals and stuff like that. We...

Kathy: Enid was president of Dade Heritage Trust.

Greg: She was, she was.

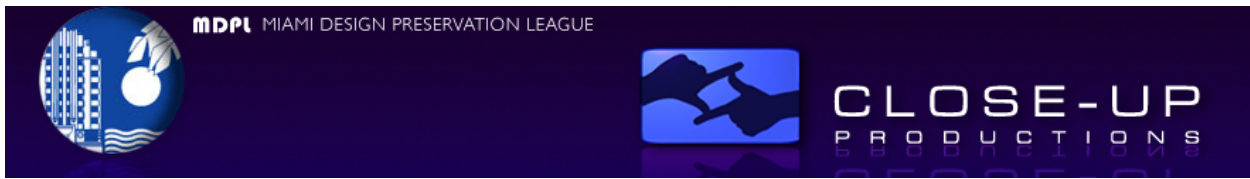
Kathy: That was a pretty important position to be in at that time.

Greg: Also even the Sierra Club brought, for example, Native Americans Seminoles, you may possibly remember, down at one of the very earliest demonstrations for the Miami Circle, all in their regalia. Of course that made the front page of the Miami Herald.

I guess a lot of us learned different media strategies. Hey, the Herald's not going to necessarily cover us. We had a great ally in Jim Mullin, then the editor of Miami New Times, now the editor of Biscayne Times. He was great. He did articles that brought out what we were up to in, I think, a relatively fair manner. We used minor media in different ways.

Kathy: Was Eye on Miami online then?

Greg: No, that wasn't in existence then. No, not at all. We tried to strategize how to obviously get into more major media. Anyway, that's got to be an important part of any kind of effort like that. Aside from the research, the pleasant lobbying of commissioners and lower-level staff, contextualizing these issues for the public, for politicians and others because a lot of them



are so busy, they don't know.

It's not that they're bad people or anything or corrupt. Some may be. You've got to really explain without being, how should I put it, talk down to them. You don't want to talk down to them, "You knew. Didn't you know about this and this and this?" Sometimes they go, "Oh, I didn't realize that. That's important". The fact that some of us, I think, were gaining credibility over with issues too over time.

Kathy: You were so well informed.

Greg: Relatively well informed and serious. We didn't have any economic interests. One of the things in my life here is that I've always just been this geeky college professor, did not have any kind of economic interests in any of this stuff. I was doing my thing as director of the Institute of Public History at the University of Miami and I took that very seriously. I did it in my own terms, what I thought to be in the public interest.

Some people would say after a while, "Gee, is this objective history that you're involved in writing?" because I got involved in a lot of stuff. I never cared. It's just important that there be people that know some of the history that do something and getting—

Kathy: Otherwise, why, it's just an intellectual exercise.

Greg: Yes. I frankly think I've seen too many academics that are just so co-opted into the publish-or-perish, a little article here and you're going to a fancy conference in San Francisco or whatever it is and eating nice dinners or paid for. Very few get involved in local stuff. I can understand. I know I understand why and I'm not condemning them individually and you need specialization. It's tricky but I think the reward structure of the university needs to be rethought, but that's another subject.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]