



Jane Gross Interview

Kathy Hersh: It is May 26th, 2017, and we are interviewing Jane D. Gross in her beautiful home for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project. One of the first things I'd like to ask you is when did you come to the Beach and what brought you here.

Jane Gross: OK. Well, I came to the Beach in September of 1982. I had a three-month freelance job with Andrew Capitman and his partner to restore the first major restoration on Ocean Drive called the Carlyle Hotel, right across the street from the Cardozo. We had three months to do it, because it needed to be done by Art Deco Weekend January of 1983.

How I got there is a very round-about thing. I think I've already spoken to you about my corporate work. Once again, I was trying to just do freelance work. I was writing instruction booklets and assembly manuals and employee manuals. I was working on Wall Street with a friend of mine, who had created a hardware system for the money-market trading floor, which was really new. I also was in the barn at night with some teenagers pulling the cable that would go down Wall Street, up the elevator shafts and out to the desks, so I was Jane of all trades.

Art Deco was always one of my hobbies. I was always fascinated with the glamour from Hollywood and the costumes. A friend of mine was opening an Art Deco restaurant in Danbury, Connecticut, and it was called The Thirties Café. I got a little freelance writing project to describe, in the menu, what it was all about.

My other friend, Donna Zemo, she used to live with me in Connecticut. She and this other person, the person who was opening the restaurant, came to Miami Beach to see the Cardozo, because they thought this was Art Deco research. They just wanted to get away for the weekend. When Donna came back, she packed her things and moved. She took a job as assistant manager of the Cardozo.

That was in June, so in July, around July Fourth weekend, I said, "What am I missing out on?" I flew down for a long weekend. Left my resume with Donna, because I totally fell in love. It was a full moon. I spent the night on a sailboat on a full moon for the first time in my life. It was like magic.

Within a week, I was interviewed on the phone by Mark, Andrew's partner, and offered this job. So I was here, but it was in a round about kind of way.

The job was doing everything. It was answering the phone. It was going to city hall to get all the microfiche. They called it in those days the microfilms. It was dealing with the architects, the banks. I had a lot of corporate background, so I was able to do construction loan stuff and contractor things. One of my odd jobs in college was as a carpenter's helper, so I



actually even knew the trade. I just fit right in, and then at the end of every day, I could go across and take a swim. It was just kind of like magic.

When my three months was finished, because an old person had the room rented every winter, I was out of the budget. I definitely didn't want to go back to Connecticut in the cold, so I got myself a tiny room. I got my real estate license, and Barbara Capitman and Leonard found me a job with another Art Deco developer. He had restored the H.S. Kress building, a 1939 building that's still on the corner of 12th and Washington. The Erotic Sex Museum is upstairs, but my office used to be upstairs.

He was part of the old world, but he wanted to take advantage of the tax credits. Again, we kind of pioneered getting the first tax credits that came through the federal government, through Tallahassee and like that. Our office became a place where anybody interested in investing in the Art Deco district would wind up, because we knew city hall. We knew how to get them the right people.

I was even getting work for some of the artists that I knew. One of the main people who came through us was the Club Z people from New York. They restored the Cinema Theater, which is between 11th and 12th on Washington. So a lot of people that I knew who needed work, I would get a percentage of whatever work I got for them, including the artists.

I worked for the Robins after that. I worked for both Craig and Scott. When I worked for Scott, I learned the first software system for general contractors. We restored the Marlin, the Webster. What else? A bunch of other places. The Betsy.

I worked for Craig, and his girlfriend had a cosmetic company called Iota Cosmetics. They produced lip pencils and eye pencils. I told you about my corporate work with the Chesebrough-Ponds corporation. They had a business going in old city hall, so I would help them with that. So I did a little bit of everything.

Interviewer: That sounds very exciting.

Jane Gross: Then Saul came down about a year later. He was first known as my boyfriend. I just want everyone to [laughs] [05:20-05:20] know. I'm known as his wife, which is fine. We dated and never got along. We knew each other in business, because he was here representing his law firm at first, before he decided to move here and open his own business.

He was a lawyer. He was very straight. I was too tough for him. He was too tough for me. It was like our gay friends persisted. They said, "Oh, no. You two are perfect for each other," and sure enough, we broke up one time. I remember I was answering the phones in the developer's office. We had lost our secretary, because with all the money and the banks, everybody was over-leveraged and we had to fire people.



I hear this voice on the phone say, "Would you like to go to China with me?" It was like, "Who's this?" It was Saul. He and his partner, Arthur. Arthur was married to a Hong Kong citizen, and we were all going to go to Hong Kong to visit her family. I had always been so busy earning a living, I could never really afford to travel, and I said, "Yeah. Let's go" [laughs] [06:24-06:25].

So we went, and after that trip, we stopped fighting about those things. It was like a power thing for us, I think. We just moved forward and moved in together, and then decided we wanted to get married and have a child. Like I said, I was 40. My clock was ticking, so I had to convert, really, so that my son would be accepted by the tribe, and the rest is history.

I retired to raise my son, because I had worked for 20 years. I had worked my way through college and worked up until it was 1989 when we got married, so I'd worked for 22 years in one way or another. The deal was you make the money, I'll spend the money and raise our son. [laughter]

Jane Gross: I'm still doing that. It's the best job I ever had. I got involved in a lot of charities. I was involved with the schools, every school he went to, and I enjoyed being a political wife. I liked that exposure. Saul was really good at what he did, and I was happy to help.

Interviewer: Tell us about being a political wife. Explain that.

Jane Gross: Well, especially in Miami Beach, where it's a very small town. I call it six degrees of separation. People feel that when they know who you are, you must know who they are. It's a very public forum. People interrupt you in restaurants. They call your house at seven in the morning to tell you their neighbor is doing illegal work.

It's a constant kind of a thing, and Saul was very good at that. He's got a very even temperament. I'm a little bit more crazy, like, "Why are you calling me? Call code [laughter] [08:04-08:06] enforcement."

I enjoyed the fact that you could get people interested in charities. I used a lot through our temple. I used the social justice aspect of it a lot to start food drives and backpack drives and clothing drives for the homeless and cooking in soup kitchens and that kind of stuff.

That made people aware that they should be doing that kind of stuff, especially the wealthier people here. It's hard. You have to let your children know that there are kids two miles from here that are going to bed hungry. You really just need to ask people. It's not their fault, but once they know about it, they get more involved.

Interviewer: Do you think that that's, I wouldn't say unique to Miami Beach, but that it is a special characteristic here?



Jane Gross: I don't know. I really lived in Brooklyn my whole life and then in the woods of Connecticut and then here. What I loved about Miami Beach, aside from the diversity and the weather, of course, is that it's a small town. It really is a small town. On steroids to a certain degree because of the tourism and because of all the visitors, but it's still the kind of town where, even to this day, my son will be 26. When I go to Epicure or Publix, they ask, "How's your son? How is he doing? When is he coming home?" Now I can say, "He's coming home." He's finally coming home in July. He's moving here.

You can call city hall and have somebody from the mayor's office call you back that day. How many towns can you do that in? Especially in the summer, when it empties out. A lot of the snowbirds fly away. It really is such a small town, because the stores are happy to see you. There's parking spaces. The quality of life slows down, and it really has that small-town hominess that I fell in love with.

Interviewer: There's an incredible history of tension here in the needs of the residents versus tourism, which is the great economic engine. You've probably been in that sort of balancing act there as a resident, but Saul's business, a lot of it involves tourism work.

Jane Gross: Right. Right. Well, I'm the daughter of a fireman, so I know the value of those kind of jobs. I don't know what I should say about this, but I think the residents of Miami Beach, there's always a bunch of people that are always complaining. You need to know that the tourists pay so much of what you ordinarily would have to pay. It's why we have decent quality of lights, why we have a great police force, a great fire department. I think our city services are fabulous.

You just have to remind people that if the tourists go away, so does your quality of life, but there is a balance. For instance, when Art Basel was in town, it gets a little annoying. I love Art Basel, but all the streets are sewn back up and all the construction signs are down. Then as soon as Art Basel people leave, they rip up the streets again and block your way. I think it's just the matter of how you have to live in a tourist city, but I think the city administrations, all of them that I've experienced, some do a better job than others, but I think it's pretty well balanced.

Interviewer: Let's go back to that frenzy time. We were speaking earlier about the people who call themselves pioneers from the '90s, but the real pioneers, modern pioneers, were really in Barbara Capitman's [crosstalk] [11:59] era in the '80s.

Jane Gross: Right. Well, they were here before me. I came in '82, and the League was already founded and they were already taking up causes. Andrew and Mark bought those six hotels along Ocean Drive. They had investors. They had like 40 investors. A bunch of old alter cockers from New Jersey, who wanted to make some money on their money, but they lost all their money.



The next wave were the gangsters, or I should say the guys from South Philly, who bought those buildings. That was a pretty glamorous time, too, in a way, because they did clean up the crime on the street. You didn't have to worry about walking home at night when those guys were here. We're still friendly with one of them. We love him.

Then Miami Vice, of course, came. It was a crazy time, because you had all the new, glamorous stuff going on juxtaposed to some of the old people still sitting there in God's waiting room. You still had some of the Marielitos on the street that would just rip the gold chains off the old people's necks, because if they got arrested, it was better to go to an American jail and have three square meals a day and air conditioning and be treated pretty fairly, as opposed to how they were treated in Cuba, so they weren't afraid of being arrested. There was all of that happening at once. It kind of made it interesting.

Interviewer: You were living on the Beach at the time of the Mariel influx, weren't you?

Jane Gross: Yeah, they were still around. The worst of them had been arrested, but, yes, there were a lot of them still around.

Interviewer: What was that like?

Jane Gross: A little scary. You knew when to cross the street. Like I said, I was born in Brooklyn, and I travelled the subway to my Catholic high school a lot, so I have a good eye for that kind of thing.

Interviewer: So you had street smarts.

Jane Gross: Yeah. Yeah. They weren't outnumbering us in those days. There was still a core group of young people that were working for cheap for the Art Deco district at the time, and there was always somebody you knew around on the street. They were getting more and more populated. In fact, when my room was finished at the Victor, I moved in 1983, I guess, into the Amsterdam Palace, which is now the Versace mansion. It was a wonderful, old, funky apartment building that always smelled like pot.

[laughter]

Jane Gross: It was filled with gay artists mostly. Every time I would move south, every couple of years, I would get a break on the rent from the owner, because I would move. I had a real estate license. I would move people in with me to make it safer.

I finally worked my way, the last apartment I had was on Ninth Street, next to what is now Mango's. I had a third-floor, one-bedroom apartment on the south side. I could see the whole ocean, because Mango's had not built that last story. I think I paid \$300 a month for it.



My living room was filled with the model apartments from all the developers [laughter] [15:15-15:16] I had worked for. I got free furniture, and there was a tiny little closet. I'll never forget this. Tiny little closet. I used to get all the promotional nightclub t-shirts and this and that, and when I worked the door at night at the night club, they would have to send a dress and a makeup artist to my apartment, because I couldn't afford that kind of stuff.

My closet was so small that I would get rid of all these t-shirts. In that time, there were dumpsters in the alley. There was a pecking order of women homeless. I knew who would go through the clothing first. It was a hoot, because I would see the homeless women walking around in my t-shirts.

[laughter]

Jane Gross: It was really fun. Like a Fellini movie.

[laughter]

Interviewer: It still feels that way in some respects of some of the things that you see going on [crosstalk] [16:08] late at night [laughs] [16:09-16:10].

Jane Gross: Oh, it's nothing like it is, but I loved to see that. That's why I don't want them to gentrify. Like Washington Avenue is a mess, but it's also funky. It used to be me my shopping. I used to go to the Art Deco Market for my food, and there were wonderful bakeries and old people pushing their carts home with their groceries, but there's something about Washington Avenue that, just like in SoHo, you don't want to lose all that funk. You don't want to sell it all and build it all up. You need to just revitalize it.

Interviewer: What do you see happening?

Jane Gross: Well, I know that there are hotels. Bernard Zyscovich had designed a master plan for Washington Avenue. In order for it to work, you need to allow developers to restore the façades and then set back the new portion, so that young people can live there, so that they can have small hotels, micro-room hotels.

That's what's in the works for the next couple of years. I think two or three projects that have assembled blocks and will be doing that. Also, more sidewalk cafés. I don't think they're going to be putting in a track for a trolley. I think it will be a free-standing trolley, because nobody really wants those overhead wires. Just to keep it low scale.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. So that's the plan?

Jane Gross: Well, the plan is fungible. The master plan is there, and we'll see, I think, how the first couple of them go. The thing is to have Fifth to the Convention Center made kind of all developed. No empty stores. Sidewalk cafés. Rebranding the sidewalks to help people cross the streets. Making it more



pedestrian friendly. Safer. Lincoln Road is going to have its own facelift. Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, really?

Jane Gross: Yeah. There's a Lincoln Road master plan as well.

Interviewer: Wow, and you've seen the master plan?

Jane Gross: I've seen it. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: You think it's compatible with keeping the old and [crosstalk] [18:23] making it better?

Jane Gross: You know it's hard. I'm an old-timer now. I think there'll be enough left. I really think that you have to let the next generation put its own stamp on things, as long as it doesn't destroy it.

There are some things on Lincoln Road that I don't like. There are some things that are going to happen on Ocean Drive that I don't like and Washington Avenue, but I think as long as we keep electing officials that understand preservation to a certain extent and that it's not just saving old buildings.

It's the preservation of the quality of life, the pedestrian friendliness, the trees, the landscaping and the canopy. So much more than just old buildings. If you have to sacrifice a building here and there to maintain that quality of life, then you have to bend a bit, so I think there's a lot of compromise coming up.

Interviewer: You have been on the historic preservation board for several [crosstalk] [19:23] years.

Jane Gross: I was for six years. Almost six years. Just under six years.

Interviewer: Tell us about some of the experiences that stand out in your mind of that ongoing struggle between preserving the old, but allowing the stamp, as you say [crosstalk] [19:39], of the next generation.

Jane Gross: Right. Well, I think the preservation board, by and large, does a very good job, because you need to understand the balance of development and preservation. You can't just say you need to stop development, so I think by and large they do a good job.

There are good developers and there are bad developers, and by the time you're on the preservation board for a few years, you know who they are. You know who's going to be straight with you. You know who's not going to be straight with you. I think that there's a very good balance, the people who represent the preservation community at the meetings.



I think that developers, at this point, know what they can and can't get away with. They always try to push the envelope. That's their job, but you need to push back. You need to be as smart or smarter than them, and you need to know how you can compromise.

Like these buildings up here in the '20s and '30s, on Collins, that are the high-rise Art Deco, oceanfront hotels. There was no financial incentive for them to restore those hotels. They could very easily have just been torn down, but, no, we made another historic district out of it, and the historic preservation board allows people to buy those and, in exchange for restoring the beauty of it and the hotel rooms, to build a condo tower behind it. That's not so intrusive, but they know they can sell those for millions of dollars, so you give and you take.

Also, that's revitalizing my neighborhood. Now Mid-Beach is being revitalized by all of these beautiful hotels. Vayena [phonetic] [21:16] and the addition, and it's going up north. Pretty soon, it'll meet the Fountainebleau. I think there's a nice balance being maintained along Collins here.

We just need good people to run for office and good people to impose their opinions, strong opinions. Miami Beach is filled with activists. That's another thing I love about it. I think we're going to be OK.

Interviewer: I'd like to talk a bit about Barbara Capitman. When you were talking about compromise, I'm thinking, hearing all the quotes from the film that we did about her and how she was not a compromiser.

Jane Gross: No, and if it weren't for her, I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you.

Interviewer: Tell us about that.

Jane Gross: Well, I had a love-hate relationship with Barbara. She was a very annoying old lady at times. I call her a cross between Eleanor Roosevelt and a bag lady, which she was. She had the qualities of both.

When people saw her coming at city hall, they ran for the ladies' rooms [laughter] [22:13-22:16] and the men's rooms, because she would just be in your face. However, she brought the interest here. Her son bought six hotels. He might have lost them, but we got great press. The Friedman's Bakery idea was an amazing idea. That got the international architectural groups to see the beauty of the Art Deco architects [crosstalk] [22:38] we have here.

Interviewer: Can you describe that project, please?

Jane Gross: I wasn't really involved with that project, but I know that Leonard treated it like it was a birthday cake. It was a bakery, so he did try to take into consideration the use of the building.



Somebody had a contact at Progressive Architecture, and it was a wonderful cover to show people in just one, a picture is worth a thousand words, what can be done with what otherwise would be considered dowdy, broken-down architecture. Once that hit and the architects started coming in here on vacation and looking and seeing and they started writing about it, and travel writers started writing about it. Real estate investors from out of town started coming in, and they started buying things.

Saul's company bought a bunch of apartment buildings along Flamingo Park, and he gave them a look and a promise. It wasn't a full restoration, but he rented them to young people. Then we realized that there needed to be a service corridor, so Washington Avenue, I mean, it already was for the old people, but it became the restaurants, the little grocery stores, the dry cleaners, the shoemakers. They were all there. The neighborhood started to percolate.

So Saul bought property on Washington Avenue in the early days. He was lucky and smart to do that, and then, of course, things come, real estate. I had my real estate license for 35 years. There are waves, no matter how it goes. There are waves and then it's starting to get pretty funky again.

Interviewer: Let's go back to the Friedman's Bakery. It sounds like, by the way you're telling it, that was a key turning point.

Jane Gross: I see it as that, especially now in retrospect. When you're in the minute, you don't really see it. It's when you can look back and figure out what pushed it over. Also, I think that there were some great real estate deals here.

Interviewer: Tell us about Leonard Horowitz and your friendship with him.

Jane Gross: Oh, well, God. Leonard was like a sister to me. I didn't really know many gay men in my life in Brooklyn and Connecticut. In Brooklyn, I probably did and didn't know it, because they were all in the closet.

So Leonard and I used to smoke pot together and meditate on color. That's pretty much the basis of our relationship. He loved me. He loved Saul. He was one of the main people that persisted that Saul and I be together.

He was not sick for the first few years I was here, but we saw a lot of people die in the first wave, like quickly, so he was scared, but he was very promiscuous and very flirtatious. He soon got ill, but he came back three times from it. The third time he went in the hospital and he never came back out.

I guess my relationship with him, I had difficulty with him at a time, too, because I don't think I want to put this in the archives. Business-wise, at some point, I had to say, but then both of our fathers passed away, so we reunited. We started going to the Unity Church over on the Bay, and basically meditate together. Meditate at the beach. We would meditate



together on buildings that he was in charge of putting color on. We would chat about it. I certainly didn't have any input, but he would invite me to come and sit with him.

Interviewer: Did he know about your background as [crosstalk] [26:31] a color.

Jane Gross: Of course. Of course. That's what the basis was. That's what we talked about most of the time, in addition to gossip.

[laughter]

Interviewer: Let's talk about your background in color and how that has kind of been your [crosstalk] [26:46] destiny [laughs] [26:47-26:48].

Jane Gross: Well, it didn't dawn on me during it, until I got here and started really the metaphysics of color, when I was a Rosicrucian. My jobs, my two main corporate jobs both had to do with color.

One was computerizing a small paint company, a factory in Brooklyn, beautiful corporate headquarters in Connecticut. I didn't really know much about computers, but that was good, because I had to know everyone's job and work with the guy who had this huge computer room. In those days, computerizing something meant using an entire clean room like this. After we computerized all the sales forms and the manufacturing, we invented the first custom color system.

I was learning in those days in the mid-'70s, especially with the problem with petrol-fuels and things were being pulled out of the earth, it was very expensive with the Iran problem with Jimmy Carter. They wouldn't sell us their oil and oil was very expensive. We had those big pig cars and it was very expensive, so I began to understand that you actually pull the color out of the ground.

It's pigment. There's a magician, kind of mad scientist in a laboratory thing you do to this pigment that the earth makes that becomes paint, and that the paint colors do have psychological effects on people. There is, like I said before, hospital recovery green. Being in the pink of health. Having the blues. Yellow sunflowers making you happy. Gray being a little depressing.

The difference in the color that our eyes perceive is just a difference in the rate of vibration of when light rays go through a prism. I mean it's pretty magical when you think about it. That was one job.

Another job I had was for Aziza Cosmetics at Chesebrough-Ponds Corporation in Greenwich. We did fragrances and cosmetics, Aziza Cosmetics. Again, I had to name the thousand colors on the custom color systems we put on the East Coast in the home centers, and every spring you had to be fresh, so you had to change the names. In the Aziza Cosmetics, all the eye shadows and lipsticks and eye pencils, you had to



keep them fresh, so you had to to come up with names. There were a zillion names.

Metaphysically, color, when I was a Rosicrucian, color is related to numbers. It's related to shapes. It's related to gems. The shapes of the buildings down here were also kind of magical. In Rosicrucians, you would meditate on something like everything in nature tries to be a circle. That the atom, the electron going around the nucleus of the atom and the planets going around the sun are all, after eons, they finally find their orbit.

I know that Black Elk, one of the great Indian gurus, American Indians, said he knew that his culture was in decline when the white men made them live in boxes, because squares, 90-degree angles, even in astrology, are confrontational and difficult. The closer you get to a circle, the easier it is. So the eyebrows and the curves of the Art Deco architecture are very magical and make for a very relaxing atmosphere. Even the trine in astrology is that much closer to a circle, so every time you release a hard edge, an angle, it makes things easier. Call me crazy, but [laughter] [30:49] [30:50] that all fits in together for me with the district and the colors.

Interviewer: Did you and Leonard talk about colors?

Jane Gross: He didn't know that's how my color was. His was pretty much he did use the tools, the color wheels. He taught me a little bit about color wheels and the contrasting colors and the tones of each color. That you can't put a bright blue with a pale pink on architecture, because it's not soothing. It's a little bit abrupt.

He had his own way of doing things, but he loved, once he heard, we would read to each other the Psychology Today articles [laughs] [31:33-31:34] about color and color therapy that they were coming up with at that point. This is funny, because when he got really sick, the last project that he did was for a friend of ours, Clark Reynolds. I forget the name of the building. It's on Jefferson Avenue.

Interviewer: Tell me that [phonetic] [31:54] he got it.

Jane Gross: His illness got in the way. It was the first time I saw colors. It was like purple and chartreuse, and Saul and I thought, it was almost like his illness was preventing him from getting into that vibratory space that he always got into that always did the right colors for the right buildings, and he knew it. He knew it, too. He never recovered from that.

Interviewer: That was a great loss.

Jane Gross: Yes. He tried to stay alive for our wedding. We got married in June. I believe he passed away in May. Because we used to pin him into his tux and put him in a wheelchair and take him with us to affairs, because he loved



galas and he loved dances and stuff like that. We kind of thought that he would bounce back again.

Interviewer: Unless this is too personal, what do you think that he saw and others saw that kept pushing at you and Saul together when you felt like you were [crosstalk] [32:59] opposites?

Jane Gross: Well, for me, I figured it out later on for me. It is a little personal. I had been married before for a hot minute out of college, and I was stalked by him for a year to get a chainsaw. He was a carpenter, so chainsaw. I don't think it's going to hurt me.

The point is, I was avoiding relationships. I was a single woman from the time I was 26 until the time I was 40, and I did not need to have that kind of relationship. Also, any man that was in my life, I could boss him around. I could use the term for it, but I won't use it on camera. I was also a bit smarter than them and they let me push them around, so I didn't have respect. Saul was the first guy who would tell me, "Hey, Jane, fuck you." [laughter]

Jane Gross: Be quiet. [laughter]

Jane Gross: You don't know what you're talking about. I was like, "What?" [laughter]

Jane Gross: It was like a power thing with us. Once we figured that out, I mean we still have a little bit of it, but we laugh about it now. We're like George and Gracie Allen now.

We got over it, but it took traveling. It took that trip to China when you're in the hotel room with somebody and there's one bathroom and there's one mirror and there's one bed. You're together. It's just the two of you, because we stayed in Hong Kong for a few days, and then Saul and I went alone into China for a couple of weeks.

Everybody said it was too early. It was like 1980 I don't know. Six maybe? It brought us together and the façades were down. The gloves came off, and we realized how compatible we were. After that, it was just getting over ourselves.

Interviewer: Leonard must have been delighted.

Jane Gross: He was delighted. He took full credit, but a lot of people took credit. My boss took credit. He said, "Find yourself a nice Jewish boy and give him a son and you'll be set for the rest of your life," so he thought he did it, and our friend Victor Farinas, another artist.

He was a Memphis artist, a Memphis-style artist, which I'll show you his table on the way out. He also thought that we were perfect for each other, so he actually brought me to Saul's birthday party. When we finally got



back together, he brought me to Saul's birthday party. It was right after that we went to China.

Interviewer: Beautiful.

Jane Gross: Yeah. Most of the preservationists like myself in the early days didn't have any money, so when you try to tell people how to spend their money or to buy a property, property rights, and you can't take it down, that's a pretty big deal. There are people in the preservation community from day one that don't like my opinion. They don't like the compromise opinion.

What I always say is you can't petrify a community. It needs to breathe and grow and be adaptably reused. We're not Williamsburg. We're not Westport, Connecticut. We're not all red brick things with the same awnings and whatever. There is that kind of preservation, which is not my forté. Even Dade Heritage Trust sometimes, there are things that they want to save that I say save them and embellish them. Bring them back to life. Make it so that people are coming back into them. You don't want just a piece of stone there.

I have people in the preservation community that did not want me to be chair of the historic preservation board, believe me, but I worked for developers. We convinced developers that you can make money at this. There is money in preservation, so I bear that in mind. I have a real estate license. I'm married to somebody who is considered to be a developer, but he develops in a very respectable, historic way.

There are those who think if you work for a developer, you should be banned from the movement. There are the wets and the dries, and then some people have cocktails now and then, so I'm one of the people in the middle there.

I think we're coming to a point where people are realizing that you need to compromise on both sides. The developers now come to the historic preservation board bearing in mind what they're going to hear from us. Bearing in mind, most of the time now, which is a great thing, they meet with the preservationists before they come. They already know what they're going to protest in their projects, and we already know, so pretty much this compromise is being made now between the preservationists, between MDPL and their advocacy committee and the developers in a lot of cases.

It takes a lot of the pressure off the board. The board can then just work with the beauty of it and the FAR of it, the pedestrian friendliness aspect of it, but the architectural stuff really can be worked out.

Interviewer: I sense that there is, because we've done a hundred interviews with people and we've focused a lot on development, that there is a sense that people have come around to see that there is something special about this place because of the history preserved, because of the scale being [crosstalk]



[38:22] preserved. Even if it's not consciously the reason a lot of people come, it makes it different enough.

Jane Gross: Right. Oh, it's definitely the reason. It's definitely the reason. If the developers had not restored some of those hotels and given nice rooms for the butts to sit in, to sleep in, they wouldn't be here. They'd drive through, like people drive through Calle Ocho or whatever. There's no place to say over there.

This is a place where people come and they want to be. They want to spend a vacation, but for a long time they didn't and they wouldn't have. They wouldn't have.

The other thing that's kind of sad is that the people who could afford to live here when I was here are priced out. That's the negative part of all of it. We don't have enough affordable housing. Politically, that's something I'd like to get involved with. I've been out and talked to the candidates whenever they solicit my vote. I ask them about certain things.

That's really a main thing now. I read an article where the maids at the Fontainebleau, it takes them two hours to get home at night. That's crazy. Maybe there needs to be for as many rooms as you build, an X amount of them have to be affordable housing or Section Eight housing or something, because we're losing a little bit of that economic diversity. If we don't do something soon, it'll be too late.

Interviewer: I wanted to talk about Barbara and her sons and the risks that they took at the time. Like you said, the earliest people didn't always do well [crosstalk] [39:56], but they had the vision.

Jane Gross: Right. Right. Well, he was a Wall Street guy, Andrew. He's a partner now in some big I think it's a private equity firm, so he's a brainiac. I don't know what precipitated him to buy this. I didn't even know that she had another son until a long time after I should have. They definitely were the group that right time, right place. Ocean Drive now is not the vision that Mark and Andrew had for Ocean Drive.

Interviewer: What was their vision?

Jane Gross: They saw more of outdoor café society, not outdoor café hocking expensive drinks and scantily clad women. They pictured string quartets on Sunday afternoons in Lummus Park. Like that. It was a much more sophisticated, women in sun hats and sun dresses and like that, but there you go.

Interviewer: What do you think now of Ocean Drive?

Jane Gross: Oh, it's very sad. I feel very sad. However, last month, Easter Sunday, Saul and I went to a Fish Called Avalon, which is one of our favorite places there. We haven't been there in years. It's a very responsible hotel owner.



There are new rules that they are starting to put into effect on Ocean Drive. You walk on Lummus Park and you look across at the architecture, you don't see that Miami Vice shot any more. All you see is a sea of umbrellas with no break. You can't see the beautiful façades that we worked our asses off to save.

The café tables are being moved to the sidewalk, so that you can actually see the buildings. The umbrellas are smaller and with lots of air and space between them. There's supposed to be no hawking.

Easter Sunday was the first in a series of monthly events that they are going to schedule, the next one's at the Betsy, to invite the residents to come back. Saul and I thought, well, wow. That's a great thing. It's Maryel Epps. Do you know Maryel Epps? She's a black gospel singer who does a lot of events around town. Maryel was going to be the entertainment.

So we went and the room was filled with all of our old friends from like 25, 30 years ago. I get chills just thinking about it. It was a beautiful thing, and that's what is going to get people back. I'll go once a month on a Sunday. In fact, I'll go back to those restaurants if I don't get ripped off.

The tourists are always complaining. They'll sell you a margarita. You'll order a margarita, and they bring you a trough filled with margaritas, and it's \$45. They have to police themselves. The Ocean Drive Association has to police themselves, and there are some bad people that own cafés and stuff, and there are some really good people. I think we're turning the tide a little bit on that.

Interviewer: I'd like to talk a little bit about the Betsy and some other of the gems who have thrived.

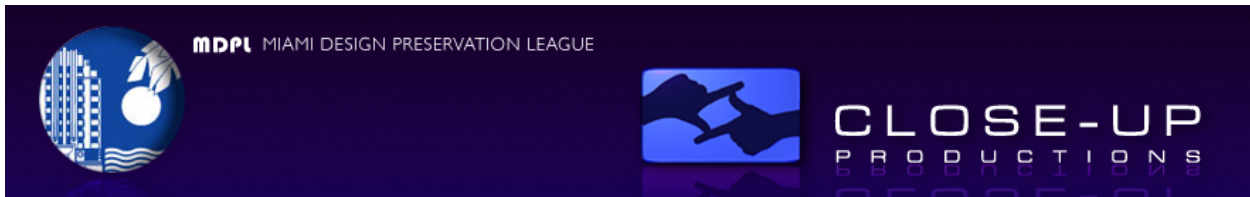
Jane Gross: When I first moved here, the Betsy was not the gem of Ocean Drive. Everybody said it's horrible. It's colonial. What does that have to do with Art Deco? There was a guy who owned it who was a notorious cocaine user. Didn't take care of it. Rented rooms by the hour, I heard.

This guy, Jonathan, Jonathan Plutzik I think his name is. Works with the family. It's just amazing. It is a gem. The architecture of it doesn't even matter at this point. It's doing the best that it can architecturally, but it is just filled with art and culture. The kind of events that they have are what Mark and Andrew envisioned, not a honky tonk.

It's a little bit too Coney Islandish at this point, but the Betsy is doing it just right, but that has only been recently. The last 10 years or so I would say. Before that, I wouldn't really.

Interviewer: They've just had a stunning renovation of the building behind them.

Jane Gross: Well, I was on the board that approved the project.



Interviewer: That swimming pool in the sky.

Jane Gross: We got a lot of flak for approving that.

Interviewer: Really?

Jane Gross: Yeah. Yep.

Interviewer: Why?

Jane Gross: Because we allowed them to assemble two pieces of property both on different streets. I think we asked helped them get the city to allow them to use the alleyway as a public right-of-way. There was an arial thing that they wanted to do that it's against all the rules and we loved it, because it was a beautiful design, so we let them do what they wanted.

The outcome is what you said. The outcome is perfect, but the staunch, hard-core preservationists were like, "No. You can't let them do that," and "That's too square. How can you...?" Just saying. Sometimes you just have to let people do their work and then judge the outcome.

Interviewer: We had a tour of that recently, and it's [crosstalk] [45:26] just stunning.

Jane Gross: It's amazing. Right? They have literary salons and events on the top. It's just amazing.

Interviewer: In thinking of this in terms of being around in 100 years? My hand gestures get in the camera view sometimes.

Jane Gross: Well, I hope so. I see that my neighborhood, there's been some houses taken down. There's no protection for the residential neighborhoods. None. So on my street now, there are a few houses that have been torn down, and they've put up these boxes.

Now, I love modern architecture. It's not that I don't love it, and it can be contextualized and mixed in. I love the old with the new. It somehow makes both things look more beautiful if you do it right. They're building as wide as they can and as tall as they can. Now, with the new sea-level rise zoning, you have to let people start three feet or four feet up, so if they can do two stories, that means they're going to tower over their neighbor. If they build with as little setbacks as possible, then they're going to be like a sore thumb in a little garden of pinkies.

It's not being dealt with. It really isn't being dealt with. For instance, the house across the street, the older couple that lived in it for about 60 years, Elaine and Sid, it was two houses. It was their house, a beautiful Art Deco house, and then there was a separate carriage house that an old guy who took care of the neighborhood used to live in. He passed away years ago.



When it came time to sell the house, they wanted to make sure that somebody respected the house, so they said, "Jane, we want you to sell the house for us," because I'm kind of the crime watch person and the email person in the neighborhood. So I said, "Well, I do have my real estate license, but it's inactive and I really don't want to go back to work, so I'm going to give you to Saul." They didn't even know Saul had a real estate company.

Saul and I looked at the house and we were nervous about who might buy the house, so Saul called Michael Capponi. I don't know if you know his name. Michael Capponi is a nightclub impresario here, but he also buys houses in neighborhoods. He does a pretty good job. Modernizes them but doesn't tear them down, and resells them, so Saul called Michael Capponi, and within a week, Michael bought the house for a good price. The couple was happy. Michael was happy.

Michael restored that house, the Art Deco part of it, modernized the hell out of it, connected the two homes, so that now it's big enough for a family, because that's why people want big homes, because they've got a lot of kids. It's beautiful. He sold it for six point two million dollars. It was sold for a little over two. He put a couple million into it, and now there's a young family living there. It's a little bigger than I thought, but on your way out, you'll take a look and you'll say, "It could have been a lot worse," so that's the kind of thing.

Michael could have bought the place and torn it down and built a huge thing. As it is, it's a large house, and he got good money for it and everybody is happy. The neighborhood is happy, but there aren't a lot of people like him. There's more people who don't really care about the architecture. They just want to [crosstalk] [48:53] build on spec.

Interviewer: To heck with it.

Jane Gross: We have another one on the street that does that. This particular developer that came in front of my board once. Usually they only go to design review, because they're not in historic districts, but he bought one in a historic district, so I went to look. I knew the house, because a girlfriend of mine used to live in it. I looked at the house and I looked at the plans of what he wanted to do.

He came in front of the board and he put up his renderings. You have to be very careful of how they put their renderings in your face. He had this big tree in front of the house that wasn't there. I was just there. I said, "I was there yesterday. That tree isn't there." He was hiding the space ship that he put [laughs] [49:38-49:38] on top of this historic house.

I was on TV. I didn't call him a liar, but I said, "This makes me not trust your other renderings. I was there yesterday. It doesn't look like that at all, so show us the truth. Why don't you bring photographs and then render them out?" I had a lot of trouble and I was getting testy by the end of my



term, I understand term limits, of people misrepresenting the effect that their things are going to have on the context.

You show us a beautiful home, but then you put it between my home and my neighbor's home, you've got to show the experience of walking past it. The pedestrian experience. How it fits in with the rest of the neighborhood. How are you going to landscape it with the landscaping in?

Don't put the landscaping in front of the air-conditioning stuff. You know what I mean? Let me see exactly what's going to be there. So they do still try to do that, but you have to just dig your way through. Always vigilant. You've got to always be vigilant.

Interviewer: We didn't even talk about sea-level rise, and that surely is complicating the [crosstalk] [50:47] job of trying to do historic preservation. Could you just briefly tell us about [crosstalk] [50:53] that?

Jane Gross: Sure [phonetic] [50:48], especially with historic preservation. I'm not really educated on that. I know some buildings will be able to be raised. I just don't know. I read an article. Did you ever the book called How We Got to Now? It's about how air conditioning came about and how this came about and that came about.

Well, they raised the city of Chicago, which had major architecture, at the turn of the 1900s. There was sewage in the street. People were wearing boots and up to their knees, they were walking through sewage. Literally. They raised the entire city in the old-fashioned Flinstonian way. They raised it. I'm thinking if they can do that and they put in pipes and they put in this and they have a great metro. They did it.

Interviewer: So it can be done.

Jane Gross: It can be done. I don't know about the foundations. I think it might be a little bit different, because we are built on porous rock, so that's why, when it floods, it comes from up, from within. It doesn't come from this or that. Really. It literally comes up, so there's no place for it to go. You can pump it back out as much as you want, but logic should tell us that because we have such porous soil and rock, we're not going to be able to do it the same way other people do it.

I count on some young scientist somewhere. I always think someone is going to come up with it, and they will [clears throat] [52:31]. Otherwise, maybe we'll have an oceanfront home one of these days [laughs] [52:35-52:37].

[end transcript]