

## JoAnn Bass Interview

- Kathy Hersh:** My name is Kathy Hersh, and I'm interviewing JoAnn Bass for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs project. It is the 9<sup>th</sup> of June, 2012, and we're in the offices of the Miami Design Preservation League. JoAnn, welcome. It's wonderful to have you. We've been wanting to talk to you for a while now since this project started because Joe's Stone Crab is probably the most famous place on Miami Beach. Would you agree with that?
- JoAnn Bass:** Well, I- not really. I mean we have the Fontainebleau and we have a lot of other icons. As a matter of fact I'm hoping to go to dinner to one tonight, Port [inaudible][00:44] which is right out our back door here.
- Kathy:** You must be loaded with stories and family lore. So where do we begin?
- JoAnn Bass:** I went straight from my birth at the hospital to the second floor of Joe's. There was an apartment up there, a two family apartment. My grandparents lived at one end, my mother and dad lived at the other. And they had a common kitchen and a common living room, and the two end bedrooms. My grandfather died before I was born, and when my grandmother died, my parents- well, my father, moved into the bedroom at the end and they put me at the other end. So it was sort of a juxtaposition, but I grew up above the restaurant until I married.
- Kathy:** You spent all your young years then above the store- your family store.
- JoAnn Bass:** Mm-hm.
- Kathy:** And when did you start working in the restaurant?
- JoAnn Bass:** I was 11. No, I take that back. I was 13, and I started working a full time shift. That was at night, and I've been working ever since with a 10 year sabbatical to raise my kids.
- Kathy:** So did you start working the door, washing dishes, cooking, what?
- JoAnn Bass:** Oh, I started in the salad area. I went to the dessert area. I guess I sort of worked all over. I did a lot of bookkeeping, and ran what we called the computer back then, which was no more than a desk size-adding machine. And then I went on the floor when I was about 16, and I worked the floor for a couple of years. Then I was married relatively young.
- Kathy:** So you escaped, or was it an escape?

**JoAnn Bass:** Well I thought it was, but it wasn't. It was a four year escape, two years that my then husband was going to school, and then the two years that he was in the service. He was going to go into the FBI, and my mother called and said, "If you don't come back and help me run it, I'm going to sell it." So she didn't leave much option. We went back, and he started working in the business. It was about that time that we got our first baby, and I went home and was a mommy for 10 years. Then I couldn't stand being home all day. Both children were in school. So I did all the volunteer work I could do without their saying, "Wouldn't you take on a full time job now? We'll pay you." And I did. I wound up back at Joe's, and I've been there ever since.

**Kathy:** So it sounds like it was in your blood then.

**JoAnn Bass:** It's in my blood. I love it. The whole place, it's my family, it's my security blanket, it's a new movie every day in the actions of the customers and the people that work there. It's Joe's. It is a wonderful place.

**Kathy:** Tell me about some of those movies. We heard one story from Harold Rosen that involved J. Edgar Hoover and Walter Winchell. Do you remember visits of people like that?

**JoAnn Bass:** Oh yes. Yes.

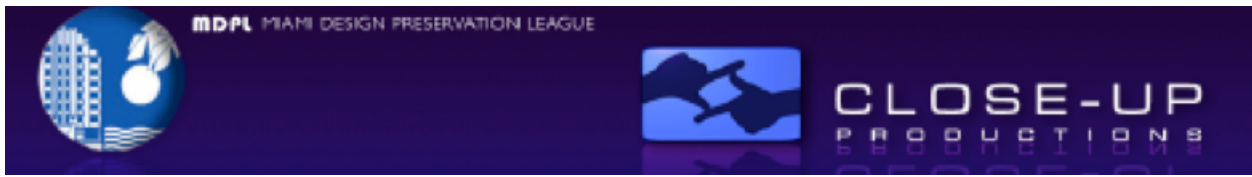
**Kathy:** Who stands out in your mind?

**JoAnn Bass:** Well I don't know if you he told you the one story about Walter dressing up in a busman's uniform. Winchell and Mr. Hoover were always playing tricks on each other. So he dressed up in this uniform, took a tray of dishes and dropped it right behind Mr. Hoover, who flew a country mile. But the guns were not drawn, but it was just short of that. So I didn't know if he told you that story.

Yes, I met them. I was there every night because I lived about the restaurant. So if somebody came in that my dad thought I'd be interested in, he'd call me and tell me to come down. A brat is what he'd call me. He'd say, "Okay Brat, there's somebody you might want to meet," and I would go down and meet them. Mr. Hoover- that's how [phonetic][06:07] Say was going into the FBI. Mr. Hoover was a good friend of the family.

**Kathy:** What was he like?

**JoAnn Bass:** Well he wasn't anything like Leonardo Dicaprio in the movie. I mean I don't know anything about his sex life, but I will tell you he was jovial. He laughed a lot. I don't think there was one laugh in that movie. So he was a very nice man. He was a good man, or seemed to be. His tactics obviously were horrendous, but the way that they picked their people I'm sure they were



taped and for a good many years I don't believe a Jewish person could get into the FBI.

So there was a lot of that. Everybody was very stiff in their suits, and he ran a very tight ship. But he was nice enough.

**Kathy:** So do you think he was anti-Semitic that he didn't permit Jewish FBI men.

**JoAnn Bass:** I don't know. I know they all had to be either lawyers or accountants, but certainly there'd been no shortage of Jewish people. That was the one thing that we thought might deter Say from getting in, but I think he had been at least verbally accepted before my mother's call.

**Kathy:** So what other people did your father have you come down and meet?

**JoAnn Bass:** I met Elizabeth Taylor. Arthur Godfrey was there all the time. I guess I met a lot of them. They came in when I was on the door. I was seating the celebrities. But my dad always said – although he was wonderful with celebrities. I mean he had them in his pocket in two minutes. He just had that knack. I kept remembering what he said, "Remember Brat, they're no different than anybody else. They put their pants on one leg at a time." So he brought me up not to be impressed by them, yet he did a pretty good job. Whether he was impressed or impressionable, I don't know. But he –

**Kathy:** Who was he impressed with?

**JoAnn Bass:** He liked Burt Lancaster. He liked Godfrey.

**Kathy:** Elizabeth Taylor?

**JoAnn Bass:** No, no. I mean he met – more Mike Todd. He was certainly impressed with Mike Todd.

**Kathy:** They would come in together? She was married to him at that time?

**JoAnn Bass:** She came in originally with the young man that- her first engagement, which escapes me now. I think his parents were in the hotel business.

**Kathy:** The Hilton.

**JoAnn Bass:** The Hilton.

**Kathy:** Nicky Hilton.

**JoAnn Bass:** Yes. She came in with him. That was the first time I saw her.

**Kathy:** Did she ever come in with Eddie Fisher?

**JoAnn Bass:** Not that I know of, but don't forget I was not there at night. This was after I was married. You know, covering a lot of time period.

**Kathy:** So the restaurant was actually started by your grandfather, correct?

**JoAnn Bass:** My grandfather.

**Kathy:** Tell us about him and what brought him here.

**JoAnn Bass:** Asthma. He was in New York. It was about the end of 1912, perhaps the beginning of '13. He was working as a waiter in New York. I never knew where because he died before I was born. My grandmother was not very communicative. But I believe that he worked at I want to say [inaudible][10:28]. A famous New York restaurant in Brooklyn. Because I went there, and a lot of the menus that were on- I mean a lot of the items on the menu I recognize as the items on our menu. Not now, but back when I was little. I have a feeling he worked there, but that's all I knew.

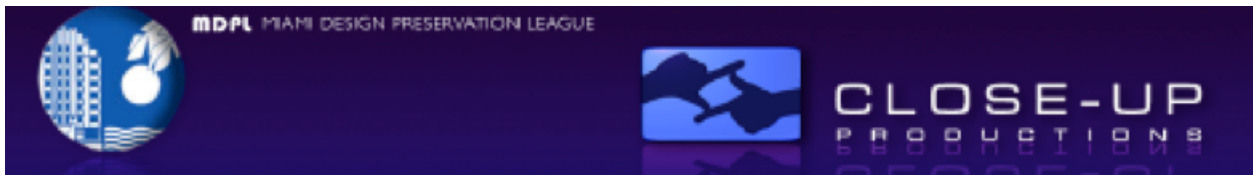
**Kathy:** Did he- tell us about your understanding of how he came to own the restaurant. It was quite smaller then it is now.

**JoAnn Bass:** Well it didn't start out as a restaurant. He came to Miami, and he was living in Miami and still had asthma. So one day he decided to take the ferry that was coming to the beach, and when he got to the beach he was fine. He spent a couple of nights on the beach, and it was like the asthma disappeared. Whether it was , you know, we had no buildings back then.

So perhaps the wind, the sea, the breeze helped the asthma. I don't know, but he decided that's where he would stay. So we went to Smith's casino, which was the bathhouse that serviced the people that lived in Miami. Because at that point nobody lived on the beach. They just came over to bath in the bath houses. My grandfather got a job.

He decided that he would open up this little stand selling fish and chips inside the bath house, and that's how Joe's started. He worked there for five years, and then bought the original little house, sort of a winter fishing house on Biscayne street catty-corner from Smith's. I think they opened it up that year. My mind is gone today, and he'll kill me. The one that wrote Miami, and the one that wrote our cookbook. Howard and I battle all the time.

**Kathy:** Kleinberg.



**JoAnn Bass:** Thank you. He said that it started in 1921. That we didn't- that the picture of the house was 1921. Of course there was a fire at the city hall many, many years ago. So all the deeds and everything burned up. So we really don't know exactly, but I do know that he opened that fish and chips stand counter in 1913.

**Kathy:** 1913.

**JoAnn Bass:** Mm-hm.

**Kathy:** Wow, that goes way back.

**JoAnn Bass:** Well that's what – we grabbed that number for our hundredth anniversary this year, or the beginning of next season, because 1913- I mean 2013 sounds a long time, or '21, or whenever he- Howard claims. I said, "No Howard, we're going to take my number. I'm getting too old to wait. But he's a dear. He's wonderful.

**Kathy:** I read his book about Miami Beach.

**JoAnn Bass:** The big one?

**Kathy:** The big one.

**JoAnn Bass:** Well he wrote The Last Eat At Joe's also.

**Kathy:** Oh, so he was a regular customer.

**JoAnn Bass:** Oh yeah. Howard still is. He and Natalie. And they're friends who last name I forgot, sorry. God, please I hope he never sees this. My name will be mud.

**Kathy:** So how was the Stone Crab discovered?

**JoAnn Bass:** There was an aquarium on 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Alton, and they had some ichthyologists come from one of the colleges to study the sea life around. And they brought the stone crabs to my grandfather. Now they were selling stone crabs in town, but the people didn't know how to process them properly, or how to boil them enough, or maybe they boiled them too much. They were not, to our knowledge, eaten by too many people. So my grandfather showed the ichthyologists what he would do with them, and he boiled them for eight minutes, took them out, put them in ice, and the rest is history. And we started serving them. Now we serve 2,500, 3000 pounds a day.

**Kathy:** A day?

**JoAnn Bass:** A day. Now that's including the takeaway and the restaurant and shipping.

**Kathy:** That's a lot.

**JoAnn Bass:** It's a lot.

**Kathy:** So your grandfather did cooking? Was he one of the primary cooks?

**JoAnn Bass:** My grandmother I think was the primary cook, but he did some and he certainly could work with that. That was sort of mechanical, put it in the pot and let it boil and take it out.

**Kathy:** She did the coleslaw and the --

**JoAnn Bass:** Oh yeah. She did the coleslaw. Made her own mayonnaise. She was a wonderful cook.

**Kathy:** So then was it expected that your father would then take over the business?

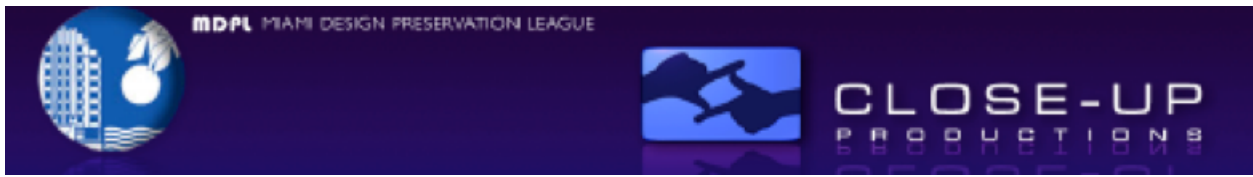
**JoAnn Bass:** I don't know that they expected it or not. They sent him to law school, and he was a graduate lawyer. He hated law, and he went back to the restaurant. My father was not a business man. By the way, I adored him. He was not a business man. He was terrible with money. He was a gambler. He was a womanizer. He was all of these things. So the restaurant was always in trouble. I mean he would meet the postman up the alley, and this was when I was grown, and he would get the American Express checks and MasterCard checks that were coming in, and I would be in the office two weeks later trying to trace where all these checks went. Because they went in my dad's pocket so that he could go to the track and gamble. He was amazing. He was fantastic. And with people he was great.

**Kathy:** And he was a good friend of Harold Rosen's, right?

**JoAnn Bass:** Oh yeah. Well he was also very political. He was Baron de Hirsch Meyer's campaign manager when he ran. He never wanted to run for any office. Past histories back then are not like past histories now. They're not plastered all over the internet. So he might have gotten away with it. It wasn't really what he wanted. He wanted to be in the background creating all the mayhem. And he did. He was the head of the visitors and tourist convention for many, many years.

**Kathy:** For Miami Beach, or for Miami?

**JoAnn Bass:** Miami Beach. Only worked for Miami Beach. He worked very hard, and got us the Super Bowl down here for the first time because he knew all these people from the restaurant. So he could go up to Chicago and talk to the big wigs, and he managed to get it here. And so he did a lot for the beach, but he was a piece of work. A wonderful piece of work.



**Kathy:** And your mother?

**JoAnn Bass:** My natural mother died when I was 16 months old. And then my father went on this siege of – well there were two wives that I don't even remember, and then he married Mildred was his fourth wife, then he divorced her and married Grace when I was 11. And Grace is the mother that I've always known. Even though they got divorced, he married somebody in between and then divorced her and remarried Grace. So there's been a lot of women in and out of the picture. But Grace is my mother. She's 98 now, and I'm going up to see her in a week. A week from today.

**Kathy:** Where does she live?

**JoAnn Bass:** Hendersonville. She gambles. She must have gotten it from my father. She goes to Cherokee, which is an hour and a half away from Hendersonville, every Tuesday to gamble. They used to lock her machine when she went for lunch, but I think that was before Harris took it over. They don't give her that privilege anymore.

**Kathy:** So you grew up in the neighborhood.

**JoAnn Bass:** Oh yeah.

**Kathy:** And who were your playmates, and what did you do?

**JoAnn Bass:** We all went to South Beach Elementary, at least all my friends. And we would walk to school because we all lived in the neighborhood, and we would walk home. I didn't know anybody that took a bus. Landon's son – I think it was Landon's son or McArthur Dairy, had a big outlet ice ream – they might have made things in the building. I'm not sure. At 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Alton Road. So every day my friends and I would head back down to South Beach, or south South Beach, and we would stop there and get ice cream cups for everybody. I would say, "put it on Joe's account." So I was a big deal with my friends.

**Kathy:** So you bought all of their ice cream.

**JoAnn Bass:** Oh yeah. Just put it on the charge. For 25 cents, I think they were 5 cents a piece. But nobody ever stopped me, so I kept doing it. My friends, my closest friend, was a rabbi's daughter who lived on 2nds and Washington. Silvia Saffra. And actually he was the Mashgiach. He was a rabbi, but he was one that koshered the meat.

And she would go away with me every summer, and I would stay with her until school was out, and then we'd take the train out to Denver where my parents went. Because the restaurant was closed five months a year. So we would stay three months

out there, and then come home. Ilene was married to Larry [phonetic][22:59] Coatson who replaced Rocky Pomerance as chief of police. He died young and she died way too young.

**Kathy:** Was it a happy childhood?

**JoAnn Bass:** Oh it was wonderful. I mean I- I you- you know, there was obvious turmoil with the families sort of changing a cast every day, but no it was more – I have no complaints about my childhood or any other time in my life. I've been very blessed.

**Kathy:** You said earlier that working at Joe's was a new movie every day. Would you elaborate on that a little bit?

**JoAnn Bass:** Well we have 380 employees, and I think I'm safe to say that I know the names of at least 70% if not more. And so you're very much into their lives. Amy Smith, who runs takeaway, when she was 40, 41 and had been married for years wanted children. Could never get pregnant. Got pregnant at 41, didn't even know she was, and then delivered a pound and a half baby. So she took off a year to take care of the baby who was on a monitor. So you're into all these lives at the present time. We have six pregnant women in the kitchen.

So every other minute there's a baby shower. We are – I know it's cliché and it's trite to say that it's like family, but we are like family. And we try and help each other. I mean some of the things that will always bother me is the server that was working at Joe's until the night before he commandeered the bus that – with the retarded children on it, and drove it to Joe's and was shot to death by the swat team.

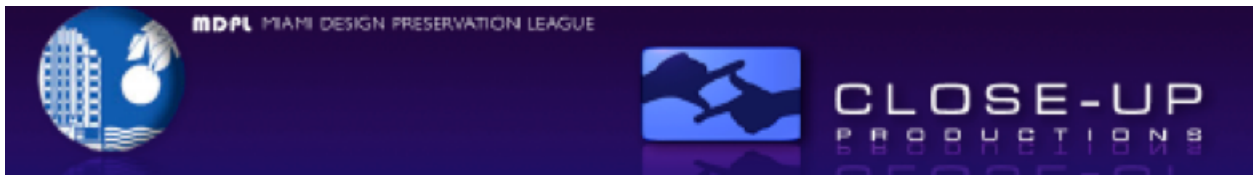
I was on my way to North Carolina and knew nothing, and when I got there my mother was yelling at the front door, "Come right away. We're on television." And they had shot him, and I- we were close. He had at one point- at one hurricane he was wiped out. We had given him the money so that he could build himself back up again.

I mean it was- it was heartbreaking. And so these are – that one I'm really sorry for because I know if the swat team had given me one of those horns they talk through I might have been able to talk him off that bus. And he was a good man. He went to church every day. The IRS was driving him crazy. They had threatened to send him back to China. And he was just –

**Kathy:** The IRS or the INS?

**JoAnn Bass:** IRS. The Internal Revenue Service. He had opened another restaurant. A Chinese restaurant that his brother was running, and it was in his name but his brother was running it. And a lot of money was not sent in when it was supposed to be, and he was fighting that. But it didn't happen.





So, you know, there are times like that. And you asked me about one of the funny things that happened at Joe's. It's not unusual for people to say at the front desk that they know me. They're very good friends of mine. So give them a table ahead of other people. Well this day I was on the door, and it was lunch. And I went to seat this woman who went flying past all of us at the door. I said, "I'll catch her," and I went after her. I said, "Excuse me. May I help you?"

She says, "Yes, I'm going to sit down now." I said, "How many in your party?" She said, "There are two of us. My husband's parking the car." So I said, "Well we don't seat anybody incomplete because they get lost. They can't find you." The truth of the matter is most of the time the people are not telling you the truth. They're not parking the car, and they don't come in for another hour, which kills the server's chance to turn his table.

So anyhow, she is very sort of high ended about everything, and she said to me, "I want to sit down now. And I want a good table." And she said, "And I don't want any of your-" she didn't say bad. She said, "Half-black waiters waiting on me." She says, "And you know you have them." She said, "I want a good server. And if you don't give me a good server, I will call JoAnn." She says, "She's a very close friend of mine." I said, "Oh, well in that case let me introduce myself." I said, "I'm JoAnn." She said - to her credit, she said, "Oh my how you've changed."

**Kathy:** [laughs][29:10]

**JoAnn Bass:** So I think she won. She sat down at her table, but she would never leave me alone. She was following me the rest of the day. She said to me, "Well, I guess I stuck my foot in it." I said, "You sure did." I mean she was so nasty that if she'd been halfway nice, but she wasn't. That's my JoAnn story. The rest of them that are all at the front, I mean they have said that they were a friend of mine while I was standing there but I never did this. I never introduced myself. I just let it go and let them wait.

**Kathy:** You said - you mentioned Arthur Godfrey came in a lot. Did he become a family friend?

**JoAnn Bass:** He was a family friend. My dad. They were both alike. They were both womanizers. They were both... I don't know that Arthur gambled, but he certainly- I think he did because he played cards a lot. But he and my dad has this affinity for each other. Again, my father was like [phonetic][30:30] Peg's bad boy. So he would team up with people that were controversial. He truly was not interested in the gentleman who had been

married for 41 years that led a very sedentary kind of life. That was not his style. He was going after the colorful because he was colorful. So it was a good match.

**Kathy:** And it did attract a lot of colorful people then to the restaurant.

**JoAnn Bass:** That's true. Well and I don't think it was delib- you know Joe's was one of the only shows in town so to speak. So after you went to the Hickory House, or to the Ember's you're going to wind up, if you're there long enough, eating at Joe's. So I guess we've just been lucky.

**Kathy:** Were there any tough times? Downturns?

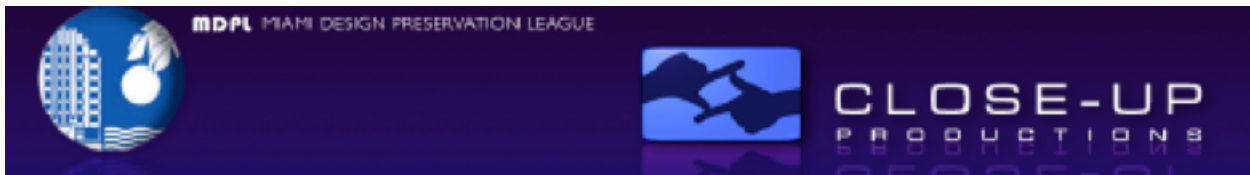
**JoAnn Bass:** I would say the toughest time was during the Merry Hill boat lifts. And that was because of what happened to South Beach, south of Fifth. All the Marielitos that I know of where south of Fifth. And I mean it's no secret that Castro not only opened up the prisons, but he opened up the insane asylums and the hospitals. We did not get the best and brightest. They took over the Biscayne Collins hotel and it was an armed camp. The police were not allowed to go into it.

**Kathy:** Wow.

**JoAnn Bass:** The one that was right next to us whose name escapes me – the Clinton. The Clinton hotel was filled with Marielitos. We had the Jewish Community Center on one side, and Joe's on the other side. They were tearing all of the utilities out of the wall, the plumbing, everything, and they would throw it out the windows. Not it was hitting the back of us, which was the kitchen area, but it was also hitting the Jewish Community Center.

And it was dangerous. It was a lot of crime down there. I was oblivious. It was during that period of time that my husband, Bob, and I bought an apartment. It was the tail end. We bought the first apartment or second apartment in Southpoint Tower, which is right across the street from the restaurant. All of our friends would say, "You're going to live down there?" Well I did live down there. I mean I worked down there and I was there all the time.

So I wasn't afraid, but the customers were afraid. I would get at least, at least, six or seven phone calls a day, "Is it safe to come?" We had full time police moonlighting all the time that we were open. Some of the time we were closed. So that was a period that was sort of sad. I can't think of any other really down time. I mean the fact that we were considered the old age spot and that all the retirees were- that really didn't effect the restaurant any. It effected the area, but not the restaurant. And then of course...



**Kathy:** You already had a name.

**JoAnn Bass:** Well yeah. The people would come in spite of. I mean it certainly wasn't very glamorous down at our end, but it never was. I mean we were always the step child. I mean from the time they built Smith's Cottages. I was reading in one of the Miami Beach books where they said that Smith Cottages were for people that came down from the north during the winter. Well that's not what I remember as Smith Cottages. Smith Cottages is where the workers lived that the Lumus Brothers and Carl Fisher and everybody was using. I mean we had- it was terrible. We used to have two or three deaths of children climbing under the housing and eating the rat poison or whatever they were putting down. Smith Cottages was a disgrace.

**Kathy:** Was that related to Smith's Casino in any way?

**JoAnn Bass:** I don't know. There probably was a relation at some point in time. He might have built the housing, but it was used by the people that were building the beach that was not tourists from the north. Because I used to go to school with those kids, and their conditions were horrendous. So I- let me think. I'm trying to think of any other bad times. No. But maybe, you know, I was a child. I loved it. And I could always go to the dairy and get ice cream cups. So I guess I didn't see it as other people did.

**Kathy:** What about the whole Art Deco movement? Was that a boom to business? Was Miami Vice a boom to business?

**JoAnn Bass:** Yeah. I think Miami Vice and I think Art Deco – all of these things boomed business because they bring people. I mean Art Basel is amazing. An amazing shop they are. So I think anything that is glamorous or up scaled or wonderful is going to bring business. I think the trick is to survive the bad times. Those are the good times. So we all know- I think we all kind of work in conjunction with each other on these things.

**Kathy:** So you went to Beach High?

**JoAnn Bass:** Mm-hm. Graduated Beach High.

**Kathy:** And what was that experience like for you as the granddaughter of Joe Stone Crab?

**JoAnn Bass:** I hate to sound like Polly Hannah. We had no money. You have to understand. If the granddaughter of Joe had any money, she wouldn't have been living above the restaurant till she was 18 with the wallpaper coming off the wall. There was no money. My father made sure of that. And he would take it and go to the track. But it was wonderful. I mean I loved Beach High. It was

good to me. I was a cheerleader for 10 minutes until my mother said, "No, you're going to work." And it didn't- I couldn't cheerlead and work at the same time. So she wouldn't give me the nights off.

**Kathy:** You must have been a good worker.

**JoAnn Bass:** She was a tough mother. The 98 year old that I adore.

**Kathy:** Grace.

**JoAnn Bass:** She was a tough mother. Yes. Yeah, Grace. She never had children of her own and never wanted them.

**Kathy:** Did you have a brother or sister?

**JoAnn Bass:** Not that I knew. In my- when my dad and Grace divorced the first time and he remarried, not to Grace, he had two children. Oh, and the fourth wife gave him a child. Judy I knew. She was in the house until she was seven. I did not know the other two children. I met the son once. That was all.

**Kathy:** You were already out on your own then?

**JoAnn Bass:** Yes. Yeah. By that time I was working the restaurant full time. Back to Beach High. Beach High was wonderful. First of all it was beautiful. It was built around patios. There was a lot of greenery. We used to have dances every Friday after school was over. It was a very friendly- at least I found it that way. I loved my years at Beach High.

**Kathy:** Teachers were good?

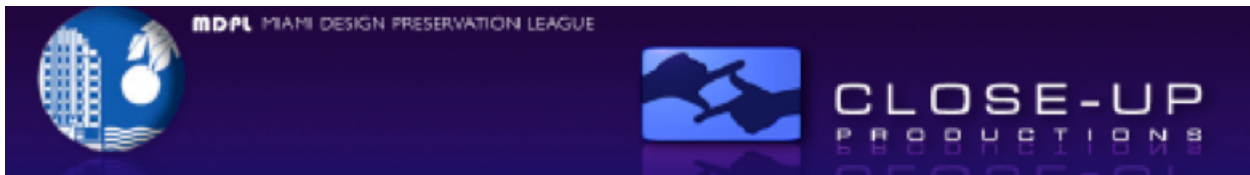
**JoAnn Bass:** Teachers were wonderful. I mean you couldn't ask for better teachers. They would help you. Our classes were smaller. It was a different time. I look at what's happening today, and my heart breaks for the kids. I mean the idea of not being given books. Not only not having to buy them, but we were given all of our books through high school. We never had to- nobody had to go out and buy pencils for us or paper. I mean now we're having drives to buy the things that the children and the teachers need. So we didn't grow up in that era. We were very lucky.

**Kathy:** Did any of your classmates ever come to the restaurant? Did you ever wait on them?

**JoAnn Bass:** No. I- oh yes, my classmates come to the restaurant. Do I wait on them? I don't take --

**Kathy:** I meant back then.

**JoAnn Bass:** Yes. There was one episode. I was about 17, and a classmate



of mine was older and was- maybe I was older than that because she was dating a commissioner. And she came in with him, and as I was walking by the table- I was just seating people. I wasn't waiting on people nor was I clearing trays then. I do now. I clear tables and put them on the trays.

Back then I wasn't. So I was just seating and I was walking by her seating some customers, and she handed me some dirty dishes and said, "Here, would you take those to the kitchen?" She was very- her family was very well-known in the area so I shall remain silent.

**Kathy:** She did it deliberately to put you down then.

**JoAnn Bass:** Well I would assume so. I mean I can't imagine her doing it for any other reason. I mean we were in school together. Then she went on to school in Europe in her junior and senior year. So it was different.

**Kathy:** Who do you think are some of the outstanding leaders of Miami Beach going from back to however far forward you want to go.

**JoAnn Bass:** I have some trouble with that. I have trouble because I was too close to the politics and the things that were going on. I have to ask you that when a city that has setbacks for you, but allow other people to build up to the sidewalk. What does that tell you? I think that we had some terrific leaders, but they were good because they were characters. Harold Rosen being a perfect example. Harold's a character, and he's wonderful, and everybody loved him. But did they all play by the book? No. And did you get the same treatment that you got?

No. I love this city, and when I saw what they were doing with the variances on parking I mean Joe's had to have one parking space for every four chairs. What are the other restaurants doing that are charging \$20 in valet? Not the \$20 in valet, it's because the valets have to pay so much to get the land to park the cars. Why? Because none of the other restaurants have to have on parking space for every four cars. That's fine because we wound up- my children will not be rich because of Joe's. They will be land rich because we were always forced into buying property, which I loved because I love property.

And so it worked out well for us, but it still wasn't fair. There was a Thai restaurant on 9<sup>th</sup> and Washington or 7<sup>th</sup> and Washington. Not Tony's. Mr. Chu had the most wonderful Thai restaurant. The food was exquisite. They gave her two parking spaces. She could buy- not buy, but she could back and pay for two parking spaces. That's insane. A restaurant can't exist like that. Look what they're doing down my area. Two new restaurants have gone in. There isn't parking for them.

Now what are they going to do? They'll have to build a parking garage. The city will have to build a parking garage. And need I say more. So when you ask me about leaders, I can't- I really hesitate because they just haven't made an appearance yet. I mean I love Norman Braman because we all fight for the same things. What they did with the Marlin Stadium was an outrage. And so I'm all for- but he's not on the beach. The beach has suffered from bad leadership.

**Kathy:** And maybe popularity? Is it becoming too much of the draw for people? Too many people?

**JoAnn Bass:** Do we have too many people on the beach? If you try to walk down Ocean Drive it's a mess. I mean I don't think- you're not going to get the people that you're going after if they can't walk down ocean drive. But they keep letting them build. They're letting them build condos all the time without the infrastructure. We don't have the infrastructure. There is - was, she's no longer there. A commissioner in Miami who I was at a dinner party with.

And she asked me where I lived, and I told her South Point. She says, "Oh, you must have to evacuate then when there's a hurricane. I said, "No, I don't- I won't leave my building." She said, "Well you will have to. I mean there's an evacuation order." I said, "I would rather go in my building than get caught in traffic trying to get off of Miami Beach. And one fender bender and you're on the crossway when it hits." I said, "We don't have the infrastructure. So they just keep building. Now they're talking about a new parking garage down near us. I don't know- I'm sure they'll put it through, but..."

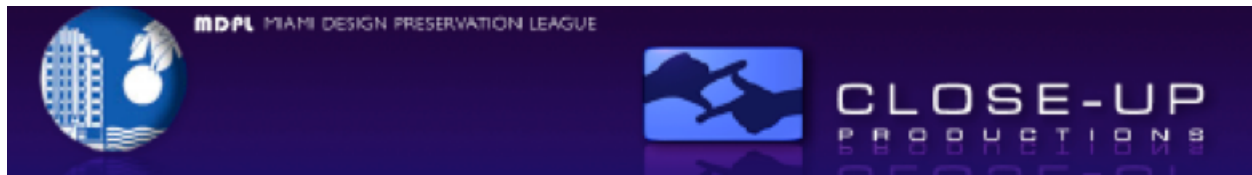
**Kathy:** What about the idea of no further development? Does that ever cross anyone's mind?

**JoAnn Bass:** Moratorium?

**Kathy:** Yeah.

**JoAnn Bass:** Well the last time we had a moratorium was in South Beach development. And that went over like a led balloon. It was very unpopular. And gave people a reason to steal because during the moratorium you didn't have to do anything to keep your building up. So the buildings weren't painted. They were left to decay. The concrete was coming off. I went into a house, and this is the gospel, where a blind man lived.

I was always worried about him because he wasn't tall, but I was always worried when he went by our awning that he was going to hit it. But I went into his house, and in the middle is a hole in the floor that he could easily have fallen into. I mean it was a round circle. Nobody had to clean that up. He had raw bulbs hanging from the ceiling.



That was the condition of the housing south of 5<sup>th</sup>. Now instead of throwing a moratorium and saying, "Okay, you don't have to do anything," there must have been something between pennies and [inaudible][50:22] where they could have said, "Okay, you've got to keep it at least safe." They didn't bother. You are going to edit all this, aren't you?

**Kathy:** [laughs][50:35]

**JoAnn Bass:** I just feel like I'm talking and talking.

**Kathy:** Well you were born and raised here. I mean you have a major stake here.

**JoAnn Bass:** It's not – you know, we could- at the end of a hundred years do what the deli did. Pack up our marbles, and certainly there's enough now. It's not like when I was a teenager that everybody could live carefully and happily for the rest of their lives. But I do want the best for the beach, and we do try. We gave to 142 charities last year. The restaurant is closed four nights, two at the beginning of this season, two at the end to do benefits. And yet I've heard people say, "Oh Joe's, they don't do anything for the community." So you can't win.

**Kathy:** You can't give and be anonymous and win apparently.

**JoAnn Bass:** Well we're not always anonymous. We were in the beginning I must say, and maybe that's where it started. We did give anonymously. But certainly through the years by now one would know you would think. But that's alright because...

**Kathy:** Why do you think people say that?

**JoAnn Bass:** I don't- because I don't think you give enough to enough charities in their mind. I remember getting a telephone call from a woman from ORT many, many years ago. And it was up in the Aventura, Golden Beach area. I mean it was way up. And she wanted us to give to her ORT chapter. And I said, "I'm terrible sorry, but we don't give to charity-" in other words, we give to some of the churches, we give to the synagogues, but we don't give to the affiliated organizations.

She said, "Well that's just fine. I'm going to put a sign up in our lobby and Joe's will be banned." So you would- in other words, here's an ORT chapter that's screaming because we don't give. Many times I'll get telephone calls from Broward County and Palm Beach County, will we give to this charity, will we give to that? Don't forget your customers come from here. Well maybe, but there's certainly enough to give right here. There's certainly enough to do right in our own back yard with the homeless and feeding the people.

**Kathy:** I'd like to get back to the people who came to the restaurant, let's say in the heydays of the beach, the '50s, '60s. What about Sinatra, The Rat Pack.

**JoAnn Bass:** Sinatra came. As a matter of fact, one night it was amazing. I think Sinatra, Hoover, Winchell, they were all there. We normally get the celebrities that come to town. Not necessarily the new group. But the sports people. We get sports people, but they're usually the older, more conservative. We're not getting the, I'm sorry to say, but we're not getting Wades and the LeBron James.

They do come in, but occasionally. But they are going to other restaurants. But we get our share. I mean if a celebrity comes into town and he's here two or three days, he will want to go to Joe's. He'll come once. I mean we've had Baryshnikov. We've had Elizabeth Taylor. We've had Anne Margaret. We've had- there are very few stars that come to Miami Beach that we haven't had. Paul Newman.

The other day- this past year, because I was on the door, Robert Redford came in. And then- at the next table over was Mike Douglas and Catherine Zeta Jones. So we get our share. And they're wonderful to us, and we're glad to have them. Woody Allen.

**Kathy:** Is he a regular?

**JoAnn Bass:** No because I don't think he's a regular to Miami Beach.

**Kathy:** He's been making a lot of movies in Europe.

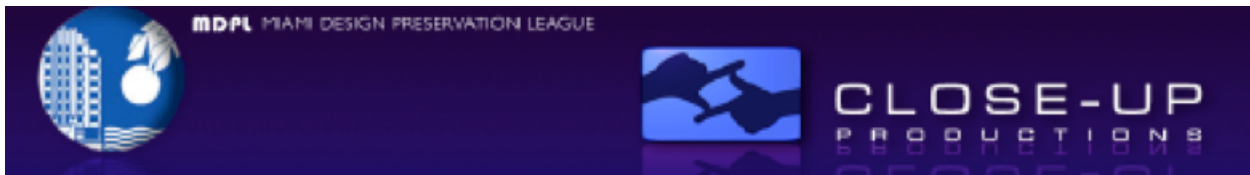
**JoAnn Bass:** But when he's here, yeah he comes.

**Kathy:** One thing that Miami Beach has been noted are the great restaurants, and they still, I think are noted for that.

**JoAnn Bass:** We do have wonderful restaurants. We do. And wonderful celebrity chefs. Unfortunately it's a tough business, and one out of two close. The mortality rate is 50%. And a lot of them you don't have very long unfortunately. We just had two open up on both corners of Joe's. The north corner, which was [inaudible][56:34], and that closed. And now there's another French restaurant that opened up.

I haven't had a chance to get there yet. And Milo's, which was across the street from that from New York. Then we had one that opened up directly across the street from the restaurant from the front door that lasted about 3 months. So you hope for the best that they all make it, but there has to be an quotient. There's a cache for a restaurant to make it, and I don't know what that quotient is. When people ask me about





Joe's, "How do you have such a successful restaurant?"

The only thing I can say outside of the crew, which is a given. I mean we have the best crew in the world, and that includes France. My son keeps hitting me over the head with how great the service is in France. Outside of the crew, there is that cache to Joe's. I don't know what it is. I mean I guess our customers could tell us better than I can. The food is good, but the food is good in a lot of restaurants. The service is good. The service is better in a lot of restaurants. So what is it? You good tell me as well as I could tell you.

**Kathy:**

Maybe it's tradition. A connection to history.

**JoAnn Bass:**

Maybe it's 100 years, you know. Maybe it's being all over the front page of the paper during the Watergate investigation because I think Howard Hunt made a telephone call from our office. And so we were all over the front page of the Miami Daily News. Maybe it's the 11 years fighting the government on the EEOC case they brought against us, which you don't want me to get started on because the next thing I know I will be on some list. But that was a terrible thing. And it was a travesty. And to my dying day I would like to ring the necks of several of the people. There was one day in court when they had nine lawyers from the government against us.

**Kathy:**

I'm not even familiar with that.

**JoAnn Bass:**

Oh, you're not familiar with the EOC case?

**Kathy:**

No.

**JoAnn Bass:**

That we were unfair to women. Nine out of my eleven managers were women. Women owned. My mother and I own it. Own all the stock, at least back then. We've, for estate reasons, have given off. But here they bring this case against us because, and I had seen this at a restaurant show. They were on the backs of tablecloth restaurants for not hiring women.

**Kathy:**

As waiters.

**JoAnn Bass:**

As servers

**Kathy:**

Mm-hm.

**JoAnn Bass:**

And we had women servers. We had women servers all during the war. And we had women servers after the war. But they forget that cultural period where women went back to the homes because their husbands went to work. So there was a lapse. We had a women working with us for 17 years as a server. [inaudible][60:28] Malloy. I mean it was a built case.

So you ask me about leadership.

**Kathy:** About hurricanes. You must have gone through some here.

**JoAnn Bass:** I've gone through most of the major ones. I didn't go through Andrew. But we usually stayed in the restaurant. I will tell you one click story, and this is not about a hurricane. One of our captains who started out as a busboy and turned into a captain, during the rights in Overton I said to him, "JT, you have to go home. You've got a wife." We closed the restaurant. "You've got a wife and children at home. You must go home."

And he would dawdle away from me, and the next thing I knew I'd see him again. I'd say, "You have got to go home before they close the bridges." So he said, "No, I'm not going home." He said, "Ms. JoAnn, we're going to stay here just like we have in the hurricanes." He says, "If it's too late, you'll take one table- we'll put some tables together. You'll take them, and I'll take the others." He says, "But I'm not going home. I'm not leaving. That's my crew."

**Kathy:** Well that family environment you said that you have. That means a lot to people to work in a place where...

**JoAnn Bass:** Where people care.

**Kathy:** Where people care for them, yeah.

**JoAnn Bass:** They're not just a number.

**Kathy:** Mm-hm. And that's getting rarer I think. So maybe that's part-in the air there.

**JoAnn Bass:** Maybe that's the quotient.

**Kathy:** Yeah.

**JoAnn Bass:** Maybe. It's as good as any.

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