

## BruceTurkel Interview

**Kathy Hersh:** I'm interviewing Bruce Evan Turkel, Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2012 at the Miami Design Preservation League. My name is Kathy Hersh and this is part of the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project. You were born on the beach, then?

**Bruce Turkel:** I was.

**Kathy:** What is your earliest memory?

**Bruce Turkel:** Wow, my earliest memory. We lived in an apartment on 15<sup>th</sup> Terrace. I remember being in that apartment, my mom coming in and telling me to clean up my room. I remember making some fuss about doing it and then I had a friend there, we cleaned it up completely and then waited for her to come back and be surprised. I think that's the first thing I can remember. It's not a Miami Beach memory but it happened on Miami Beach.

**Kathy:** What was your neighborhood like?

**Bruce Turkel:** It was a great place, very different than it is now, although still the small buildings, still very human-scale. Across the street, we didn't live on the water, we lived a block off, there was Modern Towers which was a big building. Next to it was a camp. I don't know if it was a Boy Scout camp or it was a day camp. I remember there were very tall pine trees there.

The camp was unoccupied a lot of the time so we had this enormous playground that went down to the water. There were still mangroves there. We used to play around there. We were also very close to Flamingo Park. My grandmother lived on Euclid Avenue, Euclid as she used to call it. That was pretty much, that area on Lincoln Road was my playground when I was a kid.

**Kathy:** You walked around, biked around?

**Bruce Turkel:** Everywhere. We walked around everywhere. We biked around. We rode our bikes on Lincoln Road even though there were signs that you shouldn't. There were the trams on Lincoln Road back then. We used to ride our bikes and hold on to the back of the tram. The guy would yell at us but he would never do anything.

I remember there was a Miami Beach policeman who later on was the security officer at Joe's Stone Crab, big, heavysset guy. He used to be on top of one the buildings, on top of the building where Circle Blue was. He would yell at us when we would ride by on our bicycles, "You kids. I'm going to come down. Get off those bikes". Of course he never did and he couldn't have caught us anyway.

**Kathy:** It sounds like it was a very active, happy boyhood experience.

**Bruce Turkel:** It was a great place to grow up. I don't think we knew what a great place it was to grow up because we were kids. We went to elementary school two blocks away from the beach. We walked everywhere. Even after we moved to Hibiscus Island, we still would take the bus. We would ride our bikes across the causeway. Once we were old enough that one of our friends had a little boat, we would take the boats through the canals to get places. It was a very free place to grow up.

**Kathy:** That sounds wonderful.

**Bruce Turkel:** It was wonderful.

**Kathy:** There was a shift and by the time you were around it was very Jewish here. It used to be that the Jews lived south of Fifth. There was an atmosphere of emphasis on education, I believe, and everybody knowing everybody. Was that your experience?

**Bruce Turkel:** Absolutely. I don't remember it being particularly Jewish. It didn't dawn on me until later when I went away to college that there were places where there weren't a lot of Jews. I didn't know. It was mostly Jewish, I guess, and also Cuban. Then a big portion of the Cuban population were Jews, 'Jubans', although perhaps there were some Sephardic traditions instead of the Ashkenazi that I was raised with. We didn't really notice any difference.

Education was very important. I was told, I had forgotten, I don't know that I believed it, that Beach High had the highest SAT scores in the country my senior year. I didn't know if that was true or not but recently I met a recent principal of the school. She asked me when I graduated. I told her. She said, "Oh, that year. Did you know that you had the highest SAT scores in the country?"

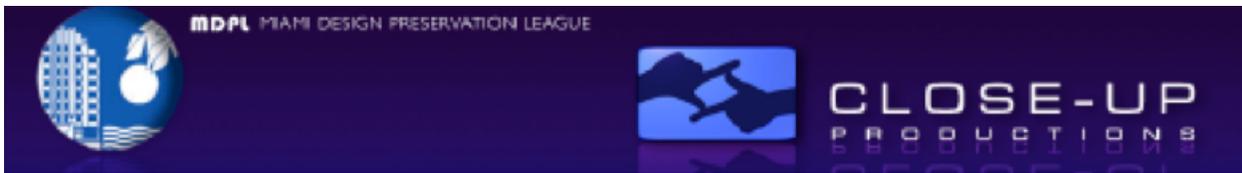
Oh, she said, "You must have done well on your SATs". I said, "I did okay". She confirmed that we had the SAT scores in the country. I guess education was important, I think, to the Jewish families. It was also very important to the immigrant families, again mostly Cuban, who had moved in and were making the most out of the American dream.

**Kathy:** You went through all Beach schools and public schools.

**Bruce Turkel:** I did. My elementary school was Central Beach, until our principal died, Leroy D. Fienberg, I think when I was in third grade. It could have been fifth. I always confuse his death and John F. Kennedy's death. I'm not sure. They were both very important when I was a kid. Then they changed the name of the school to Leroy D. Fienberg after him.

Then I went to Ida Fisher, which was across the street and separate then. It had been Beach High. By the time I got there it was the junior high school. Then I went to Beach High.

**Kathy:** What was the Beach High experience like with all these smart people walking around?



**Bruce Turkel:** I remember it being great. I was in the band. I played the trumpet. I played it at Fisher as well. I had a lot of friends who were also in the band. We were also in the orchestra and the jazz band and the marching band and the concert band. That was really the core of my life, although I was also on the newspaper staff and the yearbook.

I do remember that all the classes were AP and honors classes. It was just what you did. The one thing I did discover was, having gone from elementary and junior high school where I was always in the group of the smart kids. Then I went there and there were really smart kids, which was a really great introduction for going to college.

I remember it being really a place of reading and learning. We did have some racial riots, some problems, because they had started bussing just a few years before. There were some issues, but as I recall, mostly the kids in the classes were serious about what they were doing.

The teachers were wonderful. I learned how to write. I'm a writer today because of Mr. Blake who was my English teacher. I remember Mr. Perry and I remember Zelda Glazer. I remember so many of the teachers. They were just wonderful.

**Kathy:** Was Jimmy Morales there when you were there?

**Bruce Turkel:** I didn't know him. I know him since. We were there. I think he's a year or two younger than me. I think he's my sister's age. We've talked about when we were there, but no, I didn't know him in school.

**Kathy:** We did.

**Bruce Turkel:** It was a very big school. I think there were 2,500 students.

**Kathy:** Wow. That was big for those days.

**Bruce Turkel:** I think it's big now. It's a lot of kids.

**Kathy:** We have some schools that are three, four thousand. It's awful to think of that. Where were some of the hangouts that you, as kids, went to and...?

**Bruce Turkel:** Let's see. When I was younger it was Flamingo Park. Flamingo Park was the whole world. That really was. We did everything there. In fact, one year, I think when I was 10 or 11, I went to sleep-away camp where my dad had gone in the Poconos. All I wanted to do was go to Flamingo Park for the summer.

The next year my parents wanted to send me to sleep-away camp again. I didn't want to go to sleep-away camp. I wanted to go to Flamingo Park. Flamingo Park was the whole world. We did everything there. We played ball there. We went swimming there. We ran around. Later on played racquetball. That was the big hangout for, I guess, elementary school and junior high school.

Next door to the elementary school there was a little candy shop called Granny's. Again, elementary school, but that was an important place back then. Then at some point we discovered boats.

Once one of our friends had boats we were pretty much on the water every day. Every day after school, waterskiing, fishing, diving, going to the little islands, Fisher Island. There was nobody there at the time. There was an old fishing camp. There was the quarantine station. We really had the run of the island. Memorial Island, which was smaller then, but also we used to hang out there.

Once I was in high school, where did we hang out? During the day I guess it was around the school. The kids who lived 41<sup>st</sup> Street North, they tended to stay more in the 41<sup>st</sup> Street area. I guess those of us who grew up on South Beach stayed more around. Again, Lincoln Road was where we hung out. At night, boy, we just had the run of the beach. We would go for pizza somewhere and just drive around everywhere.

**Kathy:** That sounds wonderful.

**Bruce Turkel:** It was great.

**Kathy:** I know that your parents were very active in race relations in Miami. I worked for a while with Marilyn Bloom. I know she was very friendly with your family. Tell me about that. You mentioned that your grandmother lived down here. Were your parents also born on the beach?

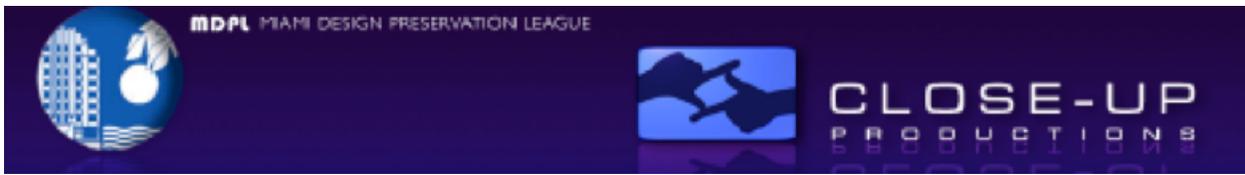
**Bruce Turkel:** No. People say, "Oh, I've lived in Miami for seven years. I'm a native". I always explain to them, "Wait a second. My mom was born in Brooklyn. My dad was born in the Bronx. My wife was born in Havana. I was born on Miami Beach. I am as native as you can get. I have no Haitian blood but other than that I have all the bases covered".

My parents were born in New York. My dad was stationed in Miami when he was in the Air Force. The La Palma Hotel in Coral Gables was his barracks, as a matter of fact. He did his time in the Air Force here in Miami. He never went overseas, and then went back to New York and met my mother. Then they moved to Miami Beach.

**Kathy:** Okay. What did your father do?

**Bruce Turkel:** My dad was a builder. Actually, he built the first condominiums in the country. We had the article from the Miami Herald. Another one was built in California and my dad's opened just a few days before that guy's. He built condominiums all over Miami Beach. He built the first office condominium anywhere in Coral Gables.

Then in 1966, there was the building moratorium on the beach. My grandfather at that point, his parents had already moved down, my dad's parents. They lived in the different apartment buildings that my dad would build. Then my mother's parents also moved down, all from New York. They moved down.



My grandfather, my dad's father-in-law and my dad went into the fruit shipping and snack bar business. The first store was in the Hollywood Mall. Then my dad built that into a very large company. Then, in his later years, he spent all his time doing social activism work in the inner-city communities. He built clinics in Overtown. He built housing in Overtown. He set up programs for kids to get free eyeglasses in schools. He did just all kinds of wonderful things. He spent all his time doing that.

When we were kids, my parents were always involved in different things. They put on the first sit-ins, actually, in the country. If you go to the first anti-segregation sit-ins, there had been other kinds, but if you go to the Smithsonian, they say that it was in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1960. The first anti-segregation sit-in was in Miami in 1959. My parents organized it with Dr. John Brown who was an ophthalmologist who lived in Miami.

In fact, we recently did a video about that, my brother, sister and I. If you go on YouTube and you put in Turkel and ACLU you can see the video. There's footage. There's Wayne Ferris talking about them. We have articles that we uncovered, interviews with people. My parents were very, very involved in that.

I was very little at the time. There's video of me holding a sign. I was a little chubby kid with a cowboy hat at Bayfront Park, a sign about nuclear proliferation or nuclear disarmament. I don't remember a lot of it when I was little. I do remember that there were always people staying in our house who were coming through to speak or to perform. This is when we lived on 15<sup>th</sup> Terrace. There were people at our apartment all the time. There were always meetings and things like that.

My dad used to go out to bail people out of jail with Tom Dickson, who was a very, very well-known attorney who was responsible for that. In fact, I asked my dad because he was young at the time. For me, I was a little kid. He seemed like an old man but he was 30, 35. I asked him, "You had little kids at home. How did you do this? How were you brave enough to do it?" His line, he would always sort of pooh-pooh it and just say, "We were too stupid to be scared".

The truth is my parents were really very, very instrumental in ending segregation, in ending a lot of the awful things. When I was a kid, once you went over the bridge you were in Jim Crow south. Miami or Miama was a very different place than it is now, especially before we had the large influx from Cuba. It was a very different place. It was clear and obvious when you would go around.

**Kathy:**

This intrigues me because also some things that Jimmy Morales said about the difference in his education by being on Miami Beach than if he'd been on the mainland. I'd like to explore that idea a little bit about that difference. Was there no Jim Crow here on the beach and you just crossed the water and suddenly there was Jim Crow?

**Bruce Turkel:** Again, remember, I was a kid. I can't say that I was that aware of it.

**Kathy:** Do you remember colored-only fountains?

**Bruce Turkel:** No. I don't remember that at all. In fact, I was told there were signs that said "No dogs and no Jews" in the hotels. I had never seen one. My father does have, we have it now, a little sign that says "Gentiles only" from a building that he had bought. We have that. No, I never saw it. I never really experienced it. We took city buses everywhere. Were African-Americans sitting in the back? I was a kid. I don't remember. I just didn't know.

I do know that when I was in high school and after band practice, again, once bussing started a lot of kids came over from the mainland. I don't know the difference in the education they had, but I do know that when we would drive kids home, I knew my way around all those neighborhoods. I knew Liberty City. I knew Overtown, because my parents were always there working. Nobody else from the beach knew.

We also went to Temple Israel. We would take the bus over to the Sears tower and then we would walk. We would play in that graveyard that's there, the Miami City graveyard, in that whole area. I really knew my way around that neighborhood. I was very comfortable. Most of my other friends who grew up on the beach did not. They didn't know where they were going. I wouldn't say they were afraid to go. They just didn't know their way around.

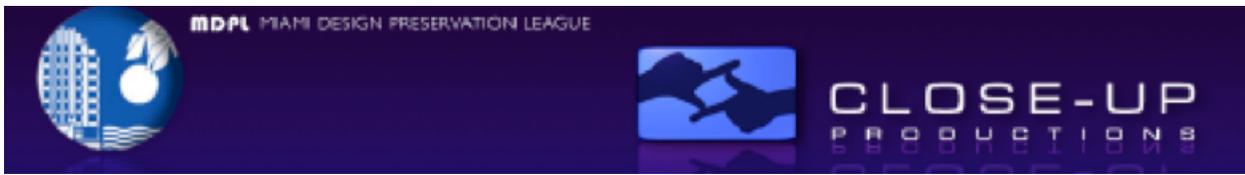
I also remember that the kids that we became friendly with, that joined the band and that we spent time with who had gone to school over there didn't know how to swim. I don't think it was because of any racial reason. It was because they never had any exposure to it which, if you think about it, kind of blows my mind.

They lived three or four blocks from the bay. They just lived over the bridge from the beach. They never, ever went swimming. We would go on trips. We would come down to the beach. We were like fish. We were in the water all the time.

These kids, they were 15, 16, 17. They didn't know how to swim. We would try to teach them. We thought it was kind of funny actually, because how could you not know how to swim? They didn't. That probably speaks, at least as I saw it as a kid, speaks to what the difference was in the way people were raised just right over the bridge.

**Kathy:** Even though your parents were really deeply involved, you never got a sense of fear then if you—

**Bruce Turkel:** No. No. Our friends were from everywhere. My parents had people in the house all the time. We spent a lot of time over in those areas, in churches because they were organizing programs. My parents had a lot of friends in South Miami also so we spent a lot of time there. No, it never seemed to be, other than long car rides because we didn't have 95 then, it never really seemed like. It's just the way we grew up



**Kathy:** When I was mentioning fear I was mentioning apprehension of repercussions from the activism.

**Bruce Turkel:** No. I never asked my folks if they had gotten death threats. I'm sure they must have. I'm sure they had to have faced both reaction and also anti-Semitism based on it, but I never saw it.

**Kathy:** What did your grandmother think about it?

**Bruce Turkel:** Well, she used to watch us, but I didn't know that until later. When she was babysitting us, my parents weren't going out dancing. They were going to black churches and organizing and doing all that. What's the greatest thing by Marshall McLuhan? "I don't know who discovered water but it wasn't a fish". It was the water we swam in.

Now I tell people the stories or we show them the videos or we look at clippings and everybody's amazed. My parents were really true American patriotic heroes. As kids it was just we were going to Liberty City to build a park. We were going to Overtown. We were going to clean streets. It's just what we did. It wasn't special. It wasn't unique.

My parents didn't make a big deal about it. My father never bragged about it. He never wanted his name on any of the buildings that they built or any of those things. My mother, she was always the one who wrote the programs, trained the people, trained the people in passive resistance. They never wanted any credit for any of it. It's just what they did.

**Kathy:** That's really amazing.

**Bruce Turkel:** It's truly amazing.

**Kathy:** You graduated from Beach High?

**Bruce Turkel:** I did.

**Kathy:** Then what happened? Then what did you do?

**Bruce Turkel:** Having grown up here and really only having this experience, I wanted to try something else. I went to school, believe it or not, in Georgia for a year. That's the first place where I experienced anti-Semitism. I don't even think it was people who were being particularly virulent. I think it was just people who were ignorant.

A guy asked me once. I had a Hai around my neck that I had gotten for my Bar Mitzvah. My grandmother gave it to me. He asked me why I was wearing a pony. It has the two legs and the little picks like that. He asked me why I was wearing a pony and I told him what it was. I remember he said to me, "You're a Jewish fellow? One of them Jewish fellows?" I said, "Yes". He said, "Where are your horns?"

Now, if I was more clever I would have said, "I never wear them during

the day” but I was kind of stunned. I don’t think he did it, again, to be nasty. I think that’s what he was told and that’s how he grew up. Anyways, I went to school there for a year. Then I transferred to the University of Florida. I spent the next four years at the University of Florida. I worked in New York when I got out of school for a little bit. Then I moved back to Miami.

**Kathy:** Why did you do that?

**Bruce Turkel:** I really missed Miami. I love it here. I missed Miami. New York was great. I liked all the stuff. I liked all the tumult and all the hubbub but it wasn’t home. I missed the water and I missed the weather. I hate cold weather. That probably had a lot to do with, although it was not a cold winter when I was there. I just missed being here. I love it here.

**Kathy:** You lived on the beach for a while and then you said you moved looking for a good school district.

**Bruce Turkel:** I did. Well, I lived on the beach for a while. Then I lived in South Miami for a number of years. Then once we had kids, our son went to West Lab at UM. Then, when it was time for them to go to middle school, we looked around and the best schools were in the Pinecrest area. That’s where we moved and we’ve lived there.

My son went to middle school and high school in Pinecrest. He’s at FIU now. My daughter went to elementary school, middle school and high school. She’s about to graduate. Then we’re done with the Dade County school system until we have grandchildren.

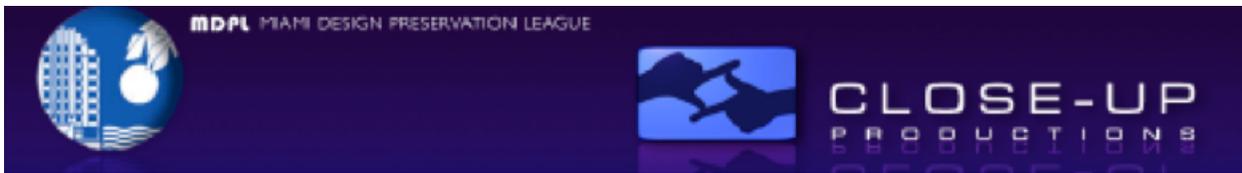
**Kathy:** About the changes in Miami Beach, general changes, what did you see during your time? You were old enough to remember the whole Art Deco period of the restoration and the movement there. Did you have any thoughts about that, having been raised here and feeling an ownership of the place?

**Bruce Turkel:** I had worked at a lot of those hotels, because I worked as a lifeguard and a pool boy. It was a service and they would send you to different hotels. I had worked at a bunch of them. Plus we had a Cabana at the old Roney Plaza and then, I think, at the Doral. I had spent a lot of time at all those different hotels, and because my dad was a builder on the beach, I spent a lot of time looking at properties with him.

I wasn’t smart enough to buy property. I did tell him at one point when I was looking to buy an office building, which I bought in the Grove. I told him that I wanted to buy the Amsterdam Palace, because I loved that building even as a kid. I don’t know if you recall but it had the open courtyard in the center and it had the statues and it was very, very open. It was before those buildings had the kind of value, of course.

**Kathy:** Was that here on South Beach?

**Bruce Turkel:** It is. It’s still here on South Beach. My dad explained to me, being a builder, I didn’t know anything about it, that the FAR is the amount of



actual rentable space in the building. It didn't make any sense based on what you were going to be taxed because the way the guy had designed it, it had all these open areas.

I remember my father saying, "The person who buys it is going to have to be some very wealthy crazy man who buys it and falls in love with it, because you can't make any practical sense out of it". It was bought by Gianni Versace, who was a very wealthy crazy man. If you look and see what he built, it made sense for him.

I also thought about buying some other properties, but again, my dad being a builder and a developer, he was the expert and not me. He said, "You never want to be the first, because whoever's first gets slaughtered. You either want to be at the end of the second wave or you want to be the third wave, when the pioneers are going bankrupt".

Again, he had built a very successful business doing that so I said, "Okay". He knew what he was doing, I didn't. I waited and then I went to him and said, "Okay, dad. I think things are heating up. I think we should do something". He said, "It's too late. Now the prices have gotten too high". Of course, he had no idea that the prices would just become so astronomical.

That was, as I saw it from a commercial point of view, as I saw it from an aesthetic point of view because I'm a real architecture groupie, there were some favorite buildings of mine around town, either because of the architecture or because of how I had enjoyed the architecture.

I kind of kept an eye on them just to see what they were doing and how they were developing it. Some of it is terrific. Some of it was horrible. The doctor's office, the Coral Rock Light building right there on Collins Avenue that was allowed to rot. That was just a shame. That was just awful. In some cases greed and avarice got in the way, but for the most part I think a lot of the buildings have been protected.

We have a couple of people, really, to thank for that. Obviously, Barbara Capitman and all the people who were so set on preserving these buildings regardless of the financial return. Then guys like Tony Goldman who wasn't from here and Craig Robins, who was, who figured out ways of doing this and making it commercially viable, I think, was pretty wonderful. That allows the buildings to exist.

If we had done some of the things that people had recommended and just torn all these buildings down, we'd still have the beautiful beach and the beautiful weather, but we wouldn't be the destination we are with this incredible, not just a treasure trove of history to protect, which is wonderful, but an experience that people can't get anywhere else.

We look different. Very few tourist destinations look different. Very few tropical destinations look different. In Palm Trees, beaches and water are wonderful. When you're up north and it's cold or you're in Europe and it's cold and you see that and that's iconic and it's great, but there are lots of

places you can go for that. If you want to go somewhere to have the experience that you have here, you don't have any other choices.

We have this incredible combination of a tropical experience and a cosmopolitan experience that come together. There are plenty of tropical experiences, as I said. You can go to Jamaica. You can go to the Bahamas. You can go all over the world, but after three or four days you've got a tan, you've gone fishing. What else are you going to do?

If you want a great cosmopolitan experience you can go to Paris, you can go to New York, you can go to, what, San Francisco, but the weather's probably not going to be that nice. You're not going to be able to spend the day on the beach.

Here, think about the experience you can have. You can get up and have breakfast in a Cuban café. You can then go to the beach. You can then have lunch in a great local restaurant. You can then shop in the greatest stores in the world if you want, or you can walk on Lincoln Road or you can do all these great things. Then in the evening you can go see the opera or you can go see the art films or you can watch a philharmonic performance outdoors.

You can't do that anywhere else. That's because all of this architecture has been preserved. That's because we have, luckily and also because of some very smart people, we have really kept what makes this area so unique and so special.

**Kathy:** Wow.

**Carl:** I was going to say that was the greatest capsule I've heard.

**Kathy:** I think that way—

**Bruce Turkel:** Well, I've been responsible for marketing Miami for the last 12 years.

[Laughter]

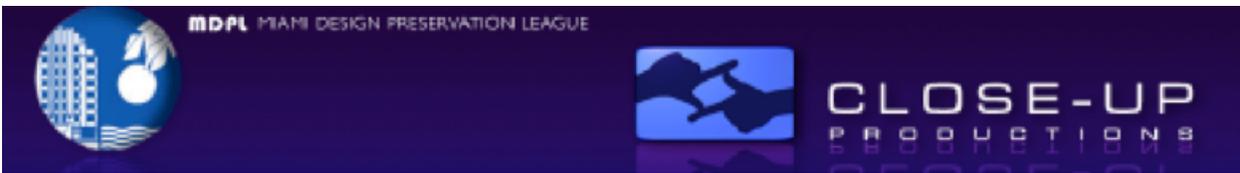
**Bruce Turkel:** I can talk on that for a very long time. That shouldn't be any surprise.

**Kathy:** You could probably do 20-second sound bites too.

**Bruce Turkel:** I sure could, or I could do three-hour talks on it, either way.

**Kathy:** Where do you see things headed? We hear a lot about, and especially when interviewing people, some close to 90 and some as young as yourself. Talk about changes. Miami Beach keeps reinventing itself. Do you see that happening?

**Bruce Turkel:** Absolutely. They say about Miami's weather that if you don't like the weather wait five minutes because it will change. I think that's similar to our community. We do keep reinventing ourselves, sometimes because of good things, sometimes because of bad things, sometimes because of bad things that are turned into good things. That continues to happen.



I think the problem of where we're going to go, you can either look at it in the micro or the macro. I think the biggest problem is lack of leadership. I think we don't have visionary leadership in our community in general. We have no Fortune 500 companies to speak of. We have no tradition of leadership. Almost everybody here came from somewhere else.

Alberto Ibarra, the president of the Knight Foundation, he had a great quote. I heard him speaking and he said, "One of the best things to happen to Miami is that people who were born here are finally dying". When you hear that, and he's a very good speaker so he gives it enough dramatic pause that you start thinking, "Oh, what's good about that? Why is it good that people are dying?"

His answer is that, before, the people who died here were from somewhere else. They never really built anything here. They moved here after they retired. They didn't come here and buy things. Once they were here they didn't do very much. Then when they died, they gave their money back to Philadelphia or back to Baltimore or back to New York, wherever they were from.

Now we're starting to have people who understand that this is their home. I think part of the whole Cuban experience here, my father-in-law used to talk about going back to Cuba. He was always going to go back. He passed away never getting to go back, but he was always going to go back to what he left. What his father, my grandfather-in-law would tell him is, "What you left there is here. It's not there anymore". I think you have a lot of people now who understand that.

My wife, who was born in Cuba but moved here very young, but this is her home. That's her homeland and a place she'll visit and care about, but she's no more connected to that land, perhaps, than I am to Poland or Russia where my grandparents came from, even though she was born there.

I think we're going to get people now who understand that this is home, which is why we have the new art museums and the new performance centers. All these things are happening here. They're not happening anywhere else in the world, by the way. We put our money away for these things in the GOB, the General Obligation Bond, 10, 15 years ago. We have the money now to do things that aren't happening anywhere else.

This lack of vision is what's going to hold us back. Congestion is a perfect example. People want to move here. I get that. They want to be warm. It's beautiful here. We spend all this money marketing tourism, so they come here and they say, "Hey, this is nice. Why would I want to leave?" University of Miami, people come here, they go to law school. They never leave, which is why we have more lawyers than anywhere else, because they want to stay here.

We're not dealing with congestion at all. The reason is because no politician can do something about congestion and have something happen

good on his or her watch. All that's going to happen is they're going to be talking about tearing up streets and causing problems and spending money for a solution that's not going to happen until they're out of office. They'll probably get kicked out of office because of it.

I don't know who said it, but there's a great quote that said great cities are built by men who plant trees they'll never sit under. We have a few of those people. My dad was one of them, but we don't have a lot of those people. That's, I think, our biggest issue.

**Kathy:**

We live a five-minute walk from the Metro Rail, which we use all the time. People would say, "Oh, nobody ever rides the Metro Rail". I say, "Have you been on it? Lots of people ride the Metro Rail. It's packed. You cannot find a seat at five o'clock on the Metro Rail". Our kids would jump on the Metro Rail and go places.

I get this, "You let your kids go on the Metro Rail?" and I said, "You let your kids get in a car with a 16-year-old driver that you don't even know?" It's just a total different experience. You had that urban experience and that melting pot experience here and yet just a causeway drive, there was a parallel world.

**Bruce Turkel:**

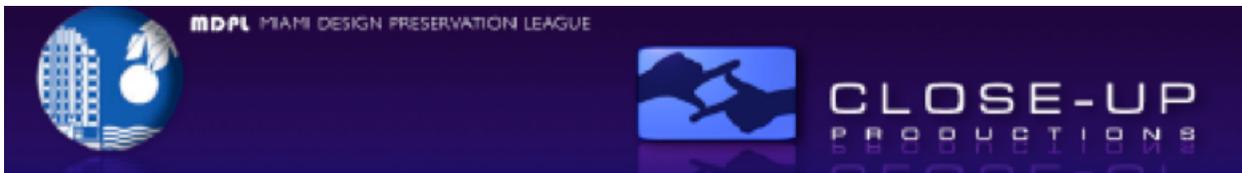
Well, that's a very interesting thing when you say parallel world. I think Miami, the whole county, is really like a 3D checkers set where you're playing on this level, you're playing on this level, you're playing on this level, but you're also playing this way and this way.

Think about it. You have the highest-income zip code in the country at Fisher Island and you have the lowest-income zip code in an area aptly called Germ City in an area ironically named Liberty City, what, a 10-minute drive away. Think about the two different experiences.

You could be a little girl whose parents are South American businesspeople or diplomats or whatever who live in Coral Gables. She goes to the IB school on Sunset. She speaks Spanish and French. She has a completely different experience than a kid who grows up in Overtown. Forget inner city, forget even the financial differences, or a kid who grows up in Pinecrest or in Aventura, completely different experience.

How many people do you talk to who live in Pinecrest, for example, and you tell them where you're going and, "Oh. I never go there". It's not, "I never go there because it's bad". It's just not part of their world. They live in their own provincial little neighborhood. No different on the beach, by the way, when you talk to people, my sister for example, who doesn't leave the beach. She'll talk about it. I want her to come to my house, "So I have to leave the beach?" She doesn't. I tease her about it. She doesn't.

You have those provincial experiences as well. Then, of course, they say the two man-made objects you can see from space, the Great Wall of China and the Dade-Broward line. You have people who never go to Broward and you have people from Broward who wouldn't dream. Maybe they'll come to South Beach for dinner on Saturday night, but they wouldn't dream of coming to Dade County.



If you ask them why, what do they say? "Oh, they don't speak English there", right? If you ask people from Dade County, "Oh, you know there's a thing in Lauderdale or Davie or wherever" "Oh, I don't go there. It's too boring". We have this incredible segmentation.

Then Dade County is, what, 36 municipalities? We have Miami, Miami Shores, Miami Springs, Miami Gardens, which is neither in Miami nor a garden. If you think about it, North Miami Beach, South Miami, we have Aventura.

We have all these places. They each have a political system. They each have a mayor. They each have commissioners. They don't really work towards common good or common practices, unlike a place like Jacksonville, which is a city and a county. I think it's the largest city, by land mass, in the country, because the county is the city. People can't live outside and work here.

You can live in Broward and work in Dade. You can't do that in Jacksonville. You live in Jacksonville, in the county, and you work in the city. That's a big problem. It's not going to get better. It's going to get worse.

**Kathy:** Do you ever bring your kids over here?

**Bruce Turkel:** I bring my kids here all the time. My mom still lives on South Beach. In fact, I'm going to go see my sister when we're done here. My son and daughter had dinner with my mother the other night. Yes, we come here all the time. It's funny, because when in my office if people overhear me talking about going to the beach, they think I'm going to the sand. To them, going to the beach means I'm going to go lie on the beach. To me, it means I'm going to Miami Beach. My office is in the Grove, right?

**Kathy:** Your mother is still around then. Is she still active?

**Bruce Turkel:** Very active.

**Kathy:** What kinds of things is she involved with now?

**Bruce Turkel:** Well, right now she's really involved in dealing with all of the programs that my father was so passionately involved in. My father passed away a year ago. Well, not quite a year, in June. He had a bunch of programs he was working on. She's busy figuring out what his legacy is going to be, how she's going to keep some of the programs operating. Some of the programs only he can do or only he could do because of his passion, knowledge.

My dad also had this great ability or great asset. He had no agenda other than what he wanted to accomplish. He had no business agenda. He didn't need to be liked or care about being liked. He only cared about accomplishing whatever it was he was doing.

He would raise the money on his own. He would either finance the projects or he would get the money. He would go do the projects. He would build them. He knew his way through the county and the city. He was a contractor so he knew how to get permits. He knew how to get everything done.

If people didn't like it, he didn't really care. He would work with the community groups that he was working in. He wasn't looking to have people hire him or get city contracts or any of that. It didn't much matter to him what people thought about it.

**Kathy:** That they couldn't figure him out.

**Bruce Turkel:** He wanted nothing from it, right. They could not figure him out. That's exactly true. Again, he didn't want his name on the programs. He didn't want his name on the buildings. When he was done he would turn them over to the community or to the county or to whoever it was he was working for.

He was restoring the Dorsey Library, which was the first black library in Dade County, the black archives. My dad was restoring it and the plan was to give it to the city of Miami when he was done. He didn't want anything else, other than some degree of justice in getting these things done.

My mom is really busy figuring out, again, what we can keep alive, what we can keep working on and which projects are just, "Look, none of us have the time or the superhuman abilities that my dad had to actually get it done".

**Kathy:** Do you think your mother would consent to being interviewed?

**Bruce Turkel:** She might. She's still dealing with this enormous change in her life. She doesn't like to go out that much. I can let her know how comfortable. She might. I think she'd be a great person for you to interview.

**Kathy:** I would love that. I think she has stories and she can tell—

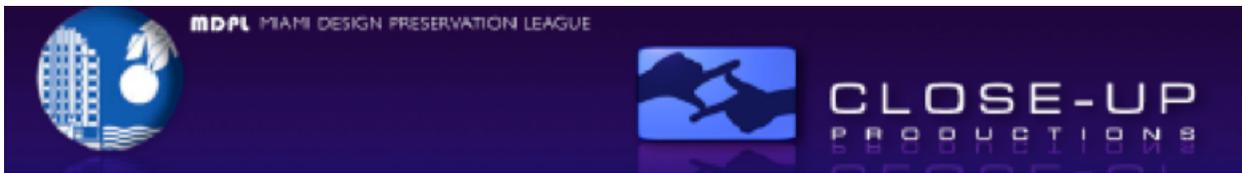
**Bruce Turkel:** Of course. She's very cogent and with it and has great stories. She's been here longer than me.

I would have loved for you to chat with my dad because he knew all the buildings. He could have told you what they were, who owned them, who he bought them from. He built a lot of those structures on Lincoln Road, the Lapidus design. I think my dad, Turchin and Arkin built them all. He could have told you. I have no idea but he could have told you how that happened, how that was all put together, but that's gone.

**Kathy:** He must have been involved with CORE then.

**Bruce Turkel:** I think my parents started the CORE office here in Miami. If they didn't start it, they were very, very involved with CORE.

**Kathy:** We interviewed, 10 years ago now, A. D. Moore, who was the national



treasurer of CORE, as it turned out, and met weekly with Martin Luther King. I did an interview with him in front of an audience of students at Turner Tech High School. He mentioned having heard the 'I have a dream' speech at the Hampton House Motel before it was given in Washington. I must get back to that point.

**Bruce Turkel:** Goosebumps.

**Kathy:** It started the ball rolling to saving the Hampton House Motel.

**Bruce Turkel:** My parents met Martin Luther King twice. My dad said that the really memorable part of meeting him was the second time they met him. He didn't know who they were. So much for that.

**Kathy:** Which probably says more about your parents, their modesty and humility.

**Bruce Turkel:** That's probably true. I'm sure they weren't trying to, again, didn't want anything from him and weren't in his face for anything.

**Kathy:** He did a non-violence training here at the Sir John Hotel. They probably were there.

**Bruce Turkel:** I bet they were. I don't know but I'll bet they were. In fact, on that video, the one that's on YouTube, we have footage of a non-violence training course, where I think my mom and someone else is instructing people and then singing 'We shall overcome' in the church. My mom's the one in the big Jackie O glasses.

[Laughter]

**Bruce Turkel:** She looked just like Jackie O too.

**Kathy:** Okay. I'm trying to think. Anything else, Carl, that you think we should cover?

**Carl:** I'd like to get a little more current and come into talking about the preservation, where Miami Beach is now. We have now, with the designations which have happened and the protection. How has that changed the dynamic? In effect is it a bit of being frozen in time but not? I wonder whether, as we project where Miami Beach goes, you spoke eloquently about...

**Kathy:** Where do you see it headed?

**Bruce Turkel:** Well, I think, first of all, it's important. I can really talk about it from a tourism point of view. I don't think I can talk about it intelligently from an architectural point of view, certainly not from a sociological or an anthropological point of view.

From a tourism point of view, if you understand the tourism industry it would make sense why this is such a powerful community, why it's so

compelling to tourists. Really, there are four things. It's called the four A's that tourists care about, which is affordability, accessibility, authenticity and activity.

Affordability doesn't mean cheap. It means, "Can I afford to go?" We have our problems with that, because our ADR, average daily rate, what hotels charge continues to go up and up and up and up. As you can see from our bed tax collections, it doesn't really seem to hurt our business very much.

As far as activities go, we have every tourism activity you could consider except two, which are cold weather sports and mountains. Other than that, Miami Beach and, more importantly, Miami, because the consumer does not see Miami Beach as a separate area. In fact, 50 miles outside of our community or 20 miles outside of our community, if you do research, Miami Beach is the strip of sand attached to Miami. People don't see it as a separate city.

Locally, again, we're very provincial. I see Miami Beach. In fact, when I was a kid growing up on South Beach, going to Central Beach Elementary, as far as we were concerned Miami Beach only went up to 21<sup>st</sup> Street. As kids, if you lived north of 21<sup>st</sup> Street, well, that wasn't Miami Beach.

Then, once I went to junior high school and they brought kids all the way south of the Nautilus district. Then Miami Beach expanded to 41<sup>st</sup> Street. If you lived north of 41<sup>st</sup> Street, as far as we were concerned, that wasn't Miami Beach.

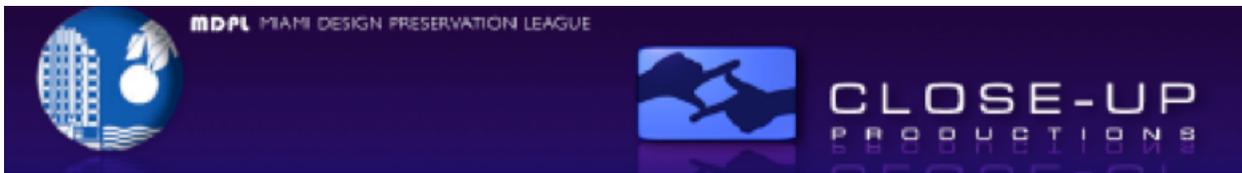
Then once I went to high school, of course, it went all the way from, what is it, Biscayne Street to somewhere up in Sunny Isles. Then Miami Beach became, to us, the whole island. If you didn't live on the island and go to Beach High, well, then you were not from Miami Beach.

I still hear business owners and professionals and politicians with that same silly argument, that there's Miami Beach and there's Miami. From a tourism point of view, there is no differentiation. In fact, the truth is the Miami brand is the brand. It's where the airport is. That's what people know. They think Lauderdale, Hollywood, everything else is included as well. Consumers don't know the difference. The Miami brand becomes very important. Affordability is key.

Accessibility, I can't visit a place that I can't get to. Yes, there are some people who do adventure travel and they try to go to those places you can't get to. Not being able to get there becomes the trip, but that's a very small percentage.

Depending on how you look at it, thank you to American Airlines for the enormous investment they've made in Miami, because we have accessibility. You can get here now from anywhere in the world. You can fly nonstop now from Barcelona. KLM now flies here nonstop. Emirates is thinking about it. You can get here now from anywhere in the world. We are very accessible.

We've talked about three, affordability, accessibility and activity, but the



key is authenticity. The saying is, people go to old places to see new things or they go to new places to see old things. We are both a new place and an old place. We are a cutting-edge city.

We are one of these new city-states that people around the world are looking at, where we have greater identification with other places than with our actual geographic area. We have more connection, for example, to South America, perhaps, than to the rest of Florida.

We get that sort of attention. People understand that we are an old place and a new place. Demographically, people who study demographics say that Miami is what the rest of the country will look like 20, 30, 40, 50 years from now. The great thing is a lot of our issues, we've worked out.

This might have been an awful place as far as Jim Crow goes and as far as treatment of Hispanics and maybe Haitians don't get the type of fair treatment that other groups do. We're working on those problems. I think we've worked out a lot of them that other areas are only starting to deal with. That gives us an enormous opportunity.

Authenticity also is authenticity of place, and because of restoration we have a place that doesn't look like we're anywhere else. I understand that there might be an equally large or a larger collection of art deco properties in Haifa, because the mostly Jewish-German architects who designed them, when they left Germany they either came here or they went to what was then Palestine and became Israel. I haven't been to Haifa so I don't know. I haven't seen it.

We have this unique look. What it does for us is it creates this visual icon. Whether we are old or new, to quote Carl about taking the old but how do we move it forward. We will move it forward technologically. Clearly the buildings will be just as up to date and they'll be lead-certified. That will all happen. That has to happen, but the look becomes the uniqueness that people will notice.

As an icon, people will be able to look at South Beach and see South Beach equals Miami Beach equals Miami. That look will drive the train. No different than if you see that one curvy road in San Francisco. You've got to spend a lot of time in San Francisco to find that road if you don't know where it is but it says San Francisco. If you see the Grand Canyon, it's iconic. If you see the bridge going over the left bank, you know you're looking at Paris, and so on and so forth.

We have that. You can't create that. You can create it but it takes 50 years or 100 years until it becomes authentic. Vegas did that. Vegas didn't exist 50 years ago. Of course, they've created it by copying other areas. If you see the Empire State Building or you see the Statue of Liberty, you could be looking at New York or you could be looking at Vegas.

If you see glass block and pink neon and an arch, you know what you're looking at. Now, people call it Deco. They call it Nouveau. They lump it all together. They don't know what they're calling it because, again, they

don't know. It doesn't matter. We would say, "Oh, no, no. That's not Deco. That's MiMo" or "That's not Deco. That's Populuxe" or "That's not Deco. That's Modern" or "No, that's Nouveau". It doesn't matter.

It's no different than going to France and going to see a cathedral. Do you know if it's Gothic or if it comes from a different period? Do you have any idea? Ultimately, does it matter if the columns are Doric or Ionic or whatever it is? You don't know or care. You just feel like you've seen it. We have that same opportunity here.

**Kathy:** Even if people don't realize it, even if it's on a subconscious level, even if they can't take the elements and say, "Oh, this is this and this", it feels different.

**Bruce Turkel:** It feels different. Exactly right. It feels different but somehow comfortable and safe and warm and wonderful.

**Kathy:** It's in America [laughs]

**Carl:** Right here.

**Bruce Turkel:** Well, who was the comedian who said Miami is as far as you can go without leaving the country?

**Kathy:** [Laughs] I think [Crosstalk] [42:35] we're good.

##