**Interview with Stephen Hertz**

**Interviewer:** Today is August 23, 2016. We are in the home of Stephen Hertz; we are recording for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project, and my name is Kathy Hirsch, the interviewer. Were you actually born on Miami Beach?

**Hertz:** I was not.

**Interviewer:** When did you first come?

**Hertz:** I came here probably in 1942.

**Interviewer:** How old were you then?

**Hertz:** Going on two years of age. I was born in the beginning of 1941 in New York, where most of the people came from back then, and I had smart parents. When I was born, they said, “Let’s go raise our children in Miami Beach.” That’s where we moved to.

**Interviewer:** What are your first memories of the beach?

**Hertz:** That’s difficult. My first memories of the beach would probably be North Beach Elementary, which is the school that I went to and started in back then, which was an excellent school. I still have many friends that started there.

**Interviewer:** What’s it like living in a place that was small enough where everybody knew everybody, and you all went to the same schools and you still know each other?

**Hertz:** When we were growing up, Miami Beach was considered a transient city, not a place to move to and live. What a difference it really was. The people that lived here were very, very close and helped each other. Everybody knew each other, and it was a very, very strong community, developing a very large Jewish community. Prior to my being here and being old enough, the Jewish people had a problem on the beach, there were a lot of places that they were not welcomed and couldn’t go to.

**Interviewer:** Did your parents experience any of that?

**Hertz:** They may have; I never did. What problems they may have had back then when I was too young to know what was going on, they never talked about. I don’t remember any incident that they would bring up that would have stuck in my memory.

**Interviewer:** You don’t remember seeing any of the signs? “Gentiles only,” the restrictive signs?

**Hertz:** That I probably did, and there were some hotels and stuff that would not allow Jews back then.

**Interviewer:** What work did your father do?

**Hertz:** My father was originally in the shoe business. He came down and went to work for some companies out of New York, and then he opened his own store on Lincoln Road called Hertz-Ross. He had a partner in the store that he eventually bought out, and he had his store on Lincoln Road.

**Interviewer:** What kind of shoes? Who were his clientele?

**Hertz:** His clientele were, for the most part, tourists. His shoes were all handmade, designed by himself and, back then, extremely expensive for that period of time. A pair of shoes could be as high as $250-$500 back then, and purses more expensive than that. Of course, a lot of the material that was used would not be allowed to be used today. You were able to have material – today you could’ve had alligator, but you would’ve had a lot of the exotic materials used in the shoes. They were all high-class.

**Interviewer:** He did well?

**Hertz:** He did well, yes, with the ups and downs of Lincoln Road as it changed. At some point you had Saks Fifth Avenue, you had some very, very expensive stores, it was one of the main shopping streets in the country.

**Interviewer:** You must have memories of that, of going there.

**Hertz:** That I do. My first memories of Lincoln Road were when it was a two-way street with cars and parking just like every other street. Eventually, when they started to build malls, they built the 163rd Street Mall in North Miami Beach. At that time, a lot of the more expensive stores were moving off of the beach.

My father got the idea to turn Lincoln Road into a shopping mall. At that time he was president of the Lincoln Road Mall Association, and he got the merchants on Lincoln Road behind them. They passed a resolution that was approved by the city to turn it into a mall. The original mall was financed solely by the merchants on Lincoln Road. He did the design work, basically, with his own drawings as to what it should look like, and he hired Morris Lapidus to turn it into an architectural beautiful project, which Morris did, and the mall was eventually built.

**Interviewer:** Was your father pleased with the results?

**Hertz:** He was thrilled with it. Remember, back then it was totally different than it is now. In fact, if I had some wishes given to me, besides wishing for my own health and the health of those close to me, one of the things that I would really like to do is, my father passed away prior to the mall being revised and redone, and the way it is today with its worldwide reputation. I would love to bring him back just for a short visit to see what he created has turned into.

**Interviewer:** If you could telegraph something to him, how would you describe it today, the changes from his time to now?

**Hertz:** It’s totally different. Back then there weren’t the restaurants, there weren’t the clubs, there were no outdoor restaurants. They had a tram that went from one end of Lincoln Road to the other that carried people that you could get on and get off, and it was mostly clothing stores and shops like that.

It’s totally evolved now where it’s now entertainment from the time you get up for breakfast in the morning until late at night. One of the thrilling things about Miami Beach is you can still go shopping at night. It’s not just a place to go for dinner or to walk, actually there’s activity on the mall that’s fantastic.

**Interviewer:** It’s also one of the best people-watching spots in the South.

**Hertz:** On October 31, if you want to go to one of the best places in the country for Halloween, our population – Key West gets a lot of notoriety for their Fantasy Fest, but I think Lincoln Road equals it. The costumes are just magnificent.

**Interviewer:** I’ve never done that, that sounds like a lot of fun. In your growing up, how about your mother? Was she involved civically in Miami Beach?

**Hertz:** My mother was basically a homemaker, a highly intelligent, very pretty. I’ll tell you a little story about my parents in a minute as soon as I finish, but basically she raised the family. That’s one of the nice things about growing up on the beach, every night we had dinner together, all of us. It was a home-cooked meal and it was approximately the same time every night, and my mom ran the house. She did help my father with the bookkeeping in the store, but mostly she was a homemaker.

As an aside, though, I had very good-looking parents. I can remember stories when I was growing up because of the activities, the clubs that we had on Miami Beach, which were famous back then. Remember, Miami Beach became famous before Vegas. Vegas was built from the ideas of Miami Beach with a lot of the hotelier – there’s a good word – people that built the hotels on Miami Beach also built in Vegas. We would have the entertainment here without the gambling, but this is where people came and we had all of the big-name entertainment.

My parents were night people. I can remember many, many times getting dressed, and as I’m leaving for elementary school in the morning, my mother would be walking into the house with her shoes in her hand after having been out all night. We had a magazine, a newspaper called ”Panorama” that highlighted the things that were doing on Miami Beach – the entertainers, and they took pictures. Every single New Year’s Eve, “Panorama” followed my parents from club to club. Their picture was on the cover of “Panorama,” and the clubs that they went to were the little story.

**Interviewer:** They were socialites.

**Hertz:** They were.

**Interviewer:** When you saw your mother coming in the door with her shoes in her hand, who had gotten you up and ready for school?

**Hertz:** Back then, in fact even here, the homes that were built in the Miami Beach in the 50s, most of the people had a live-in maid, and the homes were built for that purpose. I grew up with a maid that I spent a lot of time with that would make breakfast, lunch, make dinner.

I’ll tell you a cute story. I’m old enough to remember having an ice box where the Royal Palm ice company would deliver a 50-pound block of ice and put it into an ice box, and there was a fan on top of the ice box that would blow down over the 50-pound cube of ice to cool. You didn’t have a freezer, but you had a cool refrigeration.

Nobody bought milk store; it was all delivered to the houses, and it would be delivered in a little glass bottle with a tab at the top. If you left it out on the stairs, it would get heated by the sun, or the cats would knock it over and drink the milk. The homes would have a milk delivery system where the milkman could come to the house, open up an outside little box, put the milk actually into the walls of the house, and the maid would come by and take the milk by opening up the same type of latch inside the house. When we redid this house, we left that as a reminder of the way that people lived in the 50s. I still have the milk delivery system in this house.

**Interviewer:** Was the maid white or black?

**Hertz:** The maid was black.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember her name?

**Hertz:** Bertha.

**Interviewer:** How long did she work for your family?

**Hertz:** Years – many, many years. She was the most wonderful person. She actually was a member of the family, and we were members of her family.

**Interviewer:** Did you have much contact with her family?

**Hertz:** She would bring her family over, and if my parents were going to be out of town or something like that, I and my sister would go over there during the daytime, or she would be staying at the house. That was true of many of the families that lived on the beach.

**Interviewer:** Yes, we did an interview with Bea Hines, who used to be a domestic prior to beginning her career at the Miami Herald. So you went to the Miami Beach public schools?

**Hertz:** Yes, I did. I went to North Beach Elementary, which had an excellent PTA that really supported the schools. One of the high points that I remember – and I remember some of my teachers from elementary school where I don’t remember the names of the teachers from my junior high school, but I remember Veda Jordan, who I went through. Supported by the PTA, we would take a trip over the Easter vacation. One of the trips was to Cuba.

**Interviewer:** Really?

**Hertz:** We went to Cuba, a whole group of us and stayed in Cuba. I can even remember – it made an impression on me – I stayed at the Amos Mundos Hotel. Why it made an impression is it was a square hotel with a cage in the center, and the cage was the elevator and you would take the elevator to the top where they had their restaurant.

Some of the things that I remember about that hotel that made an impression on me as a child is the hotel room had a balcony. If I was out on the balcony and somebody was in the building across the street, we could almost shake hands because the streets were so narrow in Cuba. That was one of the highlights of going to North Beach Elementary, was the extracurricular activities that the school provided.

**Interviewer:** That would’ve been what year, approximately? Early 50s?

**Hertz:** Well, I was born in ‘41. I would’ve started school at age 6, so it would be ’47. Six years later would’ve been somewhere around ‘52 or ‘53 that I went to Cuba.

**Interviewer:** That was under the time of Batista.

**Hertz:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Prior to the revolution.

**Hertz:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** What was it like, then, your having had some experience in Cuba? Well, I want to hear more about the trip, I’ll back up a minute. What all did you see and do when you were in Cuba?

**Hertz:** It was supervised.

**Interviewer:** Was this common for there to be field trips from schools?

**Hertz:** Yeah, the schools went to Washington, or they would go to – I don’t remember whether Colonial Williamsburg was in existence then, but they would go to different places. They would pick a different place each year, and I think it was the fifth and sixth graders that went on the trip. There was anywhere from 15 to 25 students that were chaperoned, you’d go with some teachers and some parents.

**Interviewer:** Did you speak any Spanish?

**Hertz:** Nope, didn’t speak a word of Spanish.

**Interviewer:** Did they take you to the nightclubs, or was it mainly – what did they show you?

**Hertz:** We went to the orphanage, we went to the cemetery. Going back a long, long time, I’ll tell you a funny story that did make an impression on me. I think that we were there on a Sunday, and in the main square there was a very, very large church. I remember seeing people come out of the church, walk across the plaza and go to the bars. I thought that that was very cute, that they would come out of church and go directly to the bars.

At that time, Cuba really was beautiful. We went to Morro Castle, and toured the island and got to know the culture. I do remember that I brought back a pair of castanets that I would shake in my hand. I don’t know how I’m remembering this. I mean, you’re talking about fifth grade now, but it’s funny the little things, when you’re asked a question, that stick in your mind. I guess the highlight of my trip to Cuba was getting castanets.

[both laugh][19:18]

**Interviewer:** When the exodus came in 1960 after Fidel Castro took over, you already had had some context for that. What was the reaction of you as a young man, and your peers?

**Hertz:** It might have affected my sister more because she was younger, but at the time that that happened I was in college. I went to Gainesville and was not here most of the time, I was up there at school, so it didn’t have an effect on me.

**Interviewer:** What did your parents think about it?

**Hertz:** I don’t remember ever discussing it with them. Back then when it first happened, we didn’t have the same effect that it has now. You had people coming over, we had had people coming over a long time from Cuba, but you didn’t have the same type of concentration. The beach wasn’t affected until later.

**Interviewer:** Until 1980 and the Mariel.

**Hertz:** Yeah, that’s when the beach was affected. The people that were coming over in the 50s and 60s were wealthy, they came over with money. I imagine, and I’m not talking from personal experience, but just what I think, it was a different situation back then than it was after the problems that occurred in Cuba that caused the mass exodus.

**Interviewer:** The Cuban Hebrew Congregation was formed after the first exodus, after Castro. Were you aware that there were Cuban Jews that came and formed a congregation?

**Hertz:** Yes, and they built a beautiful temple right off of Lincoln Road that was, if you had an affair on the beach, they probably had one of the best caterers. The hall there was absolutely magnificent. There were a lot of affairs that were held there that was not only for Cubans – because back then it was Cubans, but not people from Columbia or Nicaragua. Almost everybody that was Spanish that came here was from Cuba, but there were a lot of the residents that were not Spanish that would use that facility because it was so well done.

**Interviewer:** You mentioned earlier that your father did some journalism, that he wrote for a newspaper?

**Hertz:** My father, at the time, was called Mr. Miami Beach.

**Interviewer:** What was his name?

**Hertz:** Hal Hertz.

**Interviewer:** Hal Hertz.

**Hertz:** He wrote a column for the newspapers, the “Miami Beach Sun.” I have many of the newspapers that he had published in, and he would write a history of Miami Beach. I think it was on a weekly basis. He would go into the different people that formed Miami Beach, and their friends and their families, and why Carl Fisher came here, and who he met and who he dealt with, and how the causeway from Miami to Miami Beach was built. He had stories about Joe’s Stone Crabs and how that started, and the different hotels.

He wrote beautifully. In fact, on his tombstone we put, as a memorial to him, that – I think the wording on his tombstone is, “He lived, loved and wrote, all magnificently.” Here is a man that probably I respect as much as almost anybody I have ever met. He had a sixth grade education, and he wrote absolutely beautifully. His handwriting – my handwriting is a mess. Everybody says, “Why didn’t you become a doctor?” Because my handwriting is like a doctor. His handwriting was beautiful, and the way he put words together – both the written word and orator words – were just, for someone with a sixth grade education, you never would have known it. He was an actor also, he appeared in many of the local plays and stuff that he used to enjoy doing.

**Interviewer:** Here on the beach?

**Hertz:** On the beach.

**Interviewer:** Was there a community theater then?

**Hertz:** There was community theater, and a lot of the temples had their own groups that got together. I’m trying to remember the name of one of the parts that he played where, as a young man, he played an older man. It’ll come to me; if I remember it, I’ll bring it back up.

**Interviewer:** So he was good-looking?

**Hertz:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** He was a good actor, well-spoken, a good writer.

**Hertz:** He ran for the city commission on Miami Beach, and was announced the winner and went down to City Hall. I remember that night, we went from jubilation, and got to City Hall and found out that he lost by six votes.

**Interviewer:** [gasps] What year was that. do you remember?

**Hertz:** I don’t remember the year.

**Interviewer:** You were all ready for him to be sworn in.

**Hertz:** Sworn into the city commission. I don’t know whether they had absentee ballots back then or what happened, but between the announcement that came over – I think it was the radio, because I’m not even sure whether we had television back then, he had lost. He lost to a good friend of his who was Joe Malik, whose wife is still active on Miami Beach.

**Interviewer:** Did he take it well?

**Hertz:** No, of course not.

[both laugh][26:03]

**Interviewer:** Did he ask for a recount?

**Hertz:** I’m sure that he did. He was very active in the city and the things that he did. Funny story, something that should be preserved. My father felt that a long-time city manager – and now I’m drawing a blank again. His monument is in front of City Hall, and I can’t…

**Interviewer:** It’s okay, we can track it down.

**Hertz:** I’m drawing a blank on the name. He got the city commission to pass and approve placing the monument in City Hall in the front of the building. He had a monument built by one of the famous sculptors and stuff with a plaque, and they had a ceremony at City Hall and placed the monument. It was placed in City Hall, in the front as you came up the stairs. This was the new City Hall. Then the commission decided that it was dangerous and somebody could bump into it, and they decided they were going to move it and put it into the rotunda where people don’t go. My father took it out and put it in his front yard.

For two years, this monument – boy, I’m trying to think of the name of the city manager basically who built Miami Beach, and the monument was in his front yard until the city commission, I don’t know if there was a new election or what, and they finally agreed to put it back into the front of City Hall. It is there today.

**Interviewer:** Your father sounds like a character.

**Hertz:** He was a character.

**Interviewer:** When he took up writing the history column, what do you think his motivation was? Did he just like history?

**Hertz:** He was in love with Miami Beach. He felt that it was paradise, which I still call it today. I thank my parents for having the foresight to move here, and letting my sister and I grow up in this area.

**Interviewer:** What was your neighborhood growing up?

**Hertz:** We started in South Beach. Our first home was, I think, on Euclid Avenue, probably across the street from where they built the Cuban Hebrew Congregation. I think it was on Lenox and 17th. I’m not sure the address, but it was either on that block or the next block.

From there we moved north. From there, we went to North Bay Road in the early 30s, the streets, and then from there to Chase Avenue right south of 41st Street. Most of my schooling and when I went to Nautilus was at Sheridan Avenue and 44th Street, and then my high school years was at 57th and Alton Road across from La Gorce Country Club.

Of course, when I got married, I moved to North Shore, the Normandy Shores area. It’s been on the beach in a steady movement north. I consider this place, I have, living here all year round, what people work a full year for to get five days. I really consider it paradise.

**Interviewer:** Is that part of your motivation for serving on the VCA board?

**Hertz:** The VCA board is an unusual board. The people that serve on that board are extremely interested in Miami Beach and promotion of tourism, which is the engine that runs Miami Beach, and they do an excellent job. The staff there is one of the best staffs, and I’ve been on the VCA for a long, long time. I was lucky enough to serve the term limit. I served six years, 14 years ago. When I got off the VCA my wife, who was also very active in Miami Beach, she became a member of the VCA for six years. The city commission was nice enough, when she termed out and I wanted to get back on the board, to put me back on the board.

I feel that we do a tremendous benefit to the city. We brought in things like Art Basel, the Food and Wine Festival. We bring in things that carry worldwide notoriety, that popularizes Miami Beach and the activities that we have here all over the world.

The people that we deal with on the VCA are excellent supporters of the beach; they’re all knowledgeable, some of them have hotel backgrounds, and to bring people to the beach. If you would read the minutes of the Miami Beach VCA, you will see that we have some very, very heated discussions where we disagree, and yet it’s the type of board that instead of arguing, we listen. Almost every single vote is unanimous, and that’s very unusual. I have served on the Planning and Zoning Board, I have been on the Budget Advisory Commission for the city of Miami Beach. I’ve been on a lot of different boards over many, many years, and the VCA is just a pleasure to be on.

**Interviewer:** Where do you see Miami Beach going? It seems to reinvent itself every couple of decades.

**Hertz:** You have to. I went through the period in Miami Beach when there was a moratorium – you couldn’t build, so the buildings became old and dilapidated. Today, as you drive down Ocean Drive, the porches of the hotels are filled with people enjoying themselves. You have music going on. You have restaurants that have opened up in the lobbies. I remember many, many years of driving down Ocean Drive, Collins Avenue, and you saw people sitting on the porch just waiting for their passing.

**Interviewer:** The summons.

**Hertz:** The summons is a good way to put it. It was a place that elderly people retired. South Beach was not an entertainment area, there was not the type of restaurants and crowds that we have today. It became a depressed area. We had some very smart people back then who saw the future of Miami Beach and what it could be, and have developed it into the magnificent city that it is today.

**Interviewer:** We just interviewed Craig Robbins yesterday.

**Hertz:** Craig and I have served on boards together. In fact, I think we were on the planning board together. Craig has an excellent, excellent mind. He is one of those people with the foresight to get in ahead of everybody else. One of the things about Craig is he was able to accomplish what he set out to do.

**Interviewer:** Did you know Barbara Capitman?

**Hertz:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** What were your impressions of her?

**Hertz:** Originally I didn’t like her ideas of preservation. I thought an old building was an old building, and needed to be torn down and replaced with something modern. I didn’t realize – as many people didn’t – that what she was doing was really for the future. Her ideas took hold and she brought notoriety to Miami Beach with the preservation, which is part of our history.

Part of what we’re doing today, your interview of me today, is for posterity. Barbara had the foresight back then to say, “We have something real here. We have something that’s important, and we should preserve it.” She was another one, a lone voice in the woods that became heard, and she was able to accomplish what no one else could.

**Interviewer:** She got a lot of criticism, and even people making fun of what she was trying to do.

**Hertz:** Because she was trying to keep old and not move on, but she saw it differently. With hindsight, she was right.

**Interviewer:** A lot of people have that hindsight. The proof is out there, right?

**Hertz:** That’s right.

**Interviewer:** Because there was a uniqueness. Can you address that? The uniqueness of this urban resort. How is it different from other places where you go to the beach and you go to nightclubs?

**Hertz:** Miami Beach is 7 miles long, one mile wide. You’ve got this little tiny physical location with so much happening. We were extremely lucky in the type of people that have moved here or have taken an interest in the development of Miami Beach – very, very smart people with foresight. They caught on to the trends. Today, we compete with some of the most magnificent, well-known places in the world. This little place attracts an awful lot of people.

We don’t have gambling, and we don’t have Disney World. What do we have? We have our people, which the VCA promotes through our service. We put money into the training, and making sure that the people that work on Miami Beach in the service industries, and the hotels, and the restaurants treat tourists that come here and our visitors with respect and kindness to make them want to come back. It just works, and it is unusual.

I go down, and I still drive down – they call me a frustrated tour director – just driving down and you look at Ocean Drive, you look at some of the different areas, and every single hotel has people in front of it eating and the streets are filled. It’s one right after the other. There are not many places that you can do that. I’ve been all over the world, and I still prefer Miami Beach.

**Interviewer:** Did you have any sense of its specialness as a child, or was it just the place where you grew up?

**Hertz:** It was a place where I had some friends, and good schooling and a loving family. Let me take that back. This is something that’s different. The people that grew up on Miami Beach, the kids had an unusual activity that occurred a couple of times during the year – Christmas, Easter, and the summer when we were out of school. All of the hotels had teen rooms. Back then they catered – we all had cabanas. When I grew up in the 50s nobody had pools, we all had cabanas at the hotels. We would meet and the friends would get together, and families would get together, and eight or 10 families would each take a cabana so that they would meet at the hotels. The kids would be in the swimming pool, and the women would play mah-jongg or canasta, and the men would play gin at the hotels. We all got together at the hotels.

So even though the hotels were for tourists, they were very well utilized by the people living on Miami Beach. As a teenager, I benefited and my friends benefited because they had teen rooms. The teen rooms had dances, they had places to meet so that the girls could be safe because you were in a hotel, and the guys were safe because they were in a hotel, and you met people from all over the world. I still have friends today that I met at the Shelborne, and I met at the Saxony and the different hotels that had the popular teen rooms, those of us that are left. You developed a friendship over the summer, or what do you call it, that has remained with us all our lives. That was the difference that Miami Beach brought to its residents that you wouldn’t find almost anywhere else in the United States.

**Interviewer:** You are the first person, I believe, Carl, that we’ve interviewed, that has mentioned this about the teen rooms. This is the first I’m hearing about it. It sounds marvelous.

**Hertz:** It was great.

**Interviewer:** Dancing, music, what else? Did they have billiards or card tables?

**Hertz:** Different hotels would have – there were no card tables, but they had music playing. They would have dancing at night. They would have pool parties for the teens. I can tell you a funny incident that occurred. The people that lived on Miami Beach, a lot of the guys worked over the summer at the different hotels as either a bellhop, or a pool boy or something like that. I can remember working at one of the hotels and I met a young girl from New Jersey.

Of course, when you’re working in the hotel, you are not permitted to be in the hotel when you weren’t working. I was off one day, and her family invited me back to have dinner with them and to spend the day. I was seen there on a Saturday or whatever day I was off. Because I went back, I had a choice of either leaving or staying and getting fired, and I got fired. I remember her name was Joan.

**Interviewer:** What was the hotel? Was it one of the ones on the beach?

**Hertz:** It was on the beach. It was probably the – it could’ve been the Sherry Frontenac or the Casablanca, it was one of the hotels up here.

**Interviewer:** So a girl named Joan from Jersey caused you to get fired, probably for the first time in your life. [laughs]

**Hertz:** That’s true.

**Interviewer:** I think, was it yesterday that Craig was telling about taking scuba diving lessons in one of the pools that was offered to the training.

**Hertz:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** The pool scene, then, was something – it sounds like it was very unique and very special, that it had its own kind of culture.

**Hertz:** It did. Like I said, most of the homes, we didn’t have city pools back then.

**Interviewer:** You didn’t need a pool, you had the ocean.

**Hertz:** You had the ocean, but the hotels had the pools. They don’t build the cabanas anymore, but back then every hotel had a section of cabanas because we didn’t have tourism business. Miami Beach back then was seasonal, tourists came in the winter and it was very quiet in the summer. The hotels, in order to supplement their income, and to have people in the hotel and using the restaurants, would have these cabanas that were filled with residents. It wasn’t rented out by the day, it was you take it for the entire eight weeks of summer when the kids were out of school. It was a place for the community to get together. We went back to the same hotel almost year after year after year, and it added to the pleasures of growing up on the beach.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember much about the beach in wartime? You would’ve been a small boy.

**Hertz:** No.

**Interviewer:** We’ve had people talk about seeing fires way out on the horizon of the tankers.

**Hertz:** Now, I do remember that when I was growing up, I volunteered for – I don’t remember the name, but it was like the civil air patrol. I remember I had a hat and a badge, and we would volunteer. It was mostly schoolkids with a supervisor. We would go to the roofs of the hotel, and we would report all of the planes that we saw or heard. I remember back then that, after doing it for so many months, I didn’t even have to see the plane, by the sound I could tell what plane it was. When we spotted a plane, we would call it in to a number as to what we spotted. Why we did it I don’t know, I don’t know whether there was threat of invasion back then, but I do remember that a lot of us volunteered for that civic organization, and it was mostly made up of teenagers.

**Interviewer:** That would’ve been post-World War II.

**Hertz:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Maybe it had something to do with the Cuban Missile Crisis or the Cold War.

**Hertz:** The Cold War.

**Interviewer:** Did you get any of that training in school about the Cold War?

**Hertz:** Not that I remember. We would have drills where I remember – today I think what we were doing was silly. We’d get under the desks, and the desks were nothing but a little tiny thing that didn’t even cover you, but they would have the alarms go off and you’d go under your desk. I remember doing that. I couldn’t tell you today why we did it or what the purpose was.

**Interviewer:** Civil defense. I think that was required around the country. Are there any stories about your coming in contact with any of these “colorful characters” around the beach?

**Hertz:** Silver Dollar Jake.

**Interviewer:** Okay, tell us about that. We’ve heard of him – he operated on the beach, didn’t he? Right on the beach.

**Hertz:** He operated on the beach; he was a character. He drove a Cadillac convertible, and he would hand out silver dollars.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever get one?

**Hertz:** Yes. The kids would run after him because he was handing out money. I don’t remember the name, but there was a gentleman that used to have a soap opera on a box that he would set up at the corner on Lincoln Road or off of Godfrey Road, one of the streets, and attract a crowd. He would give speeches, probably it was a religious speech, but he became very, very famous for his soapbox oratory. I’m drawing a blank on his name. Silver Dollar Jake would drive around, and he had dummies in his car sitting up on top.

There are a number of things that I remember that had an impression. When the Miss Universe contest first came to Miami Beach, my father was in charge of all the judges. I drove a car picking up the models and taking them from one place to the other, and boy was I thrilled. We had these white convertibles. I think they were Pontiacs, but I’m not sure. They had a whole bunch of them that they would put on sale after the Miss Universe. We would have a parade, and we volunteered to drive the cars, and I would be driving a car back then. It had to be like when I was older than 16 or 17.

**Interviewer:** I bet there were a lot of volunteers for that job.

**Hertz:** Yes, there was, but it was a memory that I will probably never forget. That brought an awful lot of notoriety to Miami Beach, having that contest here.

**Interviewer:** Did your father know Carl Fisher? Did he ever talk about any of the more famous people associated with the beach?

**Hertz:** I don’t remember. I know that he may have, because he knew a lot of the intimate details of Carl’s life, his personal life, his friends, and some of the other people that developed the beach. I was too young back then to know.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever go to any of the shows at any of the clubs?

**Hertz:** I remember I went to a lot of them. One of the favorites was Martha Raye’s – I don’t know, it was on the corner of Collins Avenue and 23rd Street, something like that.

**Interviewer:** Was she kind of a permanent fixture?

**Hertz:** She was. She had her own club here where she performed, and they served dinner and drinks, and we sat by the stage and watched the shows. There was a stripper that was very famous that had a club on Collins Avenue, that back then it was not – while it was a stripping club, it wasn’t like nude, it was…

**Interviewer:** More of a tease.

**Hertz:** Yeah, it was just risqué, but it was still a place that you could go. The 5 o’clock Club was the name. Then there were a lot of other clubs. I remember when I was older, 71st Street, which is not exactly on the beach, but right close to where I live now, North Bay Village, was filled with the Peppermint Lounge, and Chubby Checker, and The Twist there, and Sammy Davis Junior had a club there, and you had all his friends. That was very, very popular. That wasn’t exactly on the beach, but it was close enough that it was part of the beach activities that people would go to. You had very, very famous restaurants that were worldwide known, such as Hy Uchitel’s Place for Steak, the Bonfire Restaurant. There was a number of very, very good restaurants that were on that strip.

**Interviewer:** Speaking of restaurants, where did your family go out to eat when they didn’t feel like cooking?

**Hertz:** Sundays, everybody met at Coney Island.

**Interviewer:** Coney Island?

**Hertz:** Coney Island; it was the Sunday place. They had a game room where they had like pinball machines, and there was a hot dog place, and every family on the beach would be there Sunday afternoon. The kids would get together, the families would get together, and that was a fixture. We had something different back then – Pumpernick’s, Wolfie’s, Junior’s, which is where most of the residents would eat. You still had The Forge, which was famous back then, and out of the pay range of most of the people that lived on the beach.

**Interviewer:** What about Joe’s Stone Crab?

**Hertz:** Joe’s was there, and that has always been popular. It’s been redone, but it was always the place to go on Miami Beach when I was growing up, and before it started – when the beach started, basically. It’s just been a fixture here forever. What people don’t know is you not only go to Joe’s to eat and because of their stone crabs, their other food is excellent. You go there to be seen and to be with people that are being seen. I think, growing up back then, if you knew the maître d’ at Joe’s – or he knew you, let me put it that way – then you know that you had made it. [laughs][55:50]

**Interviewer:** And you didn’t have to wait. Carl, is there anything?

**Carl:** Just about his wife.

**Interviewer:** Yes. Your wife, you said, was involved in service to senior citizens. When did that start?

**Hertz:** Jackie has been…had been, she just recently passed away, which is a big loss not only to me, but to the – you’ll make me cry – but to the entire community. She was an amazing woman, she cared. Her email address had the word “care” in it, her business had the word “care” in it. Jackie had no strangers. When my father passed away, my mother had nothing to do. Jackie formed a 501©(3) called the 42nd Street Seniors, because we lived close there. It operated out of the JCC and it involved a lot of the senior citizens. They would meet weekly, and they would have lectures, lunches, and different entertainment. That evolved into another nonprofit called Primetime Seniors, which still exists today. Primetime Seniors served the same purpose; it had a means of getting seniors that were by themselves together to meet each other.

**Interviewer:** Was this just on the beach?

**Hertz:** It was just on the beach, yeah, and it was made up of people from the beach. Jackie was honored by the city of Miami Beach on a number of occasions where they named the day Jackie Hertz Day, or they gave awards to Primetime Seniors.

One of the things that Jackie sponsored was called Orange Ribbon Day, where she would get many of the organizations that provided benefits to the seniors, such as what services were available, if they were homeless, for domestic violence, a place to call. She involved the police department, and would have different seminars. One of the days, that Orange Ribbon Day, was at the convention center. It was a huge event with a lot of people attending with different seminars and movies on how to protect yourself.

The last things that Primetime Seniors did while she was alive, is we would hold events throughout the city with the police department on CPR. Many of the seniors, if somebody that you’re living with, an elderly spouse, and something happens, somebody has a heart attack, the seniors didn’t know you had to call, and you didn’t know whether to call or help or what to do first and how to do it. Primetime Seniors would hold events, we had them here like at the swimming pool in their little rec room. The police would come in with the dummies and the equipment to show these seniors how to perform CPR, and to make them comfortable so that they didn’t panic and could do it. It brought tremendous benefit to the seniors on Miami Beach.

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