October 2006

Aaron Fodiman and Margaret Word Burnside oral history interview by Suzette Berkman, October 3, 2006

Aaron Fodiman (Interviewee)
Margaret Burnside (Interviewer)
Suzette Berkman (Interviewer)

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/flstud_oh
Part of the American Studies Commons, and the Community-based Research Commons

Scholar Commons Citation
Fodiman, Aaron (Interviewee); Burnside, Margaret (Interviewer); and Berkman, Suzette (Interviewer), 'Aaron Fodiman and Margaret Word Burnside oral history interview by Suzette Berkman, October 3, 2006' (2006). Digital Collection - Florida Studies Center Oral Histories. Paper 267.
http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/flstud_oh/267

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the Digital Collection - Florida Studies Center at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digital Collection - Florida Studies Center Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.
COPYRIGHT NOTICE

This Oral History is copyrighted by the University of South Florida Libraries Oral History Program on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the University of South Florida.

Copyright, 2007, University of South Florida. All rights reserved.

This oral history may be used for research, instruction, and private study under the provisions of the Fair Use. Fair Use is a provision of the United States Copyright Law (United States Code, Title 17, section 107), which allows limited use of copyrighted materials under certain conditions. Fair Use limits the amount of material that may be used.

For all other permissions and requests, contact the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA LIBRARIES ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM at the University of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Avenue, LIB 122, Tampa, FL 33620.
SB: This is a test. This is October 3, and I'm Suzette Berkman.

MB: And I'm part of the test too, Margaret Word Burnside.

AF: And this is the—

SB: Is October 3, [2006], and I am here with Margaret Word Burnside, and with Aaron Fodiman. It's October 3, and we're interviewing these two wonderful people due to their profound impact on the Tampa Bay area. Thank you so much for being here. I enjoy you both as a couple, and we'll try to get to know you individually as well.

MB: This is quite an honor to be invited.

SB: Oh, wonderful.

AF: I'm not saying anything until I'm asked a question.

SB: [laughs] Okay, well, we'll have a lot of questions. But I think we’d like to start with Margaret, if we may, Aaron.

AF: That would be my preference.

SB: Tell us a little bit about where you're from, Margaret.

MB: I was born in Clearwater, Florida, and while we're sitting here in your home, looking out at Tampa Bay, which is so gorgeous, it makes me realize that in the 1950s and '60s we wouldn't be sitting here probably. If you grew up in Clearwater because the whole area was so divided because of the transportation problems.

SB: What, why?
MB: It was practically a day trip to get—

SB: Oh my.

MB: —to you know, between Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Clearwater, it was quite a distance. Two lane roads to go to St. Petersburg, we used to drive through a cow pasture, which was fun, but quite time consuming. The Courtney Campbell [Causeway] once they built it was very narrow, two lanes, and you know, it was quite an adventure to travel.

SB: And did you travel?

MB: We did. I can remember coming to Gasparilla one day. We had a holiday in school even in— on the other, in Pinellas County, there was a holiday for Gasparilla at that time. But it was quite a journey.

SB: Were your parents born here?

MB: They were born in Atlanta and moved to Clearwater because they wanted to open an airport here. And flew around Florida to find a place that they really liked. And they loved the beaches, and the people that they met here, and the weather. And [they] settled here, even though their families had been in the Atlanta area for generations.

SB: Is that what they did here?

MB: Yes.

SB: They had an airport?

MB: They opened the airport and then started, daddy started Metal Industries, a manufacturing company in one of the hangars. And eventually moved to other places. And so, you know, moved on from the airport. But—

SB: Were you involved in that—?

MB: I was—

SB: —as you grew?

MB: —as I grew? I was a little girl. But you know, daddy would take us out to the airport and he would take us flying which was very fun.

SB: Did you learn to fly?

MB: He used to let me steer.
SB: Okay.

MB: There weren't as many laws back then. We could go any place and almost do anything and in fact my mother just learned not that long ago that he used to do wing-over's with us in the plane—

SB: Oh my goodness.

MB: —and figure eights and we would do tricks. And it was very exciting. But I don't think you're allowed to do that anymore. But I never really flew by myself. My mother learned to fly, and soloed.

SB: Isn't that wonderful.

MB: It was very—you know, this was a very small area.

SB: So she was involved in the business too?

MB: No, not really. She was taking care of four children.

SB: Oh, okay.

MB: And I'm the oldest of the four. So she was—?

SB: Sisters? Brothers?

MB: I have a brother, two years younger who lives in Los Angeles as an—is in the film industry. A sister, six years younger who lives in Clearwater still, has a daughter, 13, and is very involved in the community on boards and committees and things, as my mother used to be (and still is). And then I have a baby brother who is twelve years younger who lives in Hawaii. And—

SB: Oh. What does he do?

MB: He's—he used to be president of Telnet, now Aaron likes to say he's an heir. [Laughs]

SB: [Laughs] Okay.

MB: He, right now is skiing some place in Colorado or—

SB: Oh my goodness, oh gosh.

MB: We grew up traveling, all of us, so—

SB: And how old were you while your father had the business?
MB: When he started the other business I was probably in elementary school. He started the manufacturing company. And then as I was growing up we all worked there doing different things along the way, and it was always terribly embarrassing. Because it was one of the largest employers around, so most of the boys in school, in high school, worked for daddy. So I hated that.

SB: Oh!

MB: Yeah, it was—

SB: That is interesting.

MB: Of course now the area has grown so much more, you know, that that's the small business now.

SB: Sure. Is your father still living?

MB: He's no longer living. But he was one of these really fun people that sailed sailboats, collected antique cars—

SB: Oh, that's wonderful.

MB: And every summer, we would travel out west. And spend six weeks in an air stream trailer, just going wherever he decided we should go.

SB: That is terrific.

MB: It was always very, very fun. So its—

SB: Did you develop your love of travel from those years?

MB: I think so, couldn't help it. We would look forward to it, and get so we recognized different places, then we had favorite places that we wanted to go. And it was always just a wonderful family-together event.

SB: That's terrific. And your mother is still living?

MB: My mother still lives in the home I grew up in, in Clearwater. And she's still—I think she's maybe the oldest, long running board member of the Salvation Army.

SB: How wonderful.

MB: She was president of so many different groups. And at one point I think she was president of four different PTAs at once.
SB: Oh my gosh.

MB: Yeah, but she was—

SB: Because—

MB: —always very involved in the community.

SB: That's terrific. Is she still—?

MB: Yes. And she still travels, and she—

SB: And part time she lives in North Carolina?

MB: North Carolina, in Highlands, for most of the summer.

SB: That's terrific.

MB: So—

SB: And do you all visit?

MB: Whenever we were able to. We were there this summer.

SB: That's terrific. And at what point did you meet Aaron?

MB: Aaron and I met—

SB: Is this—is this your first—if I might ask, [marriage]?

MB: Actually my second marriage—

SB: Your second?

MB: I have a—

SB: Do you, do you want to tell us about the first?

MB: Sure. I had another life before Aaron.

AF: Not nearly as good!

SB: [laughs]

MB: [laughs] That, or exciting.
SB: —as exciting.

MB: I'm really very fortunate. You know, sometimes things that seem like they're really, really terrible things in your life can turn out to be blessings.

SB: That's so true.

MB: And actually, that's what happened. When I was married to Bob Burnside, and we were married quite a—18 years.

SB: Oh my. That's a long time.

MB: And then when he ran off with my best friend, I was just devastated!

SB: [Gasps] Oh my word!

MB: [Laughs]

SB: [Laughs] I'm sure!

MB: But then later, I met Aaron, and we just were immediate friends.

SB: Oh that's wonderful.

MB: So it was—

SB: How did you meet the first Mr.—?

MB: I met—

SB: —that you were married to?

MB: —him when I'd been sailing with daddy, and the rest of the family. And was home from college one summer. And he was with another friend of mine. And the friend said, “Oh, there will be a lot of girls there from Steven's College. Let's go say hello.”

SB: [Laughs]

MB: And they were getting off their boat. And so they came over and we started going out. And I really was going out with somebody else, but needed a partner to model with me in a fashion show and my other boyfriend had said, “No way.” So, since Bob was willing to model in the fashion show—

SB: You bonded.

MB: —I started going out with him! [Laughs]
SB: [Laughs]

MB: And then we eventually got married.

SB: And what did he do?

MB: He now sells insurance. In the beginning he worked at Morgan Yacht. And was the marketing director there.

SB: Okay.

MB: So, I—and he, his real love was fishing and boating. So I—in my former life I did a lot of boating and sailing.

SB: Oh gosh. That's exciting.

MB: First with daddy, and then with Bob. Now Aaron and I like to cruise on—

SB: Travel the world.

MB: —cruise ships.

SB: [laughs] right!

MB: We've moved up a little.

SB: [laughs]

MB: [Laughs]

SB: You mentioned you went to Stevens College?

MB: Yes. In Columbia, Missouri. A girl’s school that I really loved. And I was fortunate because while I was there it was becoming a four-year school. So I wrote a paper saying why I should be one of the ones selected to stay for two more years.

SB: Oh my—

MB: And [I] did stay—

SB: Great.

MB: —and just loved it. I would have stayed ten years.
SB: Oh, that's terrific. What was your major?

MB: It was a lot of everything. I always took extra classes. But it was really, Liberal Arts. But I took a lot of music and humanities and English and literature. And just loved it there—

SB: That's wonderful.

MB: —it was just great. They had small classes, and you could be really involved. And, I could do all my favorite things like water ballet and model and—

SB: Terrific.

MB: —and you know, just all of my hobbies—

SB: Keep all your interests.

MB: —were pushed there as well, so—

SB: That's wonderful.

MB: It was very fun.

SB: Well, how did you meet Mr. Right?

MB: It's such a long story, that Aaron actually likes to tell so I should let him tell it.

AF: You can tell it.

MB: My version is about—

SB: A little different?

MB: —about a quarter of his.

AF: Save four hours.

SB: [Laughs]

MB: Yes, his is very long. We really and truly met on a bus. And anybody who knows us—

SB: On a bus!

MB: —would swear that we've never even ridden on a bus.
MB: But there was Leadership Pinellas group was having their annual trip to Tallahassee. And I was on the committee that helped plan the trip. But normally would not have gone. But since Bob had left, I thought, Why not? I don't have to stay home, might as well go on this trip. And Aaron was on the trip because he had just moved to our area. And a friend had said, “Why don't you come along on this?” And so we were riding along on the bus, and a friend of mine grabbed my Rolex watch and said, “Oh! The time is off! This, how can you possibly have the time not be right?” And I said, “I don't know how to work it, but it doesn't matter, the time changed, I know exactly what time it is. It's going to change back in a few months.” And she grabbed my watch off my wrist, took it up, tapped Aaron on the shoulder, and —

[Turns to Aaron] You can do it from here.

AF: What I still consider the world's greatest yuppie pick up line, turned to me and said, “Can you set my friend's Rolex for her? I noticed you're wearing a Rolex”

SB: Oh my goodness. That's extreme.

AF: And I of course said “Yes.” And as she went back to get Margaret's watch, I turned to the woman I was sitting next to and said, “Just what I want to meet, some bimbo that can't set her own watch!”

SB: [laughs] Oh gosh!

MB: I was terribly embarrassed.

SB: What an introduction!

MB: But he set the watch and then, because—

AF: When I saw the bimbo, I said, “Okay, maybe I do want to”—

SB and MB: [Laughs]

SB: I would think so, Aaron!

MB: But—

SB: That's a great story.

MB: —by setting the watch he got to ask the girl sitting next to him, “Who is that?” So she knew that I was going through a divorce, since her husband was handling the divorce.

SB: Oh, Okay.
MB: So—

AF: And he had been my fraternity brother in college. So that's how I knew her.

SB: Isn't it a small world? That is amazing.

   Where were you going on this bus?

MB: Tallahassee.

SB: Tallahassee.

MB: To visit the legislators.

SB: Okay. And so that's how you initially met?

AF: So she, yeah, she told me, “Oh, that's poor Margaret Burnside. She's going through a terrible divorce.” And then proceeded to tell me that after knowing me for thirty years, that was the biggest smile she had ever seen on my face.

SB: Oh, that's, a great story.

   Well Aaron, now tell me and—and we've talked before about this, but you have a very interesting background in terms of your studies. But can we go even further back as to where you were born?

AF: Oh sure, I was born in Stanford, Connecticut.

SB: Okay.

AF: Which was a bedroom community to New York City. And my father had been born there along with his brothers. My grandfather moved there before the turn of the century. [He] had escaped from Russia, Poland, or one of those places, and had come there. And my father went to school in New Orleans at Loyola University where he met my mother who had been born and raised in New Orleans. And brought his southern belle back to Stanford after he graduated from dental school. And so that's where I was born and raised. And thought I would spend all of my life there, just as my father and his brothers were spending all of their lives there. In those days, people didn't move around. You assumed that you would live in the same town that you were raised in. And so I grew up in Stanford, and was—

SB: With how many siblings?

AF: Four siblings, I'm the oldest of four. Margaret and I have that very much in common. I have two younger sisters and a younger brother. And we're each approximately three years apart. Good planning on my parents’ part. And consequently, I really didn't get to know my brother until he came down to Washington to go to college. Because I went
away to school when I was 16 years old, I went to college. And at that time he was only seven years old. And when you're 16, you don't really know your seven-year old sibling.

SB: That's true, yeah.
   Where did you go to school?

AF: Tulane in New Orleans.

SB: Because of your mother?

AF: Because of my father I was slated to go to Dartmouth. And two weeks before I was going off to school, my father said, “I don't like to interfere in your life, but I'd like you to consider where you're going to college. I know you're all excited about going to Dartmouth, and everybody's excited that you're going to Dartmouth. But I must tell you, it's very cold up there. And there are no girls up there. And I would strongly suggest you consider Tulane in New Orleans.” And we went to New Orleans all the time because of my mother's family, so I knew the city well. And I thought about it, and I finally turned to my parents and said, “You know what? You're probably right. I probably am carried away with the Ivy League and all the rest. And maybe New Orleans is where I should go.” And they got in the car, drove me down, and I went to classes at Tulane for a week before my transcripts got down there. Because they knew they were going to admit me. And that's how I ended up at Tulane.

   And of course I was a pre-med student because in fifth grade, they had career day. And I was generally fairly bright, so when they said, What are you going to be? I knew fireman, cowboy wasn't going to pass anymore by the time I was in fifth grade. So I said, “Doctor.” And the teacher of course went, “Wonderful!” And I came home that day and my mother said, “What happened in school?” And I said, “We had career day,” and she held her breath, as she asked me, “Well, what are you going to be?” And when I told her “Doctor,” it was like, “Oh good! I can't wait to tell your father when he gets home!” So they did, and of course I got extra dessert that night or something. And the next year, we had sixth grade, [and we] had career day. And I could remember a year back, so when it came to me, it was like, my hand was up there, I'm going to be a doctor, and all the accolades started all over again. So by the time I was in ninth grade, everybody knew I was going to be a doctor, including me. And it was just natural, and you know—I didn't have to meet with the school counselors, nobody was worried, What am I going to do with my life? So it was very simple. And of course I got down to Tulane and found out that anybody that wasn't a premed, we basically considered brain damaged—

SB: Oh gosh.

AF: You know we figured, oh yeah, well he's in business school, he's not too bright [laughs].

SB: [laughs] Oh goodness.
AF: It was really that type of thing. And lo and behold, when I got ready to go into medical school, I suddenly started to faint. I have something called Vasovagal syndrome, which when I see blood, think about blood, anything of that nature, I faint!

SB: Oh gosh.

AF: And they told me, Don't worry, you'll get over it. And I said, “I’m not getting over this.” I tried it for a couple weeks. And so I decided, “Okay, I've got to do something with my life.” And I decided that I’d go to graduate business school. And lo and behold, I couldn't get into graduate business school because I had never taken [an] accounting course, an economics course. My degree was in chemistry.

SB: Your degree?

AF: Undergraduate degree.

SB: Okay. Because you—

AF: This is when I was premed—

SB: Okay.

AF: I was a premed—my degree. My degree was in the sciences, which was chemistry. And not knowing what in the world to do with my life at that point, I was 20 years old, and I thought I was really old. I started to panic. And one of my father's friends, who was dean of New York law school, and we were having lunch with him, and I was telling my dilemma—and he said, “Well, you ought to come to law school. I said, “I don't want to be a lawyer.” He says, “Well, you don't have to be lawyer, but if you graduate law school, you can get into graduate business school because they will accept that as your prerequisite.” So I said, “Well how long does it take to get through law school?” He says, “Normally three years, but you can go on an accelerated course and we'll get you through in two years.” I said, “Okay—

SB: Oh my gosh.

AF: —if it's only going to take me two years, I will do that.” And I went through law school in two years, and when I graduated—

SB: At—at which school?


SB: Okay.

AF: Downtown New York, Foley Square, across from the federal courthouse.
And I was—had my application into New York graduate school [in] business administration. And at that time, I'd won the international law award. And the Kennedy administration had just come in. And so they had their best and brightest program. And they came to the school to recruit me for the federal government.

SB: Oh my gosh.

AF: And being young and foolish, I said, “Well, I'd love to, but I want to go to graduate business school.” And they said, “Well, why don't you work for us during the day and go to graduate business school at night?” And that's what I did. So—

SB: Amazing.

AF: —the first year I worked, I worked up in New York so I could go to graduate business school.

SB: What did you do in your job?

AF: I started with the Federal Trade Commission. And from there I transferred into the White House, and I was basically White House counsel for every president from Kennedy through Carter.

SB: White House counsel?

AF: Yes.

SF: That is extraordinary.

AF: It was fun.

SB: My gosh!

AF: It was fun.

SB: What kind of experience that had to be!

AF: Things that you don't—

SB: Do you have some stories?

AF: —want to ever talk about!

SB: Well— [laughs], so—

AF: There are two things you never want to see made. One is sausages, the other is laws.
SB: Oh no. Well do you have some stories from that time?

AF: I have wonderful stories but I tell very few of them. But I will tell one story because it relates to Margaret.

SB: Okay.

AF: When she finally got up the courage to introduce me to her family, because I was not what they really had in mind for her, she—I think we had been dating almost nine months before she finally brought me to her family's home. And they were talking about her father's best friend who had moved back to Clearwater to live near him since they had been friends since they were three and four years old. And I heard the name, and I listened, and I asked a few questions, and I realized he had been my first boss in Washington, DC when I went down to Washington.

SB: Oh my goodness, that is incredible.

AF: And of course, when I told them, they made sure that I was invited back immediately so that they could have him over as well. And we could reminisce about old times, so to speak.

SB: Isn't that interesting.

AF: But again, that small world thing. It's incredible how often the paths of your life cross back and forth.

SB: That's incredible. Now what year would that have been in?

AF: Well, for me, I went to work for the government in 1960. And then met Margaret in 1985.

[Phone ringing—tape paused]

AF: So therefore, it had been 25 years basically since I had first seen and met Margaret's father's best friend, never realizing that some 25 years later, I would be sitting in my future wife's home finding out that this man, whose job it was to oversee what I did as a beginning young lawyer—

SB: That's extraordinary.

AF: —was going to be tied in in that way.

SB: Just amazing.

[Tape Paused]
AF: The funny thing about telling stories about things that happen in the White House, first of all, you realize that you had a very skewed view of the world there, that the rest of the world finds hard to understand. The other thing is that we all realize relatively quickly that we all had our own versions of exactly the same thing that took place—very shortly after the event. So most of the stories about what happened in the White House were long, ongoing dialogues—and probably the biggest lesson that we learned was, particularly during Watergate, where we were so tied up in every little thing that happened each and every day. And found out fifty miles outside of Washington, nobody else cared.

SB: Oh, okay.

AF: And that was a big shock for us because—

SB: Really?

AF: —we were so centered in the fact that, Oh my god, here we are in the core of government, basically determining what was going to happen with the rest of the world at that time.

SB: Extraordinary.

AF: And so the stories are really what has happened to history. And as they say, history is written by the winners. So basically, whatever we saw as what was going on within the White House, it's how it ultimately worked out that matters. So the rest of the stories are insignificant.

SB: Not sure I agree with you Aaron, but of course that's your prerogative. You know, to not comment on those. But let me ask you, how did it affect you as a person?

AF: One, it made me very open minded. Two, it made me very much aware that there is never any one way to do things. And that three, don't prejudge anything. Because no matter how you think it may turn out, it may end up totally differently than what you expected. I think it made me very aware of the fallibility of all of mankind.

SB: Wow. Pretty serious lesson to learn.

AF: Because—well, in the beginning we thought we knew everything. And as time went on—

SB: How did it affect you then professionally? Did it steer you in certain directions?

AF: No, as a matter of fact, ultimately, all that happened was that I finally decided it was time to move on. And that I wanted to do something else with my life.

SB: Okay. And this was, this was what year?
AF: This was 1978. I had been working for the government for 18 years. And President Carter was in office. I was an Iranian expert. I was very close with the Shah, and the Iranian ambassador. And we knew the overthrow was coming. I was one of those people that argued very strenuously to keep the Shah in power and tried to explain that there are certain groups of people that, that you cannot give their civil liberties to. And things turned to such a note that I said, “You know, I really don't feel that I'm doing any good here.” It was time to leave. And at that point, I left, and just went in a totally different direction. And accepted the position as President of Popeye's Family Fried Chicken. Just to—

SB: My gosh.

AF: —you know, go from the sublime to the ridiculous.

SB: But into the business world.

AF: But into the business world. And then I ended up coming to Clearwater because the Kapok Tree Restaurant chain was offered to me to purchase. And I wanted the corporation to buy it, and the corporation didn't want to buy the chain, but I did. So I gave my resignation, left Popeye's, bought the Kapok Tree chain, and started coming down here four days out of the month to run them, and after six months, said, “This is heaven, this is where I want to live.” And—

SB: Our fortune.

AF: —moved here. So it's, it's funny how unexpected things are there, that serendipity is everywhere.

SB: Absolutely.

   And let me ask you, did you ever get that MBA?

AF: Yes, I did. [Laughs]

SB: [Laughs]. You did?

AF: Yes I did.

SB: From?

AF: From New York Graduate School of Business Administration.

SB: Was that important to you?

AF: I thought it was at the time. The only thing that I think that ever came out of it that was important was that I remember vividly a course I took on corporate finance, where
they taught you the proper way to select an underwriter for your company. And I guess I was out of school three years when I started to get involved with some public underwritings. And realized that I had spent three hours in a course to teach me something that could have boiled down to, You accept whoever says yes.

SB: Oh, okay [laughs].

AF: And it was one of the real lessons in life, that some people make things look as though you have control over them. And the truth of the matter is, No. You just go out there and ask enough people until somebody says yes.

SB: Well how long were you with Popeye's?

AF: From 1978 to 1983.

SB: Oh, okay.

AF: So it was five years.

SB: A good bit of time.

AF: It was—and I loved it and I had a great time, and I was living in New York City, and it was fabulous and it was such a big change for me. From what I had been doing—to go from worrying about everything in the world to, okay, all we have to do is sell chicken.

SB: Kapok Tree. That was also a restaurant. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

AF: Well the Kapok chain—Again, interesting how all these things come about that are all long stories. But it was a chain of restaurants that had started outside Washington, DC back in 1948. A woman had been serving dinners in her home after her husband passed away. Her son went off to the army, came back, [and] was in the music business, playing in big bands, and all of a sudden, the big bands stopped. So he went home, and he'd been out in California, saw Knott’s Berry Farm—

[End tape 1, side A]

[End tape 1, side B]

AF: —he decided to take this concept he saw in California called Knott’s Berry Farm and bring it back to his mother's restaurant in Maryland. And called it Peter Pan. And it grew, but Peter Pan was so far out of Washington, DC that they closed down for the winter. And in 1957, they found a place in Clearwater, and they opened up a Kapok Tree Restaurant in Clearwater because the Kapok Tree was already [a] well-established monument there. And they bought the land next to the Kapok Tree, and they opened that restaurant up for the winter. So they take their staff to Clearwater for the winter, then
close down in the summer in Clearwater because everybody was gone, and moved back
to Maryland, open up Peter Pan in Maryland, and they did this for several years.

And eventually, as time went on, Clearwater grew. Maryland grew. They started
to keep them open all year round. And the year was, I think 1968. And they decided to go
public. And at that time I was representing an underwriter in Washington DC that agreed
to take them public. So I learned all about the Kapok Trees when I was going through the
prospectus for the underwriter doing the filings. And knew all the investors and
everybody involved. And again, in 1983, some 15 years later, the owner of the Kapok
Tree passed away. His wife had taken over the business. He had three children in the
business. She fought with his three children because she was the fourth wife. She settled
with the children by buying out their stock. Unfortunately, [neither] the corporation nor
she had the money. The company was a public company. The original underwriters still
had lots of people involved. The corporation, they knew I was now in the food business,
they had known me from the beginning, they found me, came to me and said, “Aaron, do
we have a deal for you. Because you're one of the only people that know all about it,
you're in the food business, this is the perfect match—and we're having a problem selling
this property because other people don't understand the business.” And that's how it
happened.

And I took it to Popeye's and Popeye's said, “No, we're a fast food company, we
don't want to do that.” So I found some other investors, and we borrowed money and we
bought the chain. Bought the public company—

SB: And this was—?

AF: —and that's how we ended up with that, and as I say, I came down here in 1984, and
that's how I got to the Tampa Bay area.

SB: Through the Kapok Tree.

AF: Through the Kapok Tree. So—

SB: What did you do with the Kapok Tree?

AF: Well eventually, the original concept was that we were going to sell off all the
property, because they were all on very large parcels of land. And I was very familiar
with real estate development, so we were saying, Okay, we bought this for five million
dollars, we can spin it off, probably and get 20 million dollars. Divide it up with the other
shareholders, everybody will make out wonderfully well.

Well I got in there, started running the restaurants, loved running the restaurants,
and so we were much slower in selling off the properties than was originally intended.
But we eventually sold off each property. The one in Fort Lauderdale was sold to the
county—it's now a county park. It was 65 acres. The one in Madeira Beach was sold to
the Jewish Community Center, and the Jewish Community Center was there for a while.
The original property up in Maryland was sold to a housing developer who ended up
never being able to develop the property and it's back to being a restaurant. The one in
Clearwater, under the tree, was sold to Thoroughbred music stores. Elliot Rubinson, and Elliot still runs—owns it. And he sold his chain to—

MB: Sam Ash.

AF: Sam Ash Music. So they now rent that space and it's still rented out for special events, et cetera. And then my favorite was the Savoy across the street. When they widened McMullen Booth Road, they took half the restaurant. So we sold that half to the Department of Transportation and I sold the other half to a fellow by the name of Ken Sawter, who built a small shopping center there. So that's what happened—

SB: Which is still there.

AF: —to all the property. So it just took a lot longer than we'd originally planned. But that's because I was having such a wonderful time running the restaurants. We were in no rush to sell them unless we could get the price we wanted.

SB: How much time was that?

AF: It went from—we bought it in 1983, March of 1983. And I think the last piece of property was sold in May of 1991.

SB: Wow, so that's a long time.

AF: So, so it was—

SB: Did you, did you—

AF: —well, it was a long time but a short time. It was eight years, and a lot went on in those eight years.

SB: Did you have a direct—I mean, were you running the restaurant yourself?

AF: Oh, I was running the restaurants. I was coming up with the recipes with—Margaret used to love to come over because we'd have tastings every couple of months to see what we're going to add to the menu, take off the menu—

SB: How fun.

AF: I was very much involved. In fact in 1987 and 1988, I won in the US Chef's Open. So I was very, very active.

SB: My goodness.

AF: I was also doing all the buying for all the gift shops. I mean, I was there—
SB: Amazing.

AF: —all the time—

SB: My goodness.

AF: —loving every bit of it, and enjoying just, having such a diverse operation to deal with.

SB: Margaret, were you involved?

MB: Not at all. I ate there quite a lot. Because Aaron had to be there. He had to walk around, even if he wasn't going to do anything, they needed to see that he was there. Because, especially on holidays. They had to be there, so he had to be there too. So our families had a lot of holiday dinners there. And we could invite whomever we wanted, but that's where we had to eat, not at home.

SB: What year were you married?

MB: We don't even know for sure! [Laugh]

AF: Actually, actually—

SB: Do you know?

AF: It was—I know for sure. It was 1987.

SB: Okay.

AF: It was 1987, and it was—

SB: So this was after you started in the restaurant business.

AF: Oh yes. See, I didn't move here until—

SB: Right, right.

AF: —’84. So I met Margaret in about ’86.

SB: Oh that's great.

AF: —’84. So I met Margaret in about ’86.

SB: Now, okay, after the restaurant's gone, now what?

AF: I started to look for other things to do.

MB: That—before that, the magazine already started, while he was still—
SB: The *Tampa Bay Magazine* we're talking about.

MB: *Tampa Bay Magazine*, right.

SB: Okay.

AF: Oh, okay.

MB: You kind of forgot that minor detail [laughs].

AF: Yeah, I—

MB: [Laughs] that's our whole life now, but—

AF: Nineteen ninety, I moved down here, I'm trying to make a new life down here. I'm very involved in the arts in Washington and New York. And it—

SB: In what way?

AF: In all ways.

SB: Okay.

AF: In theatre, in museums, in a multitude of different organizations.

MB: Boards and committees.

SB: Okay.

AF: Kennedy Center—you name it I was involved in it.

And everybody said, What are you going to do in the backwater? And I said, “I don't know but I’m sure I'll find something.” Of course, I came down here—Ruth Eckerd Hall was starting, Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center was starting up. There was so much going on. I went on the board of the Tampa Museum of Art. There were opportunities everywhere. And I was having a wonderful time, but I was finding it very difficult to fully enjoy the lifestyle I had had for those—

SB: Sure.

AF: —years in Washington and New York. And one of the things that I noticed was missing was, in New York and Washington, I had always read the local lifestyle magazine. Washington it was *Washingtonian*; New York [it was] *New York Magazine*.

And you knew the better restaurants, the people that were involved in things—what exhibits were going on—there was this whole part of my life that I was having a very difficult time getting all this stuff together. And I decided that we really needed a regional magazine down here for me. I didn't care about anybody else. But I wanted a
regional magazine that gave me all this information. I wanted to go to the better restaurants.

Well, I love the Tribune, I love the St. Pete Times, but you are not going to find out about the lifestyle that I wanted from either of those publications. The TV of course is geared to a totally different audience. So I had this idea of starting the magazine. And I hired some people to work for me, and I thought it would be very easy because I had in my mind exactly what I wanted. It was going to be a combination of New York Magazine and Washingtonian Magazine. And to this day, I am very flattered if somebody says to me, You know, your magazine looks just like Washingtonian or looks just like New York. I go, “Good! I'm on track!”

Anyway, what happened was I terminated the people that were running the magazine—

SB: Which—was it called Tampa Bay—?

MB: Tampa Bay Magazine.

AF: Tampa Bay—

SB: From when you purchased it?

AF: From the start. I didn't purchase it. I started from scratch.

SB: Okay.

MB: And I kept saying, “Oh! Everybody all these things. Why do we need to do this?”

SB: Okay.

AF: Yeah, Margaret kept telling me, “I know all 400 people that count.”

SB: Oh gosh. [laughs]

MB: [Laughs]

AF: You know? And we all—We go to the Yacht Club, we go to Heilman's [Beachcomber Restaurant], I mean—she could—four restaurants, that's it! How many more restaurants do you need?

SB: But you said you fired the people who were on—who were those people?

AF: I hired somebody. It was a Greg Snow.

MB: And just didn't follow the directions.
AF: So Greg Snow worked for me, and he just couldn’t—he was one of those people that I liked to say, [he] “Would rather lie than tell the truth, even if the truth was better.” Just something about him, he just wanted to do that. So I called Margaret, I said, “I’ve just fired Greg, his wife and his sister, all of whom worked for me.”

MB: And his sister was working—doing the books. They—it was just a little too inbred in there.

AF: And I said, “Can you go over and run the magazine for me?” And Margaret said, “Oh! Certainly.”

SB: Oh my!

MB: It's no big deal. I have a background in all those kind of things. I thought this would be easy.

AF: So in 1988, she went and ran the magazine.

MB: I was on—

SB: Wait a minute. We need to back up. You have a background in that? Could you clarify?

MB: Well—

SB: Because I don't think we talked about that.

MB: I had done catalogues and all of the—anything that was published for, first, daddy's company, and then for another company that—a manufacturing company that was their national manufacturing company. So I knew, I could even do the physical layout for the art department.

SB: Terrific.

MB: I had always been able to write, and I thought, How hard can this be? You know, I know about business, I can just do this.

And got in there and took about two minutes to realize [that] what really mattered was selling ads. Luckily, I had been out collecting money for all kinds of charity events. The boards that I was on, and had always been able to sell. So that was easy and actually still to this day, my favorite part of the magazine. But, so I—

SB: Interesting.

MB: —went in there doing that, and really spent almost two years just cleaning up problems that had been created—
SB: I see.

MB: —that everybody almost that I ran into thought they were going to be on the cover—

SB: I see.

MB: Little, minor details like that. But I was—I didn't really have time to be doing this, but got so involved in it, that I really loved it. I was modeling and coordinating fashion shows, and I would literally be backstage at a fashion show, while they were calling, You're on! And I'd be on the cell phone, working on an advertiser—

SB: Oh my goodness.

MB: —or something for the magazine, telling them, “Just a second, just a second, I'll be there!” And so I realized, Okay, if I'm going to do this, I better quit modeling, resign from about ten different boards I was on. I really went into the magazine.

Then, when Aaron sold Kapok, he was wondering, What am I going to do now? Because he had gone from being so busy to just nothing to do. So he was looking for a job. And that's when I interrupted him—

AF: That's when Margaret said to me, “What are you doing?” I said, “Well, I've got to do something with my life!” I was talking to people about all kinds of businesses and deals. And she says, “Well, you've got a magazine, why don't you—

MB: Get over here!

AF: —run it with me!” I said, “I don't know anything about the magazine, you're doing a good job.” And—

MB: So he would sit in there reading the paper for the—for a long time. And so we had to find things that he could do. But he could always write. And he had never sold anything. As many things as he had done, so—we had to work on selling skills—[laughs].

AF: And I had always been a photographer—

MB: So he could do that.

AF: —so I was thrilled to go out and take photographs of anything that they needed a photograph of, and then slowly they found different things for me to do.

MB: And it really ended up being such a fun thing, that we quit looking for somebody else to run it because we loved working together, being together all the time.

SB: That's important.
MB: And having this common project that was so exciting. And [we] had certain goals. And one of the goals was bringing the Tampa Bay area together. And so we were very focused on that, as well as you know, finding things that our readers and we felt like we were the typical readers so we knew what they would want. And just really, it's something we enjoy doing together.

AF: And I thought I had done my job very well because when I first married Margaret, if I'd said, “Find out what's going on in Tampa or St. Petersburg,” she would have said, “Why would anybody want to go to Tampa or St. Petersburg?” So you know, the viewpoint was your entire life could be lived very happily in Clearwater, Dunedin without ever having to go any place else.

SB: So was your focus initially Clearwater, Dunedin?

AF: No.

MB: No—

SB: With the magazine?

MB: —we knew we needed to—

SB: To bring—

MB: —do the whole area.

AF: That's what—that's why they did Tampa Bay from day one, because to me, I lived in Stanford which was a metropolitan part of New York City. I mean, we always considered [that] we were part of New York City. And living in Washington [DC], I mean, it was a metropolitan area. Nobody thought of DC as the only part of Washington. So when I got down here, this to me was so clearly a metropolitan area. I couldn't understand that the rest of the world didn't see that Tampa Bay was one area.

SB: You, in my mind, both of you, have helped with that particular mindset—incorporating it as Tampa Bay. There are few institutions like the Florida Orchestra. Well, I can't—a couple others I'm sure come to mind.

AF: Yeah, well, we're—

MB: They're one of the only ones—

SB: But they're bringing all those areas together.

AF: Well that's why we're very proud of the fact that Ruth Eckerd Hall and the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center just announced that they're going to be working together.
SB: That's exciting.

AF: That every time we see these groups coming together, I mean we thought it was wonderful when the Heart Association said, Okay, [we’re] no longer Hillsborough and Pinellas. Now, we're the Tampa Bay Arts Association. So we, right from the beginning kept telling people, Please don’t divide. [The] Cancer Society used to have one fundraiser in Hillsborough and another in Pinellas. We said, Can’t we do it all together? And they were having these little invites and we kept trying to say, There’s no reason that it can’t be one area and everybody join together.

And of course the sports teams followed through. You know, when we started it was Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and then when all of a sudden it became the Tampa Bay Lightning, and then the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, it was like, Wait! All the rest of the world is going Tampa Bay! Everybody was hearing, Tampa Bay.

MB: And when you used to pick up one of the guides, if you looked up St. Petersburg, it had one listing of everything that they had or the—the population, all the different figures. Clearwater would be separate, Tampa would be separate, and it isn’t until they add them together and have Tampa Bay, that we’re just an astounding area. We’re twelfth largest in the country.

AF: ADI in the country.

MB: And in the market. We’re—

AF: I was just talking to somebody about that from Miami today. That nobody can believe that we’re a bigger market than Miami.

SB: And singly, we’re not. Clearwater is not a—

AF: On no!

MB: Singly, we’re way down the bottom of the list.

AF: We don’t, we’re so far down it, we wouldn’t be on anybody’s chart.

MB: You wouldn’t even notice it.

SB: But together, yeah.

MB: Together we—

SB: Together we really make an impact.

MB: Together we’re the largest ADI, area of dominant influence, south of Atlanta. And I think it’s Detroit that’s ahead of us, and we’re about to pass them.
AF: Yep.

SB: That's extraordinary.

AF: We're sure going to.

SB: Extraordinary.

AF: Well—

MB: And—

AF: —WEDU is probably one of the best examples of that.

SB: Very much.

AF: You turn around and nobody has any idea how big WEDU is in the scope of public television stations.

SB: It's true. That it covers—

AF: But there's another one and we just have one after the other. Lowry Park Zoo, I mean I can name so many institutions.

SB: Please do, because in my mind, that's where you all have made the biggest impact. You interact with every one of these organizations.

AF: Yes.

SB: And it would be interesting to hear how you interact. And what is your criteria to interact, you know, with a particular group?

AF: Well, first of all, they've got to want our help.

SB: Okay.

MB: They have to call us and invite us to help.

SB: Okay.

AF: And be happy to get our help. Because we understand not everybody wants our help. And we decide that you can't go in and push things if they're not willing to. Like the Dali Museum. The Holocaust Museum. The Fine Arts Museum in St. Petersburg. There's three organizations that understand so well that they really have to deal with the whole area. And even though they're grouped together in this one little area in St. Petersburg, they all
understand that they are there for the rest of the area. That they’re a Tampa Bay institution. The Dali, the Holocaust, the Fine Arts are fascinating because each one of them is so different. But each one of them is so geared to taking care of the Tampa Bay area.

MB: And the world. I mean the Dali—

AF: And the world!

SB: They draw international—

MB: Yes.

AF: They draw from all over. A couple of years ago, while I was President of several of the cultural organizations here in Tampa—the Tampa Players, the Tampa Ballet Theatre, et cetera. And one of the things I always did was try and make sure that if they performed in Tampa they also performed in Pinellas. And several years ago we were so excited when we got American Stage to come over. Now it turned out to be a fiasco for a multitude of things, but at least they tried. And we understand—that’s one of the things I learned the most from government. That you don't always have to get positive results because somewhere along the line, at least you did try, and people will learn from that.

SB: You sowed seeds.

AF: You sowed the seeds. And that the seeds don't always catch on. And that—

SB: It's the only thing—

AF: —they turn around. I mean, in the beginning, we were very, very involved with the Tampa Museum of Art when Andy Moss was there. And then one thing led to another and we tried to work with Emily and there was just a different vision there. And even now, people are still so centered on, What's our building going to look like? Nobody talks about, what are we going to have in here? You go down to St. Pete, they're concentrating on what show are we bringing here next? Do we have a reason for people to want to come? Are we building an art collection? Such a difference between the philosophies of two different organizations and the strangest part is, probably 15 years ago, everybody would have bet that today the positions would be absolutely reversed because St. Petersburg were the old stodgy people who only wanted this very narrow scope of art. And the Tampa Museum of Art was the one that was opening up and blossoming and bringing in new ideas and concepts. And then you say, “How did they flip flop?”

SB: You just never know.

AF: You just never know.
SB: How are you involved to help these cultural institutions evolve?

AF: Well, one of the ways that we're involved is of course, we promote them in the magazine. We think that's very key. We have over 300,000 readers. So we're very, very aware that what we push makes a difference. We like to believe one of the reasons that the orchestra has continued to grow has benefited—is that we don’t sit there like some of the other media, and talk about the orchestra's problems. Yeah they have problems, every orchestra does! We only talk about the positive. So anybody that reads our magazine, when they think of the Florida Orchestra, tend to think, Gee, what a wonderful organization, we're always hearing about their great concerts or great parties and different events they're doing, how they're involved, who's donated to them. I mean that's another amazing thing. By simply reporting who's donated to them, people are very impressed by that.

SB: Of course.

AF: I mean, USF—I mean, Judy [Genshaft] unquestionably has done an incredible job out there. And then Judy Lisi up at Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center. There are some people that make our jobs so easy. Because they sit there and say, Gee, will you help us? And then there are other people that just sit there and go, We're here, we'd like to help you. And they go, Well, we don't really need that, that's not what we're focusing on.

So it's fascinating, one what we can do just through the way we present them in our publication. Which is something we get to do. And it's repetition because it's there all the time.

SB: Can you describe how, for people who haven't read the magazine, can you describe—?

MB: You mean there are people out there?! [laughs]

SB: Not a lot— But what is the format? How are you able to focus on these organizations?

MB: Well we, for one thing, do stories about things that we like. And we happen to like the culture. And there are so many events going on, we may do something ahead of time, so—and we have an event calendar that will tell people you know, what's going on. And so obviously we put that in there. We personally attend most of the events, in fact all of the events that are in the magazine.

SB: That's terrific.

MB: And so Aaron or I will take photos at events and after it's over, you can look and see social scenes. And they—the people are always looking for the readers that happen to be photographed there, what did they wear? What was the party like? And here they are, they look like they're having fun. Well, maybe next year I want to go to that event. And I think it helps in that way.
But we're totally focused on entertaining. We're not looking, like Aaron said, for something that's going to be negative or newsy. We're looking for what's fun, what's special about our area. What do you want to make sure you go to? We have artists in there—

AF: And what's happened? We do the people and places. We very much concentrate on who the people are because we believe that whatever Tampa Bay is, it's basically because of the people that are here. The next thing we do is, we concentrate on what places there are. Because until you tell people about the Aquarium, about the Dali Museum, I agree—people don't know. So, we're very much an information book. We're very much a book for people that sit down, and almost anybody that picks up our magazine goes through and finds something that they go, Oh, this is interesting. I didn't know this.

MB: They pick it up and say, What a great area this must be. Look at all the things that go on here.

SB: You get a lot of feedback, I'm sure.

AF: We do. We also divide the magazine into sections to appeal to different people. We have an “upfront” section that tells you about things that went on. Then we have a “best bet” section that tells you about things you shouldn't miss while you're here, or things that have already happened. The “events calendar” is very important. Because people are always going, Well, what am I going to do? Well, they open up our “events calendar”—it's by date. They look down, and they know.

SB: And it's for how—what period of time does it cover?

AF: Well generally—

SB: Two months?

AF: It's three months.

MB: Three months out.

AF: Yeah, we generally go three months out. And we always have a phone number where they can call. So—

MB: And one of the neatest things about that is that a lot of the events that are in there used to be closed events. People would wonder how—

SB: By invite?

MB: —do I get an invitation to this?

SB: By invitation only.
MB: Yes. And the different groups have realized [that] if they want to be in the magazine, they're inviting our readers.

SB: That is terrific.

MB: Our reader reads about it and wants to go, they can pick up the phone and say, You know, I saw this in *Tampa Bay Magazine*, that looks like fun.

SB: I didn't realize that.

MB: Yeah, that's—

AF: Well, see, and part of that is—

SB: Significant.

AF: —that they were closed events not because they were meant to be closed, but if you don't get the word out, everybody will say, Well we're sending out 500 invitations. Well, fine. The truth of the matter is, 500 invitations, as compared to 300,000 people reading about it in the magazine—that the people you want to get are the new people that have moved into town that aren't on your list yet, that nobody knows. We're constantly amazed—

MB: And that live in another town.

AF: —how we get out into the community, you suddenly meet people and you go, “Isn't it funny?” The Patels lived here for years. Nobody knew who they were. And then all of a sudden, everybody knows the Patels. Well we found out there are a lot of Patels other than—

SB: The Patels. Yeah.

AF: —the Patels who are also giving, et cetera. But that there are lot of people that come to events because they moved into town, they kept the magazine, and they go, Oh, look at this, Storybook Ball. Gee that sounds like fun. Let us call up and get something. We're amazed—we've chaired the New Years Eve Ball for the officers. Every year we end up getting at least 20 to 30 new couples that nobody really knows who they really are—

SB: That's terrific.

AF: —and you go, “Well, we came into town, we were looking for something to do, et cetera,” and then they become—

[End Tape 1, Side 2]
SB: We're continuing in an interview with Margaret Word Burnside and Aaron Fodiman. It's October 3, [2006], and we have been talking about the *Tampa Bay Magazine*. And we will continue with that.

Aaron, you were I think—

AF: We're talking about the number of people that are looking to get involved in the different social charitable institutions around that don't know. We started a Food and Wine Society. We were amazed how many people wanted to meet new people that they live in a certain confined group where they don't get to see a lot of people from other parts of Tampa Bay. They love the Food and Wine Society because they come and they get to have dinner with other people that have similar interests and that's the thing that you find. That most of the people that are involved in the charities, in the arts, had very similar interests with all the other people that are involved. They moved here from all over the world, not just from all over the country.

SB: Extraordinary.

AF: And it's a—

SB: What's bringing people to this area?

AF: Everything from—

MB: Just look around!

AF: —retirement.

MB: It's gorgeous! [Laughs]

SB: [Laughs]

AF: One of the new members to our Food and Wine Society is the fellow that was hired by Tom James to run Tom James Financial. Wonderful couple. So you know, you don't realize—Or well, your very good friends, the Lands. They came here because they transferred from Birmingham.

SB: Yes.

AF: What a difference they've been able to make! And they're the very type of people that are interested in all the different things that are going on.

SB: He [Eric Land] came to run the Channel 8, but decided to make this his—
AF: His home.

SB: —last stop. So he accepted—

AF: Absolutely.

SB: —the COO position with the Bucs.

MB: And how wonderful for our area.

AF: And for the Bucs and for them. And we find that's the story over and over and over again. But people are moving here for jobs, they're moving here because it's a beautiful place to live. They're moving here for reasons that we can't fathom. We've met a lot of people that are moving here to take care of their parents because their parents have reached a stage—

SB: Sure.

AF: —that they need somebody there.

SB: To what extent are you making a difference in people coming here? With the magazine, with your networking clubs—

AF: Well—

MB: Actually, we know that the magazine gets sent to people who are considering moving here, or if businesses are trying to hire somebody away from some place else. They'll send them the magazine—

SB: Wow.

MB: —to show them, “Look at this place! This is where you want to live.”

AF: Eric and Cindy knew all about us before they moved here.

SB: Really?

AF: Because Channel 8 is typical of one of the businesses here that, when they're recruiting somebody, our magazine is what's sent.

SB: Is it that interesting.

AF: Now, think about this. Do you want to send them the *St. Pete Times*? Did you see the front page of the *St. Pete Times* today? *Tampa Tribune*? There's murders, there's scandal—
SB: Right.

AF: —there's everything in the world. You're trying to get people to move here. *Tampa Bay Magazine* really looks like it's from the Chamber of Commerce.

SB: It does.

AF: Okay.

SB: I have to say.

AF: It really does look like—

SB: It's so positive, yeah.

AF: —it's from the Chamber of Commerce. And you go through and you go through, and you look at what we're talking about and this is what the people want.

Years ago, when they were trying to build—bring the San Francisco baseball team here, we had heard one of the biggest problems was that the managers and star players, et cetera said, We don't want to go to Tampa Bay, what are we going to do there? You can't move us out of San Francisco. And you realize that we present to the world an image of Tampa Bay. We hear it from all over. We travel all the time. People see the magazine. Universally, we get the remark, We had no idea it was such a beautiful, wealthy area.


AF: People will say to us, Well, why don't you put in an average home. We say, Because people don't want to see an average home. We feature multi-million dollar homes. People look at the multi-million dollar homes, and even if that's not they're going to buy, that's the type of community they want to live in.

SB: They're interested.

AF: They're interested. You don't have to want that. When you look at the people at our magazine, everybody looks like they're having a good time. Why? We don't do candid shots. As you know, we set up every shot. we take a multitude of shots. We want to make sure that every photograph in our magazine makes the people that are being photographed look happy and wonderful and the type of people that somebody else looks at and says, Gee, I'd like to know them.

SB: Even at events that are pretty much—

AF: At events, yeah!
SB: —events, you do stage it a little bit so that they look good?

AF: Yeah, well not only that, we stage things that people don't think about. We never stage people that aren't married to each other together. Okay. Got it?

SB: Can I ask why you do that or—?

AF: We do that. We are very careful of who we put into the photographs. We don't want anybody to misunderstand. We don't want anybody to go, Well why are they there together?

SB: It's extraordinary—

AF: You know we saw—

SB: The thought you put into that.

AF: Yeah, we put a lot of thought into each one. We've thought into, how do you write it up? Do you feature him? Do you feature her? Is she called the wife? Is it—she get the last name and he gets the other name?

SB: Sounds time consuming.

MB: We spend a lot of time.

AF: There's an awful lot that goes into—

SB: A lot of protocol.

AF: —every single item that we do. And it's always with the concept of presenting things in their best light. We have a silly thing—you will never see the word “kids” in our magazine.

SB: That's interesting.

MB: Because it's slang.

AF: We think they're children.

SB: Okay. Interesting.

AF: We, we were both raised—they are children! They are not “kids!”

MB: And we have, we try not to have slang in the magazine. We spell out the words—

SB: Very interesting.
MB: We even spell out some of the numbers that say, the newspaper wouldn't spell out.

SB: Very interesting.

AF: Or, or taking—

MB: It just looks classier.

AF: —pictures of children. We will not take a picture of child unless their parent gives us the permission.

SB: That's wonderful.

MB: Yeah.

AF: I mean, because we understand. The people that we deal with—

MB: Are concerned.

AF: —that can be a very touchy situation.

SB: That's very thoughtful.

Tell me your criteria for covering events. I mean, I've lived here long enough to know that years ago, during the week, you would have maybe one event. Now there's an event just about every night of the week.

MB: —of the week. There are more events—

SB: How do you choose?

MB: —in one night.

SB: How do you choose?

AF: Okay. Let me tell you again. We very much both were raised as creatures of very proper social conventions. Our parents told us, One, you don't go any place you're not invited.

SB: Okay.

AF: Two, whomever you accept, that's where you go. So even if the girl you really want to take to the prom tells you she's now available, if you already asked somebody else, that's where you go. So if somebody's already asked us, we've committed. That's where we go. There's no—
MB: Unless we're out of town or something.

AF: —such thing as—

SB: That's terrific.

AF: —we got a better offer. Okay?

SB: That's wonderful.

AF: So we have people—I had somebody call me up today to mark down March 26 for their event.

MB: And a lot of the groups will call us from their committee meeting, so they're talking about a year down the road.

AF: But—and they'll often call to clear, to see whether or not there's another big event—

SB: What else.

AF: —that's going on.

SB: Oh that's terrific.

AF: Now we've had that situation where we've—certain groups say, You know, you're going against so and so that night. [Magazine's response] Yes, we've discussed it, that's the only night we have available. [Group's reply] Okay, we just think you're going to have a problem.

SB: It's extremely important to have. Extremely important.

AF: And years ago, we thought about doing a calendar that people could—and we found out, no, each group wants to do it [at] their time, and very seldom have we ever had a group change—

SB: But just—

AF: —even—

SB: —the fact you can call.

AF: Yeah. But at least—

MB: Right.

SB: It's such a community—
AF: —you can call and find out ahead of time from us. Because we're sitting there looking at it and going, No we don't have anything on our calendar. Does that mean nothing will come up? No, but at least you know at this point you're there. And at this point, we can say, Yes, we will come and cover that.

And on certain nights we'll try and cover two or three. Last Thursday night there were three major events that we had that we had to cover.

SB: So what did you do?

AF: We went to all three.

MB: We went to all three.

AF: Fortunately—

MB: But we were still leaving out other ones.

AF: Yeah.

SB: Oh, gosh.

AF: But fortunately—

MB: But there are more than three per night now.

AF: Yeah. But fortunately, they were at staggered times so we could do it. Two of them were relatively close together. The third one was over at the Seminole—

MB: Hard Rock Hotel.

AF: —Hard Rock Hotel. But the truth is, we can get almost any place in this area within the half an hour.

SB: All the communities?

AF: All the communities—

SB: In corpus?

MB: Yes.

SB: Oh my gosh.
AF: I mean, when people sit there and talk about, Well, it's this, it's that. We were in St. Petersburg. We were at the Seminole [Hard] Rock a half an hour after we left the Fine Arts—

SB: That's good.

AF: —in. They had the Friends of the Arts Awards that night. But there's certain ones that you know, Cameroo comes along, and it starts at six o'clock, you really can't…

SB: You just can't.

AF: —go someplace else.

SB: I do have to ask if you have favorites. I hate to put you on the spot, but—

MB: That's—

AF: Well that's never on the spot, because we don't even have to look at each other to tell you our favorite.

SB: I'd like to know individually though, if I may.

AF: Well, together, it's New Year's Eve, because—

MB: The Florida Orchestra.

AF: That's our, that's our—

SB: You chair it.

AF: —party.

MB: We give up family trips to be home for that. And it's fabulous.

SB: It's spectacular. It is spectacular.

AF: Yeah. This year, we're supposed to be with Margaret's mother—

MB: In Antarctica.

AF: in Antarctica. And we said, We can't!

MB: We said, No thank you.

AF: It's, you know—we're committed to this, that's what we do.
SB: I know they appreciate it.

MB: So that's our very favorite.

AF: Now you can tell your favorite.

MB: One of my favorites is the UPARC Party.

SB: What is—what is this?

MB: And see that's very much Clearwater event, but more and more people from Tampa and St. Petersburg are coming. But I was on the foundation board for a lot of years, and have just always liked that party.

SB: What is it? What is the organization?

MB: It's what more of the events used to be where they have them in a private home—

AF: But again, this is typical of what we go through. Margaret says UPARC you say, “I don't know what that is”—

MB: It's like HARP or—

AF: —and Margaret can't even stop because she'd go on, “How could anybody not know what UPARC is?” She couldn't understand the question!

SB: [Laughs]

MB: [Laughs]. Well you have HARP over here, which is another one of our favorite groups.

SB: Which stands for?

MB: They've changed their name now—

SB: I forget what it stands for.

MB: It's Hillsborough—

AF: Hillsborough Associations of Retarded Children—

MB: But that's not—

AF: —but it's now all changed.

MB: That's not it anymore. That's what they all used to be.
AF: And UPARC was that too.

MB: There's a Pinellas one, and UPARC is upper Pinellas—PARC is Pinellas.

SB: But it's helping retarded youth.

MB: Retarded, and just—people with disabilities.

AF: And it's no longer youth because—

MB: And it's no longer youth because now they're living longer.

SB: I see.

MB: And so the clients are growing up.

SB: That's wonderful.

AF: And their parents are dying before them, which never happened before.

MB: Yeah, so you know—

SB: Oh my goodness.

AF: Before if you had a retarded child the odds were that child was going to die before you did. Things have so changed.

SB: But they truly—they really need help.

MB: A group of new problems that they've all had to deal with. I mean, good problems, but they have to make arrangements.

SB: That's wonderful of you to help.

MB: But that's—actually all, we love those groups. And the various art centers. We've been very involved in the Dunedin Art Center for years. I was on the board there before I even met Aaron. And we, we really like all of the groups. They all try so hard and do so much. Our favorites I would say are the ones that the people are really in there, working hard and doing the work and it's not such a big business.

SB: More sincerity.

AF: See now, I interpreted her question differently.

MB: Right.
AF: She wasn't asking what group, she was asking what events. So you think of things like—

MB: Well, okay, of the events.

AF: —the Storybook Ball, which is—

MB: Because it has a great theme.

AF: Great theme.

SB: But they usually benefit a group.

AF: Oh yes.

MB: Oh they all do.

SB: So I do understand why you—

MB: The Storybook Ball benefits the Ronald McDonald house. And that's an overall Tampa Bay group.

AF: And sometimes it changes. Like this year, we're chairing the Festival of Trees that started off benefiting one group, and over the years it's evolved. So the event is still very similar, but now it benefits—

MB: UPARC.

AF: —a whole other group.

SB: Who does it benefit?

MB: Now it, U—UPARC again.

SB: Oh, Okay.

MB: But that's you know, within the last couple of years.

AF: So there have been a lot of different charity events. There's another great organization in St. Petersburg I'm sure you've never heard about, the Queen Of Hearts Ball.

SB: That's true I haven't!

MB: That one goes back a lot of years.
AF: And every year they select princesses and a Queen of Hearts. And the Queen of Hearts is the woman that they feel has done the most for charity in the area. And they do this fundraiser and they pick different groups to benefit every year.

SB: Sounds wonderful.

MB: Yeah, I think this year there are either two or three charitable groups that that will benefit.

SB: That's terrific.
   Now have you covered all your favorites?

MB: Oh well—

SB: I know there's so many!

MB: —we couldn't even begin to cover all of our favorites!

AF: No, no, we could sit here all day—

MB: And go on and on.

AF: Because coming up very quickly, another favorite, is the Broadway Ball at the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center. [It's a] very unique venue, great concept, wonderful event. So—

SB: And benefiting the—

AF: And benefiting the youth.
   And there again there's so many events that end up changing over the time. I started the Taste of Pinellas years ago, which benefits All Children's Hospital. A very big event, they just had their twentieth anniversary I think.

SB: Oh my gosh.

AF: And we don't go there anymore because it's outdoors. When we were younger, we didn't mind walking around in the heat, et cetera. Now it's like, we've got to—

SB: It's also very well attended.

AF: Yeah, very well attended.

SB: So it's kind of—like a zoo.

AF: And well now it's moved up to three days from one day.
SB: Oh my gosh.

AF: Margaret was on the original committee for Clearwater Jazz Holiday. Fabulous event.

SB: Extraordinary.

AF: We loved going there.

MB: And another one we love is Art Harvest, which is the Clearwater, Dunedin Junior League's Annual Art Show. This year we're the honorary chairs of it.

SB: Wonderful.

MB: And so we're going to have a patron's party for them. They haven't had a patron's party. So we thought, they need that.

SB: That's extraordinary.

AF: And then of course Tampa's Gasparilla Art Show is—I mean, incredible art! [It’s a] wonderful way to meet all our friends, see great art, pick up wonderful buys of art. And it's just fabulous. We used to go two days in a row. I mean—

MB: And we're especially fond of the local artists. And these art shows—

SB: You know a lot of—

MB: —are a good way to—

SB: —local artists.

AF: Yes.

SB: I know. And you help them as well—

MB: We try to, yes.

SB: —in your magazine.

MB: In fact we started a collection of “local artists artwork.”

SB: That's great.

MB: And we're very proud of it.
SB: Extraordinary.

AF: We're hoping one day, that's one of our legacies that we'd like to give. One of the local museums our collection of local art.

SB: That's terrific.

AF: Because we have—I bought the first piece that Duncan McClellan ever did.

SB: The very first?

AF: The very first! I found Duncan McClellan at an art show. And I went up to buy the piece, and Duncan said to me, “I'm not really an artist. I'm not sure you want to buy this.”

SB: Oh my goodness.

AF: And I said, “You're an artist. Tell me, what are you doing?” He says, “Well I run the shop at the airport, et cetera, et cetera.” I said, “Duncan, you're an artist.” And I went out, I got him a commission to do a hundred pieces for Mease Hospital Foundation.

SB: My gosh!

MB: He wasn't sure he could do that—

AF: Well, see this is another thing.

SB: That's extraordinary!

AF: We were working with Mease Hospital. They wanted an idea what they could do to get members in to donate. I said, “Well, start an arbor vitae society. And we'll give every one that donates one thousand dollars a multiple artwork.” And they said, Well how are we going to do that? I said, “We'll put out to the artists that we'll pay them a hundred dollars a piece for a hundred pieces.” And they go, Are artists going to do that? I said, “They're going to line up.”

SB: [Laughs]

AF: [Laughs] They're going [to] line up!

SB: And did they line up?

AF: Oh, of course!

SB: Oh that's extraordinary.

AF: I mean, they—you know because—
SB: And Duncan was one?

AF: Duncan was one. And he said, “Aaron, I can't do a hundred pieces!” I said, “Duncan, I got it worked out for you. We're going to do a paperweight, they don't have to be identical.” He says, “Well, where am I going [to] put my little thing on it?” We said, “We'll put it on a base, you get a brass plate, slap it on there—

SB: [To Margaret] It occurs to me your husband has turned into a salesman!

MB: He has!

SB: Which was your goal?

MB: Right.

SB: How do you like that?

AF: Yeah.

SB: [laughs]

MB: [laughs]

AF: And then Christopher, Christopher Still—we—he's very first show when he was still an art student, we used to donate a hundred dollars to him to buy—

SB: Oh my gosh.

AF: —paint—

MB: The Dunedin Art Center.

AF: The Dunedin Art Center.

SB: That's extraordinary.

MB: We were on the board.

SB: Extraordinary.

MB: And for years, I mean, even before I knew Aaron—

SB: An amazing artist.
MB: Christopher was so appreciative, he would come to our board meetings to show us what he was doing for this measly little hundred dollars, or maybe even fifty dollars that we had given him.

AF: But we put him on the cover [of] our magazine when he had—

MB: One of his pieces of work.

AF: —his first show.

SB: Oh gosh.

AF: For his very first show. And I think we probably have the largest collection of his artwork.

SB: That's amazing.

MB: Possibly.

AF: I'm pretty sure we do.

SB: Speaking of covers, Aaron—I know you're very proud of those covers. Could you tell how they've evolved?

MB: Well, there's—we have to like it. We have to know that it's going to look good on somebody's coffee table in their living room. It has to be attractive and something that is appealing, subject-wise. And we don't always plan way ahead. For instance we may have a new piece of artwork and think, You know? That'd make a nice cover. So then it can become the cover. Just—they're varied. We now do a lot of artwork, we didn't used to so much. We used to have people on the cover a long time ago, and decided, that really isn't a good idea.

SB: Why?

MB: People come and go, not everybody knows who they are anyway. And they're— basically they're not as attractive on your table or on a newsstand as—

SB: That's true.

MB: —a pretty piece of artwork. I mean we even had a piece of [Dale] Chihuly on the—one cover, when the big Chihuly exhibit was coming.

SB: How many covers have you done?

AF: Well, we've done our twentieth year—
MB: Last May-June.

AF: —in May-June, and there's six per year, so that's 120. So we're now at 122. Our next cover will be our 123rd cover.

SB: Oh, my gosh. That's extraordinary.

AF: And we have added a couple of covers where we just got down to the end and I just went through photo files and grabbed a photo that I had and said, “Okay, let's use this photo, I—I can't remember when I took it, where I took it, but it's pretty, we'll use it.” Because sometimes we plan, and it works out beautifully and other times we sit there and we just—we thought we were going to use something on the cover, something else happens. Sometimes an artist has said that they were going to do a piece and then never shows up.

MB: We decided we really need to see it before we decide. And a lot of times we’ve had beautiful pictures of homes on the covers. Our readers like that. And it also tells what you're going to see inside. There are always beautiful homes in the magazines.

SB: How much of this magazine is you—you make these decisions?

MB: All of it.

SB: All of it?

AF: 110 percent.

MB: Every bit of it. We are workaholics.

AF: Because I make all the decisions and then she decides, Well, I've decided wrong.

SB: [Laughs] Okay.

MB: [Laughs] And then fun thing is—

AF: [Laughs]

MB: —everybody—

SB: [Laughs] Sounds like a good partnership!

MB: But luckily, we really tend to think the same, so our employees, who are wonderful and really are capable of making decisions know to come to us. But they can't play us against each other. If they can come to one of us and say, Well I—I—Let's do this. And whatever answer say Aaron or I give, when they go to the other one thinking, Well,
maybe we'll get another answer and it'll be my way, they invariably get the same answer. So—

SB: That's great.

AF: I don't think we've ever disagreed on a cover. You know? I think well, when one or the other of us said, Gee, this would be a nice cover. Generally the other one says, Yeah, that would be, that's great.

SB: Okay, you write the editorial. When you open the magazine, you are the editorial. And Margaret, you have a column. Do you get ideas from each other?

AF: Okay.

SB: Do you consult?

AF: My editorial I write and then Margaret edits.

SB: Okay.

AF: Okay. Margaret knows every once in a while, I'll put things in there and then sit and listen for her to go, “You can't put that in there!”

MB: And the funny thing is, the other—I like to read things last. You know, whoever else is going to read it, go ahead and do your thing, then I'm going to have the final thing on it. But I can hear them in there saying, [makes laughing noises], Isn't this funny? And so they'll say, Oh yes, well this will be cute and fun. And then come and tell me, I can't believe he's going to say this! And I'm going, “Well we're not saying it, so don't worry!” But a lot of times he'll think, “Oh, this is cute, we'll do that.

AF: And they know I don't care. Whatever Margaret says is the final word.

MB: And he doesn't want to see it again. I always want to show him, “Okay, do you want to see what your article says now?” [As Aaron] “Nope. I'm done.”

SB: Oh, interesting.

AF: If it—if it meets Margaret's criteria, then I'm happy.

SB: That's good enough. How about for your column, [Margaret]?

MB: He reads it. Usually.

AF: But actually Margaret does a multitude of columns. She does “Ask Margaret,” and she generally decides exactly which questions she's going to answer. And I read it, but I
don't think I've ever really done anything other than some grammatical editing or something like that.

SB: Wow.

AF: Ear—

MB: You don't even always read it.

AF: I don't even always read the “Ear Column” for her.

MB: And then the “Buzzword” column, we actually write together. He'll write some and I write some. And then we'll put it together, and you know, so it will flow.

[Tape paused]

SB: If I had to ask you, sort of as a wrap up, what you would like people to remember you for, I know of course the magazine would be one of them, but do you have any other areas that you'd like to be remembered for?

MB: I would say that we were very much involved in the community and helped to bring it together and bring all of these wonderful people that live here together. Because we've made so many great friends, and we would like to be remembered as friends in return.

SB: That's great.

AF: And again, I'm just the opposite of Margaret. I really don't care if anybody remembers me. To me the most important thing is that I'm having an affect while I'm living and that I'm able to help people and make things happen while I'm here. Once I'm gone, it's over. I don't really care. But I do passionately care right now. And there's nothing I enjoy more than being able to see something that I can say, “Gee, I helped that to happen.”

SB: That's great. Well believe me you both are helping to make it happen. And I can't thank you enough. Just—not just for this interview today but for everything you're doing in Tampa Bay. You, you both are wonderful. Thanks so much.

AF: It, it really is our pleasure.

MB: Thank you.

AF: We really enjoy every bit of it. And we just feel that we're so blessed. And I would say, almost on a daily basis, we look at each other and say, Aren't we lucky to have this kind of life?

SB: Isn't that great.
MB: And to be able to share it together.

SB: Thank you so much, again.

AF: Super.

[End of Interview]