

Scenes from AN INTERVIEW: MEMORABLE QUOTES

by Gus Mollasis

Every month, I love meeting and interviewing many interesting people of influence and impact for Scenes from an Interview. Most are people who contribute so much to our local culture while a few others are visiting celebrities and notables here for a festival or performance. No matter who they are and what they've done, what they tell us is usually quite inspirational and interesting. This month, we flashback to some of the best quotes from this year's and last year's Scenes from an Interview.

FEBRUARY
2018



PRESIDENT OF MICHAEL SAUNDERS & CO.
DRAYTON SAUNDERS

Are you pleased with the path that Sarasota is on as it pertains to growth and development?

That's a good and fair question. Absolutely. We often in this community get into a debate about growth, and it's a fair and healthy one to have. We should always be concerned with the direction of the community. I think that you must first accept that there is no way to prevent growth. In fact, if you look at communities that aren't growing, there are so many symptoms of unhealthiness. Look at the devastation of the Rust Belt and so many other communities that don't grow. They are in reverse. The great news about Florida and Sarasota is that we're in a forward direction. It's more a question of "how do you want growth to look?" You have to be fair and ask, "are we focusing on the core issues?" Or "are we focusing on a symptomatic outlier?"

APRIL
2018



COMEDIAN JACKIE MASON

Tell me where your comedy comes from?

It comes from my mind. Where do you think it comes from? It doesn't come from anything that has to do with you. You've never contributed to anything in society. You haven't accomplished anything on this earth. All you do is stand there and look for other people to entertain everybody. You make a living while I'm telling the jokes.



PHILANTHROPISTS GRACI & DENNIS MCGILLICUDDY

The McGillicuddys are passionate about ending child abuse and are building a brighter future in foster care through its All Star Children's Center.

"Can you imagine being taken away from your home in the middle of the night, the home where you grew up, as you watch your parent being arrested while your brothers and sisters are placed in separate police towncars?" As Graci speaks these words from a place deep in her soul, you can feel her pain for these children, so real and so raw. "And not only that, try to imagine that in the coming days your future is uncertain. You might have a safe place to live or you might not. Getting enough to eat and having decent clean clothes to wear to school becomes an issue, and that should not be an issue for any child."

"Finally, after all that trauma," Graci pauses, "After all that, can you imagine that nobody even asks you about what happened to you on that night and other nights? Can you imagine that?" It is a scenario that has been played out countless times in America, and it's a scenario that's playing out every minute of every day.

MAY
2018



OSCAR WINNER
OLYMPIA DUKAKIS

What is your advice to those who want to pursue their dreams and how did you keep believing in yourself?

If there is really nothing else you can do, then you should go for it. But if you have some other things that are calling you maybe you should do them, because this is a tough business. I had no choice. There was nothing else I wanted to do. Absolutely. I lived in a hallway. I had no peripheral vision. I had to do it.

OCTOBER
2018



CONGRESSMAN VERN BUCHANAN

America to me is...

...a land of opportunity, where a blue-collar kid could grow up with nothing and become anything he wanted. It has unlimited possibilities in terms of the American Dream and that's what I want to fight for so that the American Dream is not there just for my kids, but for everybody's kids and for my four grandkids *What are your biggest concerns for your district and the great state of Florida?* Many years ago, when I was head of the Chamber of Commerce in Sarasota, our area was voted by *Money Magazine* as the best to live and work in the United States. That's still my focus. I think this area is the best place in the United States, and I want to continue to fight so that it remains that way. We can't bury our head in the sand, we have to fight red tide, opioids and other issues that come up while at the same time focusing on growing our economy.

PERLMAN MUSIC PROGRAM CO-FOUNDER
TOBY PERLMAN

Do you feel there is a spiritual component in his (Itzhak Perlman) God-given talent?

If you asked him this question, he wouldn't even know what you're talking about. He really wouldn't. Because for him playing is like breathing is for us. So some days he feels he plays better than others, just like a regular person, except the fact that we're listening to him, the world is listening to him, and the world feels differently than he feels about his playing. You know the world can't wait to hear the next concert, or the next note, or the next phrase. Personally speaking, do I feel that it's a gift from God? Absolutely. Of course. But I'm not speaking for him, only for myself. For me, it's a perfectly logical, reasonable explanation that God loaned him this gift while he's on earth, and will take it back at some point.



JANUARY
2019



EMMY AWARD WINNING TV JOURNALIST
MARY BRAXTON-JOSEPH

Searching for the right words to describe the great man (Mandela), she pauses and then lands on the word DIGNITY.

"When he walked into a room, everybody wanted to be like him. He was a champion of reconciliation. He learned to reconcile differences, so much so that even though he had been in prison for some 27 years, when he got out and became president, he invited some of the people who used to guard him to his inauguration. Every time I get angry about something, I think of that Mandela spirit and it just helps me reframe my attitude. Because if you can see the humanity in the adversary and take time to listen to another point of view, it might not change your mind, but it will definitely broaden your horizons."

FEBRUARY
2019



DECEMBER
2018

CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST
DR. XERNONA CLAYTON

The Trumpet Awards, initiated in 1993 by Turner Broadcasting, is a prestigious event highlighting African-American accomplishments and contributions. What do the Trumpet Awards mean to you?

The world. Let me tell you why. Growing up black in America, I understood one thing that Dr. King taught me amongst many things. He always felt that all white people didn't hate us because they loved to hate. It was his belief that some white people hated us because they just didn't know us. So we have a kind of responsibility to educate them. You know, the richness of our vast contributions were not known – even in black communities. I created this show because I got tired of watching our people on TV being portrayed as buffoons, looking silly and acting irresponsibly like clowns. I knew that's not how all of us are and that I've got to do something. Because I was working at CNN and had television at my disposal, I wanted to create something. So, I used the tools there to put on a show that really described the contributions of our people. I started

the program trumpeting loudly and broadcasting to the world that our people are not all lazy.

There is story that proved Dr. King's point and validated my efforts for what I was doing. A white mother from mid-America called me and told me that her parents taught her to hate all black people. She told me that "they never said some black people, they said that all black people were lazy; that all black men would rather stand in line for a welfare check than they would for a paycheck; and that every black woman would rather have a baby than have a job." This woman ended up hating all of us, so when she got a glimpse of the Trumpet Awards, it piqued her interest. She said, "I have two little girls and I don't want them to grow up with the same prejudice that I grew up in, so send me those tapes. I don't care what they cost." We heard many stories like that. The program brought pride to our people while educating other people. I'm very proud of it. The awards have taught and encouraged many little boys and girls to be something when they grow up.

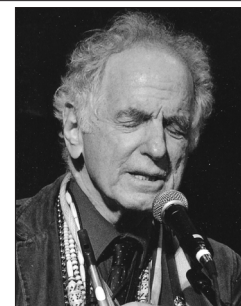
EDC PRESIDENT MARK HUEY

Huey is pleased with what they've (the Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County) done to promote our film industry.

"What we are hearing is that all the major production facilities in Georgia are booked through 2021 with content producers. So it's our hope that if that plays out, some of that film business will end up at Ringling College's Studio Labs. We do have a local incentive program that pivoted immediately to smaller scale productions. Jeanne has done a great job in that space. For us, it's always figuring out, at any given time or place, where can we compete and get some wins. And every once in a while, you get an MTV – which is now producing the third season of Siesta Key. They're going to spend a lot of money here."



APRIL
2019

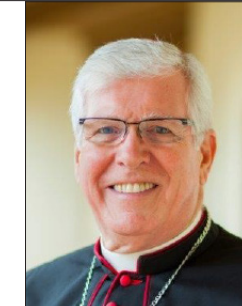


MUSICIAN DAVID AMRAM

Was there a moment of discovery when you knew that music would be that thing for you?

It was a constant process of evolution that still is going on for me at the age of 88. So instead of saying I'm going to retire on my laurels, I don't even feel like I have any laurels. I'm interested every day in trying to learn and create new things and understand the old things that I thought I knew about, while being able to revisit them. It's an endless process. Just like all major religions refer to the deity or deities as the great unknown. There is something out there that is bigger than all of us. And that's a wonderful thing to realize, because then you can remain humble in knowing that you are just another tiny presence that's here for a while and that there's something bigger that was here before you and will be here after you're gone. If you can get in touch with that while you're here and share what you've learned with others to help them on their journey, whether its music or anything, then you've had a good life.

MAY
2019



BISHOP FRANK J. DEWANE OF
THE DIOCESE OF VENICE

What advice do you give those who lose or question their faith? Have you ever lost your faith?

Lose my faith, no. I think we have to be honest when we go to prayer to the Lord. "Come on Jesus. Cut me a break on this one. I'm trying." We have to be who we are with our heart. With our joy and our sorrow. With our challenges and what we are grateful for. Other times things turn out great. That's when we have to remind ourselves, "I didn't yet thank the Lord. This turned out really well." Faith is bigger than ourselves. But living it is when the real rubber hits the road. You got to live it. I sometimes ask people, "Who here wants Jesus as a friend?" And their hands will go up. And I ask, "How often are you talking to your friend Jesus?"

JULY
2019