

a paragraph from Oceandrive.com, The Magic City
by Brett Sokol

The Deuce isn't the first bar Klein opened. That would be Ocean Drive's Alley Club in 1947. "I came here the day I got out of the service," he says of his post-World War II arrival in Miami Beach. In fact, the Deuce isn't even the most notorious bar Klein has run. That would be Alton Road's Club Benni, which Klein says was the city's first gay establishment until its liquor license was revoked in 1954. He blames a particularly homophobic city commissioner whom he believes pressured code-enforcement officers to log false violations. As for Club Benni's gay-friendly scene, "In those days, it was a little frowned upon," Klein sighs, warmly recalling its nightly drag show and visits from pianist Liberace, playwright Tennessee Williams, television host Robert Q. Lewis and socialite John Jacob Astor VI. "But to me it was strictly a business." With a chuckle, he continues, "I happen to be married with children. What do I care if somebody's gay or not? People came to the bar to relax. Some of them were famous. Some of them weren't."