

Barred Aventura book finally comes into focus



Eight years after he started research, three years after the city warned his publisher that it didn't authorize publication, Seth Bramson's book on Aventura has finally gotten into print.

"It was certainly unusually circuitous," says Bramson of the book's publication path, but he adds, "I am nothing short of thrilled to see it (at last) appear in print."

The 160-page book, stuffed with historic photos, is titled *Aventura, Florida: From Marshes and Mangroves to Cityscapes and High Rises*, published last month by Marc-Martin Publishing of Hallandale Beach, after the original publisher backed out, frightened by a chilling letter from Aventura's city attorney.

The book already has one big critic: Donald Soffer, the patriarch of Aventura development. "Some things...are factual," he tells the *BT*, "and some aren't." More on that in a moment.

The Aventura book is Bramson's 26th, many of them photo-laden histories of cities, "from Homestead to Hallandale Beach," as he likes to say. In some cases, the cities paid him to write

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Written by John Dorschner, BT Contributor
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a book and then agreed to purchase at least 500 copies. In these cases, the cities occasionally asked for small changes, which he explains he was happy to make. He has another eight books in the works, he says.

The Aventura book saga began in 2008, when some local leaders suggested that the city hire Bramson to write its history.

The author says he signed a contract with city manager Eric Soroka; he was given a copy but “it’s been misplaced.” He recalls the deal being for \$10,000 or \$12,000, with a third paid as a retainer on signing. The city also agreed to buy 500 copies.

Bramson went to work, researching the history of Ojus, an unincorporated community in northeast Dade that preceded Aventura.



He tracked down rare photos of Ives Dairy, the farm that once occupied much of the land that’s now Aventura. He had extensive interviews with members of the Lebowitz and Soffer families, who in the 1960s purchased about 800 acres that were to become the core of the future city. Each family received a lengthy chapter.

In the spring of 2009, Bramson says, he e-mailed the manuscript and proposed photos to city

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manager Soroka, who later asked him to a meeting to discuss the work. When the historian arrived, Soroka and then-Mayor Susan Gottlieb were waiting for him.

When asked to comment for this article about the book and Bramson's versions of events, Soroka replied: "I have not read it and have no comment. Much of the information in your e-mail provided by Bramson is incorrect." He did not respond to follow-up e-mails about what was incorrect. Gottlieb's response: "It was a long time ago and I do not recall it at all."

What follows is Bramson's version; the direct quotes are taken from e-mail exchanges he provided to the *BT*:

At the meeting, Bramson recalls, Soroka did virtually all the talking, telling him they weren't happy with the book.

They wanted almost all the photos to come out, as well as the material before the city incorporated in 1995, which meant eliminating the chapter on Ojus and mentions of Ives Dairy. They wanted the Lebowitz family section reduced. Most of the photos in a chapter on the Aventura Marketing Council should be cut, as well as photos of the police chief and the famed Mo's Bagels. And they wanted more to be written about Williams Island.

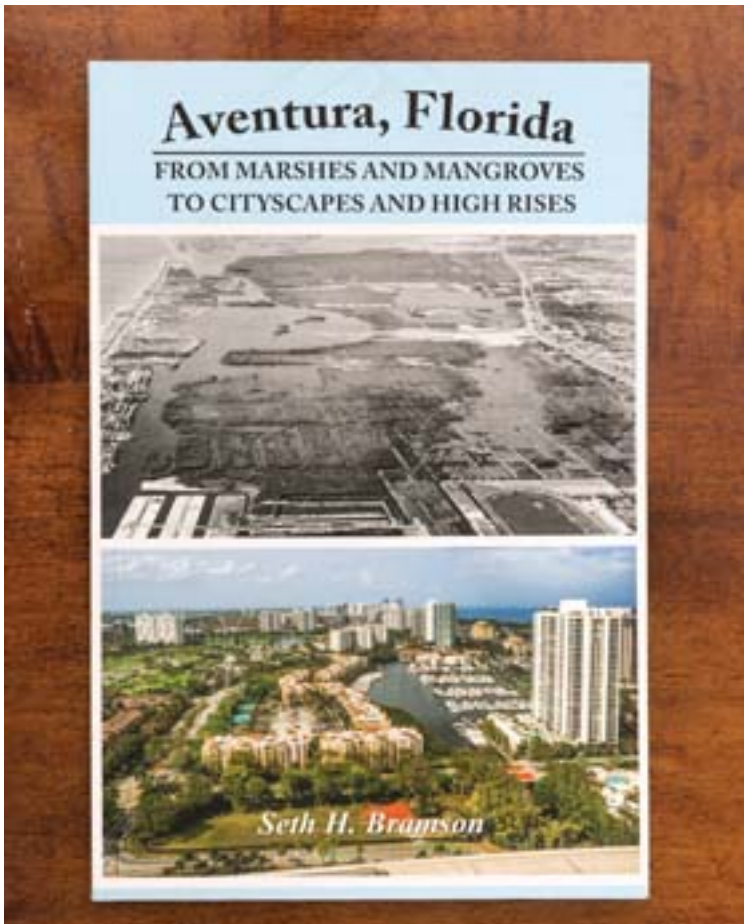
Bramson recalls saying: Shouldn't I be able to explain?

Doesn't matter, Soroka reportedly replied. The meeting lasted about an hour and a half.

Later Soroka sent Bramson a heavily edited manuscript; about half the original material was gone, and the manager wanted to include some small, low-resolution photos.

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With a foreword by John Dorschner, BT Contributor, and an introduction by Seth H. Bramson, the author of "Aventura, Florida: From Marshes and Mangroves to Cityscapes and High Rises", this book is a must-read for anyone interested in the history and development of Aventura, Florida.

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letters@brides@kahan.com