

Miami Herald

BUSINESS MONDAY

May 1, 2017



GREENBERG TRAURIG

Leadership at Greenberg Traurig: Matt Gorson, Yosbel Ibarra, Cesar Alvarez, Hilarie Bass, Larry Hoffman, Brian Duffy and Jaret Davis.

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CENTERPIECE

development.

"We now have an incredibly complex economy that will only continue to grow," said Jaret Davis, co-managing shareholder of Greenberg Traurig's Miami office and chair of the Miami-Dade Beacon Council.

Davis describes Miami's business community as a teenager or young adult. "Cities like humans have ages," Davis said. "There's an excitement Miami is experiencing as it matures. It is one of the few cities in the U.S. that can be called a 21st Century City."

Beyond new companies launching in Miami-Dade, new industries are gaining a foothold, Davis said. The key drivers of the economy — real estate, tourism, international trade and healthcare — remain strong. However, now Miami-Dade sees new business investment in the technology, biotech, aviation and the financing sectors.

The business community that has emerged over the past 50 years reflects the history of the city and its waves of immigrants who founded companies here

with skills or experience obtained in their homeland. Perry Ellis is one example.

In 1961, George Feldenkreis came to Miami from Cuba with a law degree and \$700 in his pocket. Feldenkreis found work as a manufacturer's representative and began importing auto parts and clothing such as guayaberas, the comfortable shirts popular in the Caribbean. Fortuitously, Feldenkreis was importing guayaberas at a time when large numbers of Cuban immigrants were arriving in Miami, providing him with an entry into a rapidly growing market. By 1967, his clothing business had grown, and Feldenkreis set

up Supreme International Corp., even landing some of the department stores as customers. Supreme eventually became Perry Ellis International.

The public company, now headquartered in Doral and celebrating a 50th anniversary, is made up of more than a dozen brands and has become an important international player in the casual apparel and sportswear sector.

"Miami always has been less of a big corporate town and more of a place that's highly entrepreneurial with people launching small and medium size businesses," said Matt Haggman, Miami program director for the Knight Foundation.

Pockets of South Florida



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CEO Ana Codina Barlick and father, Executive Chairman Armando Codina, of Codina Partners look over the model of Downtown Doral, a new development, in March.

are peppered with businesses whose founders, like Feldenkreis, left Cuba or Latin American countries to come to Miami and build small businesses into larger ones. The area is home now to some of the biggest Hispanic businesses in the country, including El Dorado Furniture, MasTec and the Cisneros Group. It also is home to the nation's largest Spanish-language networks, Telemundo and Univision, and North American headquarters of multinationals like Bacardi and Del Monte Fresh Produce. Bacardi is among the companies celebrating more than 50 years in Miami.

Many of the successful Hispanic businesses launched in Miami during the 1960s, '70s and '80s are in their second generation.

Leaders like real estate developers Armando Codina, Manny Medina, Jorge Pérez, broker Alicia Cervera Sr. and newspaper publisher Horacio Aguirre have brought their children into

their companies to continue influencing the skyline, landscape and infrastructure as have longtime Miami families such as the Millers of home builder Lennar and the Grahams of The Graham Co.

Look no further than Miami's Watsco to see how the next generation plays a valuable role. At Watsco, Albert Nahmad is the dynamic leader who built the company from a small manufacturing facility to the largest distributor of HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning). Now his son A.J. Nahmad is taking it forward by starting an internal incubator and overseeing a digital strategy that integrates new technology into the company taken over by his father in 1972.

Another second-generation player, Ana-Marie Codina Barlick, is overseeing development of a large community in Doral. Codina Barlick is chief executive officer of Codina Partners, a real estate investment and development firm founded by her father,

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Gary Gerson is the founder of the accounting firm Gerson Preston, and his daughter Melisse Burstein, is a partner.

Armando. She is doing her share of deal-making in the local business community, while confronting different challenges and looking to the future. Barlick sees a more cosmopolitan Miami-Dade than the nascent city in which her father launched his real estate firm four decades ago.

"I think Miami-Dade is finally starting to live up to its potential as a city in a magnificent location," she said. "I think we are really starting to be what leaders like Alvah Chapman envisioned many years ago."

Chapman, chief executive of Knight Ridder in the '70s and '80s and a leader of civic causes, envisioned a Miami-Dade with a strong downtown and a cultural component and often spoke publicly about his vision. However, what Chapman may have overlooked at the time when

Miami still had numerous corporate headquarters was how much the international influence would intensify and the role newcomers would play. Considered a Gateway to Latin America, Miami has attracted buyers, sellers, investors and entrepreneurs from all over the world with its geography, weather and reputation as a transport and logistic hub.

"When wealthy people come to our city, they don't just sit on the beach," Gerson said. "They buy properties and get involved. That doesn't happen so easily in other cities."

Aaron Podhurst, a founding partner of Podhurst Orseck, said that when he opened his law firm doors in 1967, the intention was to provide legal services to the local community.

"Now we're known in-

ternationally for our legal work in the aviation business," he said. We do more work from the plaintiff side than any other firm. If there is an aviation accident almost anywhere, we're involved in it in some way."

Podhurst said that most sizable Miami firms performing litigation or transaction work, or both, represent clients from other countries in addition to U.S. legal work: "All legal businesses in Miami are more globally focused than they were 50 years ago."

While the international component has provided added business, Miami professional services firms mostly have grown alongside their local clients, such as cruise lines and hotels, aviation companies, healthcare firms and real estate developers.

Also in Miami, the grow-

ing economy has provided opportunities that businesses and individuals might not have been able to tap into in more established communities. Often, visitors come to Miami for leisure, end up buying a second home, and eventually open shop.

"It has become an important city for national and international companies to have an office," Podhurst said. "Because we don't have those deep roots, people can come and make their mark here. They are not bucking the establishment."

Of course, the flip side of an easy-to-penetrate business community is the invitation it opens to scam artists. "Over the years, we have seen many instances when people have come in who are not top-drawer and have defrauded people. We still have that going on, by the way," Podhurst said.

The true evidence of Miami-Dade's maturation is the downtown, considered the area's cultural, financial, and commercial center. In the past decade alone, the number of downtown skyscrapers has doubled, bringing more housing, shopping, offices, bars and restaurants. Young professionals now flock to downtown and Brickell, where they work and live.

"Downtown Miami's rapidly changing demographics have fundamentally transformed our city — from the skyline down to the streets," said Alyce Robertson, executive director of the Miami Downtown Development Authority. "Millennials are bringing with them new energy, new ideas and new opportunities for investment. There's a new vibrancy to downtown."

At the center of down-

town is the ever-expanding Miami Dade College, which along with Florida International and the University of Miami, has seen tremendous growth and graduates professionals with more varied skills than in the past.

Another component playing a role in Miami's maturation is the continually developing cultural community with the annual Art Basel, several new arts museums, an explosion of art galleries and a performing arts theater that had been in the works for decades. Indeed, arts and culture now add \$2 billion dollars a year to the economy of Miami-Dade County, according to a 2015 report by American for the Arts.

Gary Gerson, founding partner of Gerson Preston, recently relocated his 58-year-old accounting firm's

offices to the Miami Design District from Miami Beach to be closer to the burgeoning activity.


"Miami has gone from a sleepy seaside resort town to a thriving global center for commerce in a matter of decades, and this move will allow us to stay at the forefront of this continued evolution," he said.

Founded by Gerson in 1959, the firm has grown from a one-man accounting shop to a full-service public accounting firm with more than 75 professionals across South Florida, including the next generation, Gerson's daughter Melisse Burstein.

Gerson said his firm got its start providing accounting services to small apparel manufacturers in Hialeah, went on to work for real estate companies and

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now, more than 50 years later, understands that servicing diverse industries is the way to survive the busts and booms.

For African-American-owned businesses, a variety of factors have made longevity difficult in Miami-Dade. Eric Knowles, the fourth president of the Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce has had in its 40 years, recently struggled to come up with a handful of black-owned companies that could celebrate at least 50 years of existence. A few examples are The Miami Times, Range Funeral Homes of Greater Miami, and Colonial Press International.

But Knowles said there should be more. "Those black businesses that depended on segregation no longer thrive because of integration. Some people call it black flight," Knowles said. He believes black-owned businesses stand a better chance of long-term survival if economic engines like the county government and the Miami-Dade School Board would include them in contracts.

Knowles also said that black millennials and young professionals are starting businesses and services firms that are doing well and beginning to employ other people: "There is hope for the next 50 years. ... I feel good in terms of that."

Indeed, an international array of businesses thrives throughout the county — not only from the Americas, but from other parts of the world. Near the Miami airport, for instance, a French/Italian aviation company, ATR, is expanding and growing. The di-

versity of businesses has sprouted dozens of chambers of commerce, bar associations, builders' groups and professional associations.

It's a natural evolution, said Liliam Lopez, president and CEO, South Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. "The people who came here from other countries in the 1960s were professionals and entrepreneurs. They didn't speak [English] but were able to make a living and put their kids through college. Now their kids are able to piggyback on that, and you see a much bigger community full of small and medium size businesses in different parts of Miami-Dade."

While the past 50 years saw storefront small businesses take off, today's startups are more focused on the growing technology sector. Miami has been the host city for technology conferences attracting entrepreneurs and investors. It also has become a hub for co-working space where freelancers, small business founders and independent creative thinkers can work alongside each other. With approximately \$300 million in venture capital investment in its startup companies in 2015, Greater Miami's entrepreneurial ecosystem ranks 16th among U.S. cities and metros.

Haggman of the Knight Foundation said the next step for Miami-Dade is focusing less on attracting big companies to South Florida and more on growing startups into larger businesses. "As a result of technology, you can grow and scale faster and at a



PETER ANDREW BOSCH/Miami Herald Staff/FILE, 2012

N. Patrick Range Jr., left, and his father, N. Patrick Range Sr., at the Range Funeral Home at 5727 NW 17th Ave. Range Sr. is the son of Oscar L. Range Sr., who founded Range Funeral Homes in 1953.

much lower cost," Haggman said. "We want to become one of those communities of high growth entrepreneurship where people are not just starting business but scaling them in a big way like you see in Silicon Valley and San Francisco. That's where the focus needs to be.

"In all likelihood, the big companies of 10 years from now haven't been started yet," Haggman said.

This emphasis on startups and small business growth has shifted the power base beyond the de facto Miami leadership once known as the "Non-Group." "Where the town used to have a cohesive business leadership group that was very effective in helping to execute positive change, that has dissipated," said Adolfo Henriques, chairman of the board at Gibraltar Private Bank & Trust Company. "We now have a much more broad leadership group that is not as cohesive, which is partly a result of the growth and partly because of our huge diversity in this community."

But as a result, today's

"That's part of the maturity process."

According to a 2016 report by FIU and Creative Class Group: "The future lies in [Miami's] broad-based creative economy, which combines its strength in arts, culture, fashion, media, entertainment, music, and food with those of science and technology, health and education, and business and finance." Researchers found that three key talent sectors — science and technology, business and finance, and arts, culture, design, and media — likely will power Miami's economic growth and will lead to higher incomes and living standards.

Codina Barlick said she wants to work with other next-generation leaders to ensure affordable housing, infrastructure, education and higher-paying jobs are

in place to lure and retain talent. "If you are a mid-level executive and you want to have an affordable home, get good schools for your children and live close to work, that's still hard in Miami," she said.

Clearly, Miami faces challenges as it scales to the next level: lessening congestion, retaining talent, creating more affordable housing, nurturing startups and creating more economic equality.

While toasting to a successful 50 years in business, Davis at Greenberg acknowledged these challenges, some a byproduct of the area's success in various sectors: "Our challenge now is to get all the sectors to work together, and to connect all the dots for maximum leverage."

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Turning

Miami's business community matures

Many family-connected businesses now reaching milestone anniversaries have passed into their second or third generation of leadership.

BY CINDY KRINCHER GOODMAN
Special to the Miami Herald

On a crisp Miami evening in March, more than 600 of Miami's business, government and nonprofit leaders joined international law firm Greenberg Traurig to celebrate its 50th anniversary. Among the crowd on an outdoor plaza were Robert Traurig and Larry Hoffman, two of the three attorneys who founded the firm in Miami in 1967. As champagne flowed and flamenco music played in the background, Greenberg Traurig and high-powered guests toasted the

firm's growth and longevity in the Miami community. There was much to celebrate. The Miami firm now has more than 2,000 attorneys in 38 offices in the United States, Latin America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East and is considered one of the top 20 largest firms in the world.

In many ways, Greenberg Traurig's growth and its milestone anniversary reflect the maturation of Miami's business community. Once a town in which three Jewish lawyers felt the need to start a firm where minorities could prosper, today it is multicultural in its power structure and diverse in the industries that drive the economy. It is a

favored location for Latin American regional headquarters, a strategic base for doing business in the Americas, and a community with the largest concentration of domestic and international banks on the East Coast, south of New York City.

As senior chairman of Greenberg Traurig Matt Gerson emphasized: "We have become an important place to not only sit in sun, but to do business."

Along with Greenberg Traurig, some other businesses celebrate the same milestone 50th anniversary this year. Nichols Brosch Wurst Wolfe & Associates, a Miami architecture firm, marks five decades in

business this year and is best known for its design and restoration of many of Miami's most legendary properties, including the Fontainebleau, Eden Roc, and the Dillard hotels. In addition, companies like Perry Ellis International, Podhurst Orseck, Williamson Cadillac, Gilda Industries and El Dorado Furniture, among others, have participated in the diversification of Miami-Dade's economy and now consider themselves entrenched contributors.

Gone, though, are many of the big companies that once called South Florida home: Knight Ridder, Sports Authority, Luria's, Southeast Bank, Sunglass Hut, Boodles and

Eastern Airlines are a few examples. Some fell victim to disruption in their industries, others to technology and consumer trends, consolidation or mismanagement. South Florida remains home to some corporate giants — Ryder System, Office Depot, Carnival Cruise Line.

However, as the region has grown, its economy has evolved with a strong service base in tourism, retail and hospitality and additional strengths in media, finance, fashion, design, medicine, logistics, aeronautics, bio-medical science, and even software

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AMONG BUSINESSES IN THE MIAMI AREA MARKING A HALF-CENTURY THIS YEAR



Colson Hicks Eidson partners, from left: Roberto Martinez, Dean Cobon, "Mike" Eidson.

COLSON HICKS EIDSON
This Coral Gables law firm handles local, national and international litigation and arbitration. Founded 50 years ago by the late Bill Cobon and Bill Hicks, the firm has added 13 partners throughout the years, including name partner "Mike" Eidson and son of founder Dean Cobon. The firm handles some of the biggest product liability cases in the country, including airtag recall litigation and Chinese drywall and has won hundreds of multimillion dollar verdicts and settlements for its clients.



El Dorado founder Manuel Capó. His sons now comprise the company's board of directors.

EL DORADO FURNITURE
The retailer was founded by Manuel Capó who had fled Cuba with two of his sons. On June 27th, 1967, seven months after their arrival, the Capós — who had owned a furniture store established in the 1920s in Pinar del Rio — opened their store on Miami's Calle Ocho (Southwest Eighth Street), naming the store after the boat they sailed to freedom. El Dorado. Fifty years later, the company has expanded brand operations with 14 locations across Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Lee counties, as well as an online store at www.eldorado.com. The business has become the largest Hispanic-owned furniture retail enterprise in the United States and is ranked among the country's top 50 furniture retailers. Revenues for 2016 exceeded an estimated \$4 million.



At Gilda Industries in 1996, Antonio (who has since passed) and Juan Blazquez.

GILDA INDUSTRIES
Located in Hialeah, Gilda Industries was founded by the Blazquez family and manufactures and distributes scooped crackers and snacks. Now managed by the family's second and third generation, Gilda has 67 full-time workers, a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility, and more than a dozen delivery trucks.



Greenberg Traurig founding partners Mel Greenberg, Bob Traurig, Larry Hoffman.

GREENBERG TRAURIG
The firm was founded in downtown Miami by three Jewish lawyers who wanted to replicate 1 New York law firms. From the start, Greenberg Traurig has handled high-profile legal matters, and over the years, it has grown to become one of the top 20 largest law firms in the country with 2,000 attorneys in 38 offices in the United States, Latin America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East.



From left: Don Wolfe, Bruce Brosch, Jim Wurst at architecture firm Nichols, Brosch, Wurst, Wolfe and Associates, Inc., in 2012.

NICHOLS, BROSCHE, WURST, WOLFE & ASSOCIATES
This Coral Gables-based architecture firm is best known for its design and restoration of many of Miami's big projects. Founded by John Nichols, the firm has been involved in more than \$5 billion in renovations and new construction for more than 300 hotels including the W Hotel in Miami Beach and the Diplomat Resort and Convention Center in Hollywood. It expanded its services into the Latin American market in 2016, when it announced its strategic alliance with Alberto Benfer & Arquitectos, a boutique architecture firm based in San José, Costa Rica.



George Feldenkreis, founder of Perry Ellis International, in 2016.

PERRY ELLIS INTERNATIONAL
Perry Ellis in Doralee is the successor to Supreme International that was founded by George Feldenkreis. Born in Havana, Cuba, to Russian immigrants, Feldenkreis moved to Miami in 1961 and started an apparel business that became known as Supreme International. Supreme International went public in 1992 and became Perry Ellis International (PEI) after acquiring the powerhouse brand in 1999, which has since grown into a multinational corporation with annual revenues of nearly \$1 billion. Feldenkreis remains involved as chairman.



Aaron Podhurst of Podhurst Orseck, center, at a party in February. He's flanked by Brian Blinn, left, and Tony Argiz.

PODHURST ORSECK
Aaron S. Podhurst left one of Miami's top firms to partner with Robert Orseck to found a law practice based on the philosophy of providing high-caliber representation in state and federal trial courts. The firm now has 14 lawyers and handles large scale aviation, class action and personal injury and appellate litigation. Its biggest successes include recovering close to \$1 billion on behalf of plaintiffs in a national insurance class action, and recovering more than \$500 million on behalf of bank customers in overdraft fee litigation. As lead plaintiff attorney, the firm was instrumental in reaching a \$1 billion dollar settlement with the NFL for concussion-related injuries.



Williamson Automotive Group owners Ed, Carol and Tree Williamson.

WILLIAMSON CADILLAC
Williamson Automotive Group is the umbrella under which Williamson Cadillac — turning 50 this year — is positioned. Williamson Cadillac was originally the George Williamson Cadillac Company, founded by George with son Ed in the family business as a new-car salesman. Five years later, Ed became president of the company, and in 1976, he and his brother Tom purchased the dealership from their father and renamed it Williamson Cadillac Company. In 2001, the dealership moved from its Dadeland location to about a mile south near Southwest 24th Street and U.S. 1. Now wife Carol is treasurer, Ed is chairman and Ed's son, Tree, is president. Today Ed Williamson also is a partner in Vera Cadillac Buick GMC of Pembroke Pines. The Cadillac dealership has been No. 1 in the Southeast region (seven states) 15 years based on sales volume.