The Remarkable Jonathan Plutzik

By Elman + Cheek

From the son of a poet becomes the owner of the most culturally advanced hotel in the world? Practice, practice, practice. (The hyperbole is mine until proven otherwise.)

And with a “little” help from his family and friends — for the glorious cultural achievement at The Betsy Hotel on Ocean Drive in South Beach is truly a family affair, with participation from an ever-growing circle of admiring friends.

Jonathan Plutzik, with high-quality, hands-on support from his wife Lesley, his son Zach, and his sister Deborah has created a cultural Mecca in the heart of South Beach — offering chamber music, opera, jazz, poetry in many forms, writers’ breakfast salons, a writer-in-residency program, art exhibitions, a cappella festivals, and much more — all free of charge to the public. PLUS all of the cultural happenings occur within the incredibly tasteful and well-appointed ambiance of the renovated and refurbished Betsy Hotel, accompanied by top-notch food and beverages.

Plutzik was born in New Haven, CT, when his father, the noted poet Hyam Plutzick, had a teaching fellowship at Yale University. Following Yale, the senior Plutzik became the first Jewish faculty member at the University of Rochester, serving in the English Department as the John H. Deane Professor of English until his death in 1962 (when Jonathan was only seven years-old). So Jonathan Plutzik and his sister Deborah Plutzik Briggs grew up in Rochester, where their mother kept them steeped in the notion that pursuing art is a high calling.

Before purchasing The Betsy Ross Hotel out of bankruptcy in 2005 and constructing the concept of an arts-oriented hotel, Plutzik graduated from Brandeis University, received an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, and had a distinguished career in the Financial Services industry in New York, retiring as vice chairman of Credit Suisse / First Boston to devote the majority of his time to The Betsy. However, he has kept his hand in the Financial Services Industry through his role as Vice Chairman of Fannie Mae.