

1 Rubin

Gulfport Public Library

5501 - 28th Avenue South

Gulfport, Florida 33707

April 28, 1983

To: Gulfport Gabber
From: Norma Lamb, Gulfport Public Library
Re: Morris Rubin, Gulfport's beach and pier photographer from 1934 - 1979
(ROZ ROBERTS'S FATHER)

Possibly many of you remember my father, Morris Rubin, who took pictures on the beach at Gulfport for many years. His camera will be on display at the library through the summer.

My father, Morris, was approximately sixteen years of age when he came to New York City from Russia to join his brother. During his stay in New York City, Morris drove an old Model T Ford taxi. He parked his cab in front of the old Waldorf Astoria waiting for passengers.

Morris retired in 1934 and came to Gulfport. Taking pictures became a hobby and he built his own camera. Morris worked inside his camera through a black cloth fastened tightly around his arm to prevent light from entering. The pictures were placed in various solutions. The hourglass timer is mounted on the camera and the pictures come out in two minutes. All his equipment was improvised and home-made.

Morris loved Gulfport. He would arrive at Gulfport at 11 a.m., go for a swim at noon and stay on the beach or pier until about 3:30 p.m.

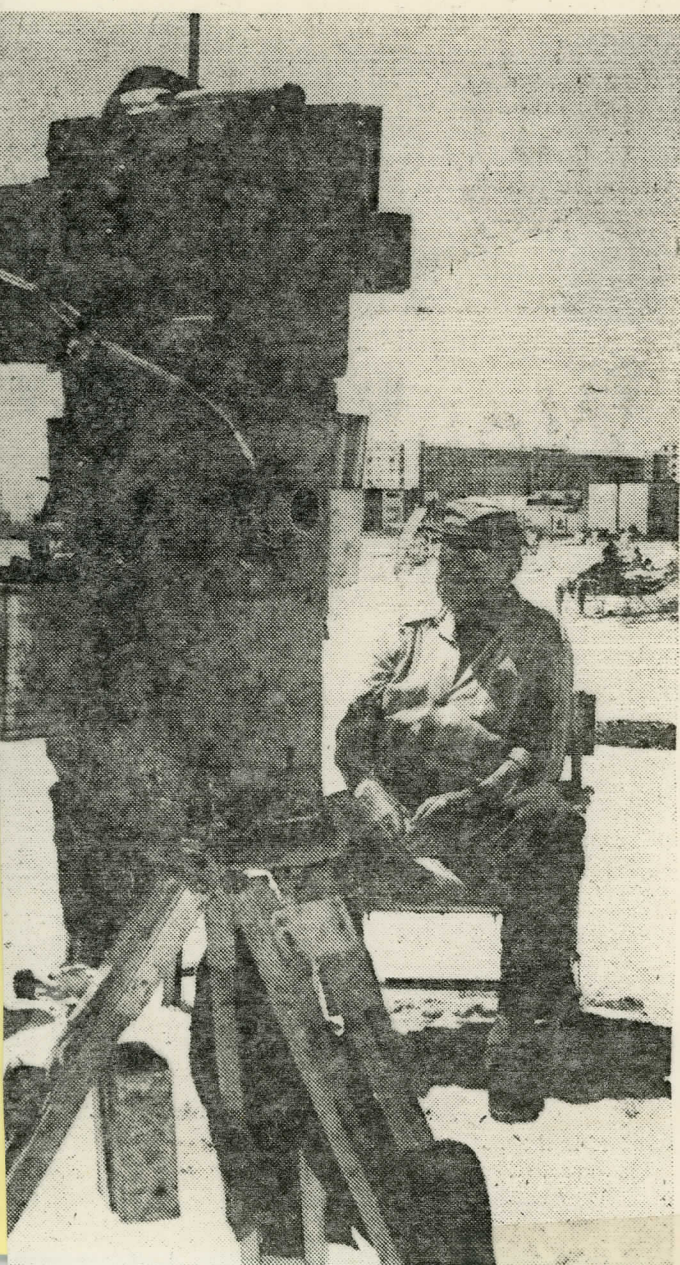
My Father charged .25¢ for a picture plus .25¢ for a frame from 1934 to 1977. In 1978 he raised the price of the picture to .50¢. Morris retired permanently in November, 1979. At the age of 93 he passed away on February 5, 1982. On March 10th, he would have been 94 years.

Roz Roberts

Roz Roberts

The Gulfport Library will have the camera and articles relating to his hobby on display through the summer months.





With his Rube Goldberg camera, Morris Rubin has become an institution at Gulfport Beach.

St. Petersburg Times Photo
by Michael Marz



May 2, 1974

Staff Photo by Jackie Greene

Okay, Smile

If you've ever been to Gulfport beach there's a good chance Morris Rubin has taken your picture. He's been a fixture of the beach scene longer than most people can remember but what you might not guess by looking at the strange box-like contraption he uses as a camera is that the pictures are made without film. Rubin uses positive photographic paper and develops the prints inside the camera.

The Gulfport Casino, a landmark since 1908, has shared the Gulfport Beach with Morris Rubin for nearly 40 years.

Two years before the first Gulfport Casino was built, Rubin entered the photographic business using positive Tin-Type photographic materials. Photographic paper was non-existent at that time, Rubin said.

In 1914 he laid aside his camera and became one of New York City's taxi drivers. His first taxi was a 1914 Model T Ford with a custom made body employing the newest designs, an enclosed passenger section.

Born in Russia, Rubin came to New York at the age of 16 and prospered until he retired in 1934 when he came to Gulfport.

With his Taxi business in front of the New York City landmark, the Waldorf Astoria, it was only fitting that he became associated with the Gulfport landmark, The Gulfport Casino.

Building his own camera to use the direct positive papers of today, Rubin set up his "Picture in a Minute" hobby on the Gulfport Pier where he would fish between customers.

Now at age 84, Rubin has moved his camera, chair and umbrella on the sandy beach of Gulfport with his uniform-of-the-day being swimming trunks. The walking landmark with a deep Florida tan can be seen 3 or 4 days a week beneath his colourful umbrella, walking the beach looking for customers or taking a 5 minute swim break.

Weather permitting, Morris Rubin arrives at his site about 11 AM. He leaves around four o'clock.

With the cost of materials going up, the cost of a photograph on Gulfport Beach has not changed from his 1934 price of 25¢. It costs more than 25¢ for a person to take his own photo, Rubin said. Boasting that his photos are "sharp" from the subject to the distant background, he said he enjoys his hobby and only wants to cover the cost of materials.

Morris Snaps Some Life Into Gulfport Beach Scene

By MICHAEL MARZELLA

St. Petersburg Times Staff Writer

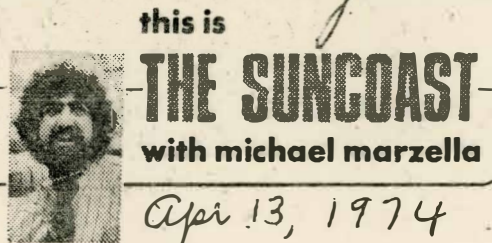
In 38 years, nasty days have visited Gulfport Beach; days when sea breezes spattered visitors with stinging sand; cloud-shrouded days of dark temperament and rain; airless, still days rimming the beach with stagnant cloyingly warm water; days you gagged on the rank aroma of rotting Red Tide remnants.

ON THOSE DAYS, sun worshippers shunned the beach, and as they do, so does Morris Rubin. "Why come down here if there's not anyone to take a picture of?" Why not, indeed, Morris?

Morris Rubin is a fixture, an animate institution as established on Gulfport Beach as the swings, merry-go-round or picnic tables. He's part of the furniture — a comfortable, easy chair. For 38 years Morris has haunted the beach with his Rube Goldberg camera, snapping instant photographs of passersby before Polaroid was a household word.

By noon, when the sun shoves a shadow across his face, Morris is on the beach squinting beneath his cap's bill, scouring the shore for patrons.

"Look there, two couples. I'll offer to take them all for 50 cents, and that will be a good bargain for them. Also maybe they'll both want pictures of each couple alone, that's a good way to get business. Sometimes on a



slow day like this you have to go out and ask them."

For one-quarter of a dollar, Morris will pose you before his hulking camera that looks not at all like any other camera. A great, green box — the color of hospital easy-eye walls — squats on three hand-hewn legs, fully five feet tall in all. A single lens, cannibalized decades ago from a disintegrated tin type camera, transfers the image to "a square of positive print paper Morris manipulates inside through a light-trapping black cloth. Dunked in developing and fixing solutions the pictures bloom in two minutes.

TWO MINUTES LATER (or four turns of the hourglass timer made from two sand-stuffed bottles taped mouth-to-mouth), Morris fishes a photograph from his washing pot, motorcycle battery casing. Thick, browned fingers, stained and coarsened from exposure to sun and photograph chemicals, cradle the finished product.

"Looks good, huh? This camera takes good pictures without any fancy stuff."

He's a shade disdainful of a costly Nikon, wagging his close-cropped head in disbelief. "It takes pictures at 125th of a second? Mine is slower, maybe one-tenth of a second, however long I think it should be I hold it open."

For 38 years, Morris has recorded the beachcombers, honeymooners, retirees and bathers, loading their arms with stuffed fish and a plywood pelican for props, so the folks back home will see the evidence of Florida on film.

"I don't make much money at this, this is just a hobby. I live off my Social Security. How old am I? Eighty-six, I think. They didn't keep good records of those things in the country villages in Russia."

BENEATH THE wind-ripped umbrella Morris waves to potential customers, yawning those ham-hands in the breeze.

"Today it costs maybe \$5 for a studio to take your picture, so where else could you get it for a quarter? But when kids come by and have only one quarter, maybe I'll take two pictures, or maybe give a woman the frame without charging another quarter," he says.

"Some days it is slow, and I wait a lot. I have everything I need — a place to live, this place to come to, and my hobby: this is just a hobby."



Pier Photographer

Camera's One Of A

Evening Independent

Localife

SECTION B

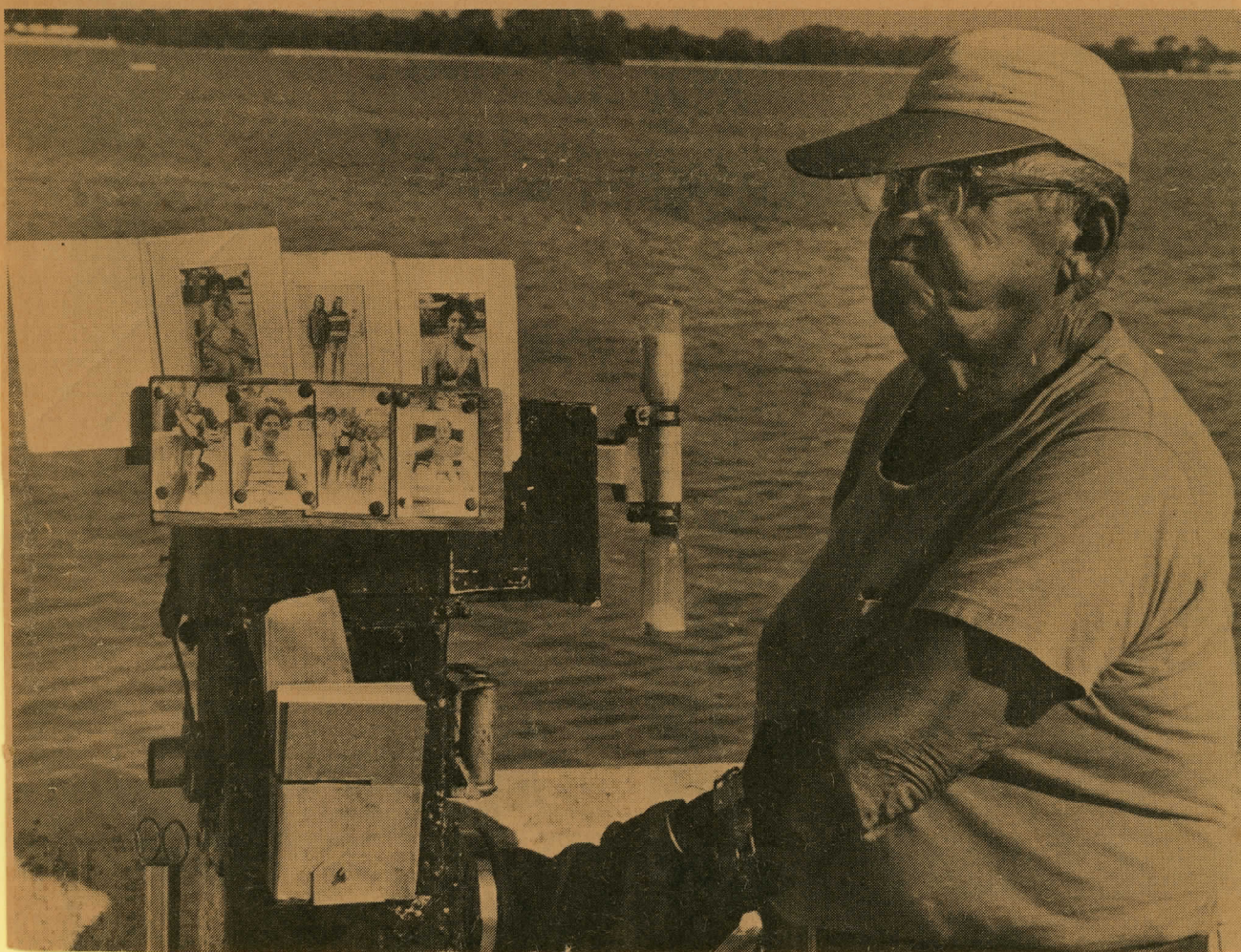
Saturday,
March 4, 1972

HAZEL GEISSLER
Independent Reporter

Morris Rubin will be 84 this month. He'll probably spend his birthday on the Gulfport Pier. Unless it is raining.

Morris has been taking pictures on the pier for almost 40 years, ever since he came here from New York to live.

When he was about 16 he came to



Kind

New York from Russia, leaving his family behind and joining a brother already in this country.

He decided, without much education, the best job for him was driving a taxi around New York City. He began with an old Model T Ford taxi. The taxi stand was in front of the old Waldorf Astoria.

Morris retired in 1934 and came to Gulfport. Taking pictures became a hobby and he built a Rube Goldberg type of camera, processing the pictures inside the lower part of the setup in a minute — long before Polaroid was invented.

His props are a fish and pelican he made and his timer is a small hour-glass mounted on the camera which takes 30 seconds for the sand to pass through.

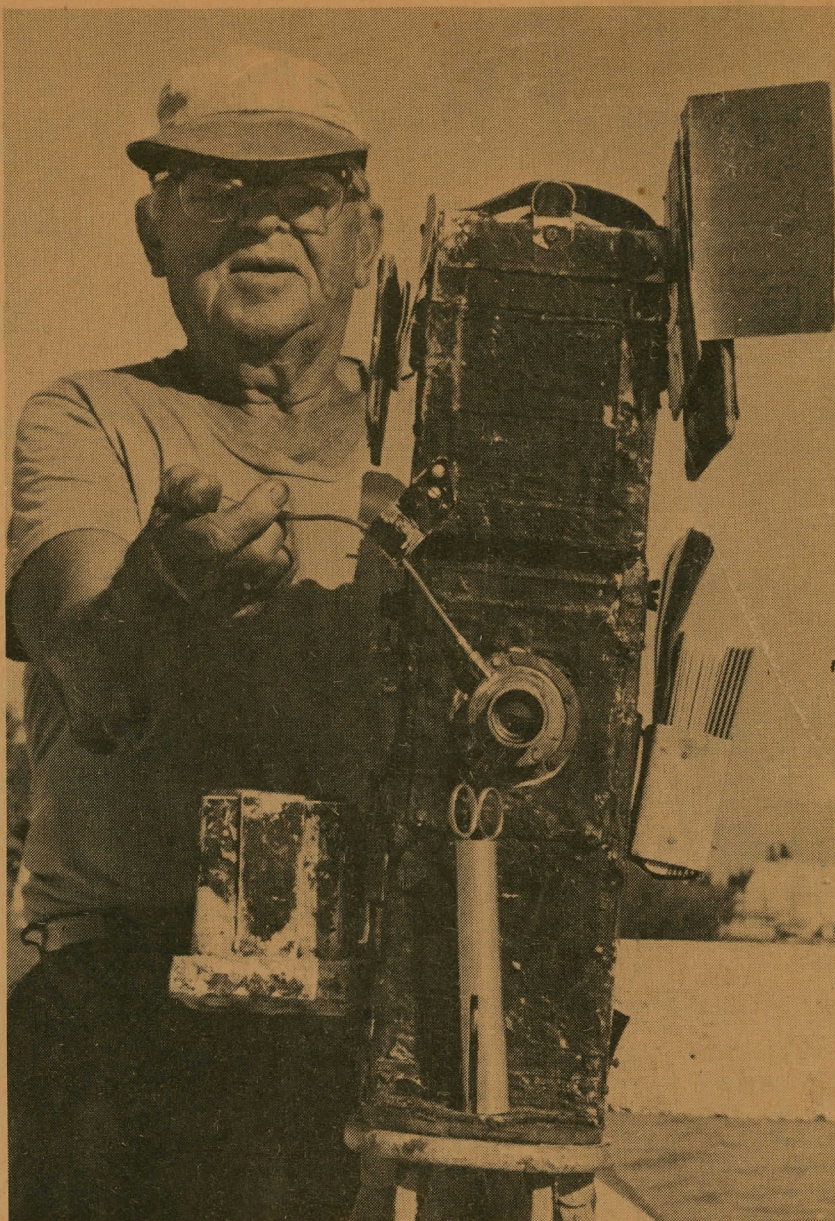
To develop a picture he draws out a sleeve of black cloth from an aperture below the camera, wraps it tightly around his arm to prevent light from entering, catches the exposed paper as it drops down from the camera; jiggles it in the developer as the timer goes into motion, dips it in a bleach to take the negative off, immerses it in a hypo at the side of the camera to fix the image, washes it in a can attached to the tripod of the camera, dries it with a piece of old towel and — there's a memento of a visit to Florida, complete with fish, pelican and palm tree.

His cash register is an old coin changer. The price is 25 cents — the same price he charged when he began in the '30s.

"I come down every day in good weather. I come down about 11 a.m. and stay around to 4 p.m. I fish once in awhile."

Those residents who walk the pier know him and he knows them.

He's a part of the pier. Gulfport wouldn't be the small town friendly community it is without him.



Morris Rubin, 84, is a familiar fixture on the Gulfport pier as he takes pictures of visitors and residents. Rubin built the old camera he uses some 34 years ago when he came to Florida and picture taking became first a hobby and then an avocation. Snapshots he has taken and developed on the spot are tacked to the camera (below) and on the little cart he uses in his daily walk to the pier and home again.

April 2, 1969



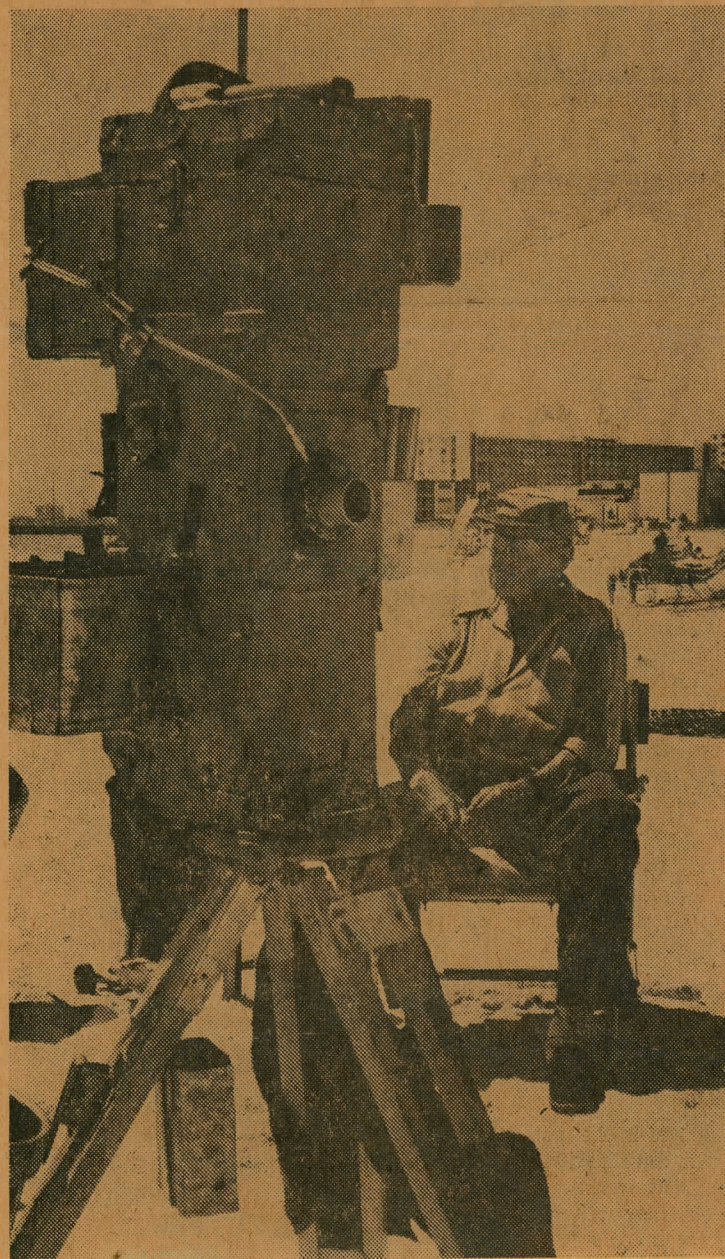
Sea Side Fixture

Anyone who's been to Gulfport Beach in the last 34 years has more than likely seen Morris Rubin and his camera. Rubin's been shooting pictures of people and developing them on the spot for more than three decades. Here he takes a shot of Kyle Keuning (above) while his pelican prop looks on. Waiting with Kyle to get her picture is Gail Bebenhausen (right).

Staff Photos by Norman Zeisloff

Family The Arts Lifestyles

H.S. Rubin



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St. Petersburg Times Photo
by Michael Marzella

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By MICHAEL MARZELLA

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THE SUNCOAST
with michael marzella

Apr 13, 1974

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Rubin with one of his bathing beauty shots.

1977
#6
Rubin

88, And Still Behind The Camera

Morris Rubin, an active 88-year-old photographer, boasts of "the only camera in the world like it!" He built his own Rube Goldberg-type contraption that he uses as a camera to photograph people on beach areas on Gulfport Beach. Rubin has been a photographer for almost 50 years and is still going strong.

Staff Photos by
NORMAN ZEISLOFT



Morris Rubin behind his homemade camera.

