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Spring Break: Image, Identity, and Consumer Culture in a Florida Rite of Passage

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a social history of spring break, examining the economic and social aspects of this youth culture phenomenon in Florida. Spring break follows the evolution of youth culture's increasingly complex relationship with an expanding consumer culture. I am exploring its many manifestations in music, film, and popular fiction, but also its rebellious expressions in the riots and arrests on Florida's beaches. I intend to focus on the small beach communities that were transformed by spring break, particularly Fort Lauderdale.

Spring break in Florida dates back to the late 1920s in Palm Beach. Wealthy New England families spent their winters in Palm Beach. Their children who attended northern colleges joined their parents during Easter vacation. The hardships of the Great Depression and the sacrifices of World War II kept extravagant travel to a minimum, and the southeast coast of Florida became a popular vacation spot.

By the 1950s, Fort Lauderdale reigned as the spring break capitol. Soon the competition to attract spring break crowds and the tensions of an emerging youth culture played an increasingly vital economic role in a consumer-driven America of the 1950s and 60s. Fort Lauderdale struggled to maintain an image of sophistication while catering to a notoriously raucous but financially lucrative onslaught of teenage spring-breakers. Spring break determined the development of both of these cities, and many others in

Florida, by influencing municipal law, local industry, and, eventually, the cities' own senses of identity and public image.

Spring break continues to demonstrate the vicissitudes of youth and consumer culture on the beaches of Panama City and Cozumel, Mexico, but it has also become an industry in itself.

Chapter 1

The Origins of Spring Break: An Introduction

The origins of “spring break” were a century in the making. Since their inception, Easter and spring vacations provided students a retreat from their studies and a chance to spend time with families, practice sports, tour with the glee club, or travel. During the 1950s, however, spring vacation attracted national headlines as a cultural phenomenon. Young college students emboldened by the tradition of campus “spring riots,” spurred on by their growing influence in American consumer culture, and seduced by Florida’s warm climate, quickly transformed spring break into a rite of passage and an industry of its own.

Spring Riots

The tradition of spring riots began in Ivy League colleges, particularly at Yale University, and for the most part remained an elite, white male experience until the 1950s. Predating the American Revolution, campus hi-jinks and spring riots provided a precedent for the later antics of the modern spring break phenomenon in the later twentieth century. Among the earliest instances recorded, the Harvard Butter Rebellion occurred in 1766 when disgruntled students complained, “Behold, our butter stinketh as we cannot eat thereof.”¹ From 1761 to 1766, Yale students effectively disabled the university through an

¹ Andrew Hamilton, “Madness on the Campus,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 28 April 1956, 110.

extended revolt that included physical attacks on the faculty. In 1774, a recent graduate of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University), reminisced about fellow students “Meeting and Shoving in the dark entries; knocking at Doors and going off without entering; Strewing the entries in the night with greasy Feathers; freezing the Bell; Ringing it at Late Hours of the Night.”²

As early as the late-1800s, “panty raids,” the burning of effigies, and general bedlam aggravated spring fever on college campuses across the country. For instance, in the 1850s, University of Michigan students strung up, shot, and burned an effigy. One of the first known panty raids occurred in 1899, when 400 University of Wisconsin male students, wearing only pajamas, stormed the streets of Madison, broke into Ladies Hall, and stole “204 articles of clothing.”³ That same year, 600 to 700 Princeton students rioted against Pawnee Bill’s Wild West. The revue’s organizers, aware of but undeterred by a college tradition that forbade parades, scheduled a procession to advertise for the western show to follow later that evening. Students turned out to enforce the rule. Surrounding the parade, they threw firecrackers beneath horses and pelted the animals and cowboy and Indian performers with vegetables, eggs, and finally rocks. The performers shot blank cartridges from their guns into the crowd and fought back with whips and bolas. Horses and ponies trampled students and cowboys alike, and the fracas escalated into a full-blown riot. The ordeal ended with many cuts and bruises and one fractured skull. Woodrow Wilson, then president of Princeton, prohibited the students from attending the circus that that evening.⁴ A few days later, in Ithaca, New York, after a baseball game

² Thomas Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (New York: Avon Books, 1999), 89.

³ Hamilton, 110.

⁴ “Princeton Students Riot, They Attack Pawnee Bill’s Wild West Combination,” *New York Times*, 16 May 1899. The article describes the rule as “an unwritten law of Princeton that no circus parade must pass

between Cornell and Princeton, a riot erupted when the police and fire departments interfered with a celebration by dousing a blazing bonfire. A number of students seized and cut the fire hose. Enraged townspeople attacked the students, beating them with “clubs or any other weapons that could be improvised.” The assault ended at last with firemen turning their hoses on the students to clear the area.⁵

Spring riots intensified in the twentieth century. In particular, rioting students from Yale and Wesleyan challenged police in the spring of 1910. Following an academic banquet, approximately fifty Yale students rampaged at Coney Island, wrecking amusement booths, a restaurant, and a “flying horse” show. The *New York Times* reported that “a squad of special constables and amusement boothkeepers fought the students in a hand-to-hand conflict” which ended with the arrest of ten Yale seniors. The same day, before their own banquet, the sixty-four Wesleyan sophomores were apprehended after terrorizing the town of Saybrook, New York. Riding the train into town, they stole lanterns from each station, then tied them together and threw them from the last car creating a terrific noise. In one of the rail cars, initiates “into the mysteries of Theta Nu Epsilon” were held to the ground and drenched with beer. After arriving in Saybrook, an official caught the students pulling down tombstones and defacing burial slabs local graveyard. When he protested, the sophomores seized him by the arms, struck him, and wrenched his shoulder. The Wesleyans continued their destructive rampage in a church, where pulpit furniture was stolen for use in their banquet ceremonies. After the dinner at

through the streets.” The parade organizers were familiar with the students’ antipathy towards parades, but defiantly ignored the rule. The riot was also surprisingly multicultural with white Princeton students fighting against Mexican and South American cowboys; the victim with the fractured skull was an African American man.

⁵ “A Small Riot at Cornell,” *New York Times*, 22 May 1899.

a hotel in Saybrook, the students launched dishes through the windows and tore all the curtains down, which finally led to their arrests.⁶

The riots continued throughout World War I. In one episode, soldiers returning from the war and the angered citizens of New Haven reversed the riots by storming the Yale campus in spring of 1919. During a “welcome-home” parade, several soldiers reported hearing insults from students watching from their dormitory windows, to which they replied, “student slackers.” Later that evening, three hundred soldiers raided the campus and “punched” several students before police intervened. Tensions heightened a few days later when a rumor circulated that Yale students were ridiculing a military band that had played a concert that afternoon. This time, two hundred soldiers were joined by five thousand others in an attack on Yale’s campus. As the *New York Times* described the fracas: “The crowd seized half a dozen young men in the vicinity of the campus whom they believed to be students and handled them roughly. Three undergraduates were . . . injured . . . when they were overtaken by the mob and mauled.” With the campus locked up, the mob faced off with students who stood behind the gates armed with baseball bats and clubs. The melee finally ended when Jim Braden, President of the Yale Athletic Association, a captain of the track team, and a former Yale football player, explained to the rioters that he had served in France during the war and fought alongside them in the trenches. He assured the soldiers that the matter of the insults would be investigated. After which, the group dispersed, but not before giving Braden a rousing three cheers. The author of the article blamed “the local Bolsheviki” rather than the soldiers for the

⁶ “Students’ Riots Arouse Faculties, Yale and Wesleyan Universities are Upset by Disturbances that Followed Class Banquets,” *New York Times*, 5 June 1910.

riot, insisting that Communists were hoping to “[incite] class hatred against university life and officials.”⁷

In 1928, Yale students were again involved in an incident that had the citizens of New Haven in an uproar. The annual “bottle riot” at Yale broke out when students, annoyed at a noisy sanitation vehicle passing by their dormitory, began throwing glass bottles out of their windows. They then ran into the streets throwing more glass and stopping a trolley car by pulling down electrical posts. Police attempted to stop the mayhem and apprehended five offenders, dragging them to the police station. By this time the group had swelled to over a thousand students. Incensed by the arrests, the remaining Yalies followed their arrested comrades to the police station, hurling bricks and eggs through its windows. The police battled with students for two hours before subduing them. Thomas A. Tully, acting mayor of New Haven, found the riots “inexcusable.” He added, “We can and do overlook the outbursts which follow a big athletic victory for Yale, but it is impossible to overlook an affair of this kind. There does not seem to have been any logical reason for starting the riot . . .”⁸ Owners of a house near a college library on campus brought suit against Yale for damages, claiming the students had broken every window in the house.⁹

The spring riots usually occurred either before or after exams, following student elections or sporting events, during hazing ceremonies, or before graduation. In a few cases, riots grew out of political rallies and speeches. But the majority of revelers avoided politics, except on black college campuses where students protested racial and social

⁷ “Rioters Damage Yale Buildings,” *New York Times*, 28 May 1919.

⁸ “Five Students Held in Yale Bottle Riot, Prof. Tweedy of Divinity School Signs Their Bonds – His Son Among Those Arrested,” *New York Times*, 31 May 1928.

⁹ “Arrested Yale Men to Contend Innocence,” *New York Times*, 1 June 1928.

injustice.¹⁰ At times, spring riots were spontaneous reactions to administration policies perceived as insults or the outcomes of campus events gone awry, but tradition remained an important impetus. College officials and newspapers generally excused the riots as a matter of course for young people sowing their wild oats, a social safety valve for letting off steam. Colleges and universities generally handled the punishment themselves, and a prevailing “boys will be boys” attitude encouraged leniency.¹¹

The riots occasionally sparked some criticism when school officials or town leaders felt that the students had overstepped boundaries or egregiously violated decorum. Citizens of college towns also retaliated. Throughout the university’s history, whether they were attackers, victims, or the source of a disturbance, Yale University students and embattled New Haven citizens, in particular, dominated the headlines each year. In 1854, a disturbance at a theater between a student and a resident of New Haven escalated when residents along with several other citizens yelled, “Turn out the d—d monkey! Turn him out!” The students stayed throughout the performance only to face a brutal beating outside the theater.¹² A *New York Times* article written in March 1865 described a violent “mob riot” on the New Haven campus between freshmen and sophomores. “The time has gone by when students behaved and were regarded as rowdies, and not as gentlemen,” the reporter declared. Yet, in the end, the writer absolved the students and laid blame with “that sprite called the ‘March Devil,’ very well known to College Faculties . . .”¹³ Similarly, another *New York Times* piece written in 1931 blamed

¹⁰ See Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

¹¹ Joseph R. Gusfield, “Student Protest and University Response,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 395 (May 1971): 28.

¹² “Fatal Riot at New Haven,” *New York Times*, 20 March 1954.

¹³ “Yale College, All About the Students’ Riots – The ‘March Devil’ – ‘Public Opinion’ – Bishop Clark’s Remarks,” *New York Times*, 1 March 1865.

the spring riots on “mob psychology,” boredom, and bad weather. From Columbia University men stopping traffic on Broadway Avenue to University of Michigan men stealing a firemen’s hose, cutting it into pieces, and selling it on campus, students were merely trying to “make life less dull.”¹⁴ One suspicious woman, a Barnard student who considered the riots to be a matter of standard practice and ultimately lucrative for schools, sarcastically proclaimed, “Tomorrow some benevolent old codger, remembering the days of his youth, will sigh and leave Columbia a million or so. If we, by bursting the bonds of convention, can gain a little of such profitable publicity, let us imitate the noble example our gay young brothers have set us. Cynicism is no more! Sophistication is no more! Modesty is no more! Let us be Amazons, oh my sisters! Let us riot – in the public eye!”¹⁵ Despite her facetious urgings, women continued to play a limited role in the riots. Her accusations went unanswered, but loyalties within the university system remained clear. Expulsions, suspensions, and arrests nearly always followed the riots, even though most schools tended to side with students in their negotiations with local law enforcement. As a result, students seemed above the law, and the relationship between town and gown became increasingly strained.

Despite the increasing diversity of many campus communities, by the 1930s, most Americans still viewed college attendance as an upper class activity, and many looked upon college students with resentment and skepticism.¹⁶ In the midst of an economic depression, the citizens of college towns grew more intolerant of the wanton destruction every spring. On the Yale campus in the spring of 1930, college officials had strictly

¹⁴ “Springs of Student Rioting, Psychology and Tradition Play Parts in the Occasional Collegiate Outbursts,” *New York Times*, 1 February 1931.

¹⁵ “Student Riots Fill Coiffers of Colleges, Barnard Girl Says,” *New York Times*, 30 November 1930.

¹⁶ Daniel A. Clark, “‘The Two Joes. Joe College, Joe Veteran’: The G.I. Bill, College Education, and Postwar American Culture,” *History of Education Quarterly* 38 (Summer 1998): 173.

forbid the annual spring “demonstration.” Students surprised them and police by starting a riot nearly a month early, by setting off a false fire alarm that sent the students into the streets and clambering atop arriving fire trucks. Two hundred collegians “halted street cars, and automobiles, shattered windows and hurled bottles, crockery and furniture from dormitory windows until the streets in the neighborhood were so badly littered that the police closed several of them.” Police fought back with clubs and arrested seven rioters for destruction of property, though seven officers were injured in the process.¹⁷ Although the students were later fined, the presiding judge issued a general warning that further violence would result in a jail sentence.¹⁸ The college suspended fourteen and another sixteen were barred from living in the dormitories the following year.¹⁹ Similar tensions and conflict started in Massachusetts in 1937 when the Middlesex County District Attorney warned the presidents of Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Tufts College that “drastic action” would be taken against rioting students. The warning came after three days of mayhem in the Boston area, during which 600 Tufts students kidnapped the fire lieutenant, tied knots in a fire hose, and paraded in front of the women’s dormitories where they were met with cheers.²⁰

In the spring of 1939, the bizarre but less threatening activity of goldfish swallowing swept across American campuses. It seems to have begun when Harvard student Lothrop Withington Jr. ate a single goldfish to win a bet, and Frank Pope, a “husky” junior at Franklin and Marshall College swallowed three live goldfish “just to

¹⁷ “12 Students Jailed in ‘Spring Riot’ at Yale; Three Taken to Hospital, 7 Policemen Hurt,” *New York Times*, 9 May 1930.

¹⁸ “Seven Yale Students are Fined for Riot,” *New York Times*, 10 May 1930.

¹⁹ “14 Yale Students Suspended for Riot,” *New York Times*, 16 May 1930.

²⁰ “Warns 3 Colleges on Student Riots, Middlesex Official Sends Notes to Presidents of Harvard, M.I.T., and Tufts,” *New York Times*, 7 May 1937. Tufts University was then called Tufts College.

show those Harvard guys are sissies.”²¹ To answer the challenge, Harvard sophomore Irving M. Clark chased twenty-four live goldfish with orange juice in just over five minutes.²² In the following months, students all over the country emptied pet stores of their goldfish, forcing dealers to scramble for more. At Roanoke College, the Goldfish Club demanded that all initiates swallow at least one goldfish, and successfully admitted fourteen men and two women.²³ College administrators and state legislators reacted immediately to stop the rapidly escalating trend. After Massachusetts Institute of Technology freshman Albert E. Hayes Jr. swallowed forty-two fish in fifty-two minutes, Massachusetts state Senator Drapf insisted that the Department of Conservation investigate the new trend and take any necessary action to “protect and preserve the fish from cruel and wanton consumption.” For his part, Hayes claimed he only stopped at forty-two because he was in the class of 1942.²⁴ At Kutztown State Teachers College in Reading, Pennsylvania, Howard Francis Jr. was suspended from classes for “conduct unbecoming a student in a professional course,” when hundreds of students skipped their classes to see him gobble forty-three goldfish.²⁵ Concern grew when Middlesex University pre-veterinary student Gordon Southworth devoured sixty-seven fish. Others followed suit, Boston pathologist cautioned that eating goldfish brought fear of exposure to tapeworms.²⁶

²¹ “Eats Goldfish to Beat Harvard,” *New York Times*, 22 March 1939.

²² Harvard Angler Wins; Swallows 24 Live Goldfish in Contest With F. & M. Nimrod,” *New York Times* 27 March 1939.

²³ “Swallow Goldfish to Join Club,” *New York Times* 28 March 1939.

²⁴ “Legislature Is Asked to Protect Goldfish As M.I.T. Student Wins Title With 42 Gulps,” *New York Times* 31 March 1939.

²⁵ “Goldfish Gulper Pays; Suspended for Breaking Up Day at Kutztown Teachers College,” *New York Times* 4 April 1939.

²⁶ “New Higher Education Diet Scorns Goldfish; Chicago Junior Eats 2 Phonograph Records,” *New York Times* 2 April 1939.

The fad soon disappeared leaving pundits to speculate at the rise and fall of goldfish-swallowing. One sportswriter could not find the cause for the collegiate interest, but did remember when it was introduced to baseball: In the mid-1920s, “in the courtyard of the hotel in St. Louis where most of the ball clubs stopped in those days there was a fountain with live goldfish in the pool below. One day [Rabbit Maranville] went overboard into the pool, came up with a goldfish and swallowed it.”²⁷ Another article found the “goldfish-gulping business” to be a “poor imitation of an old Indian custom.” According to Manuel Archuleta, a San Juan Indian, “Indian children [had] long swallowed fish to make them strong swimmers,” but college students were “just silly.”²⁸

In the early 1940s, with many students heading for war and others sobered by the prospect, campus antics declined. One reporter in 1942 remarked on the quiet spring in Cambridge, Massachusetts, “This has been a vastly different Spring at Harvard from any the college has known since 1918. There has not been the semblance of the usual Spring riot in which youthful freshmen expended their pent-up energies. Nor is there the customary gayety as the seniors look forward to Commencement and the under-classmen to the end of a college year.”²⁹ Once the war was over, in the spring of 1946, the Harvard riots resumed but with a political edge. Harvard conservatives and liberals “engaged in fisticuff, jeering, hissing and speech-making for and against Russian, Anglo-American unity, and kindred subjects.” And rather than simply cheering from the sidelines, women from Radcliffe College took part in a parade with the Harvard Liberal Union, carrying signs that urged unity among the three countries and condemned Winston Churchill. The

²⁷ John Kieran, “Sports of the Times: Runs, Hits and Errors,” *New York Times*, 5 April 1939.

²⁸ “Says Fish Gulpers Ape Indians,” *New York Times* 12 April 1939.

²⁹ “All of Harvard Given to War Aim, Whole Set-Up Changed Since Pearl Harbor to Help Meet Our Needs,” *New York Times*, 7 June 1942.

Conservative League retaliated with Union Jack signs, one of which read “Up With Bonnie Prince Charles.”³⁰ The politics involved in the riot belied a difference from the spring riots prior to the war, and the resurgence was brief. With war veterans entering colleges, campus culture inevitably changed.

The GI Bill provided the opportunity for hundreds of thousands of veterans to attend college, but more importantly this legislation changed American views on post-secondary education.³¹ An unprecedented number of students enrolled in college, flooding campuses across the country. Despite the inevitable strains this put on the nation’s colleges and universities, spring riots were rare during the immediate postwar years when veterans attended college. Older than the average student, looking ahead towards a career, and sometimes accompanied by their families, veterans seemed to ignore the rituals of campus culture. They shunned hazing practices, scorned the freshmen beanie tradition, and refused to light the cigarettes of upperclassmen – all of which defied class distinctions, sometimes frustrating younger, non-veteran students. Some worried that GI Joe would obliterate the traditions of “Joe College.”³² But by the early 1950s, the majority of the veterans had graduated. Many feared that as World War II veterans left college and potential college students left for Korea, colleges and university were going to suffer a financial crisis, but the perilous drop in enrollment that education pundits predicted never fully materialized.³³ The GI students transformed

³⁰ “Spring ‘Riot’ Staged at Harvard,” *New York Times* 27 May 1946.

³¹ Clark, 167. Clark references GI Bill historian Keith Olson who has written that over 80 percent of the veterans who attended college had plans to do so anyway. The interruption of the war caused a back-up in enrollment that eventually caused a bulge in enrollment after the war ended.

³² McKay, 84; Clark, 175.

³³ In 1950 and 1951, there was a dramatic drop in enrollment that caused some buzz. Liberal arts schools and programs continued to experience a sustained decline. But 1952 saw a new GI bill for Korean veterans and record-breaking freshman-class enrollment. By 1953, another substantial increase in class rolls put to rest any remaining concerns. In fact, most understood this as a genuine turning point in American higher

higher education in America's eyes from an intellectual, circuitous journey to a practical, career-enhancing training ground.³⁴ As the older students left, a new crop of young students arrived eager to make their mark, prepare for their careers, and find their mates for life. They were also anxious for an authentic college experience. Consequently, the college campuses of the 1950s experienced the reappearance of many of the traditions that had receded during the 1940s. Spring riots increased in both intensity and number throughout the United States, and the campus relationship with host towns also became tenser even though in many cases law enforcement continued to defer to university officials, effectively legitimizing the students' behavior.³⁵ This complicated town and gown relationship reappeared in the beach communities of Florida and other states beginning in the 1950s as the nation experienced the sudden and immense impact of the dramatic increase student population. Perhaps, most importantly, a long tradition of spring riots and their forceful reemergence in the 1950s created a peer culture on college campuses that facilitated the popularity of the spring break phenomenon.

Youth Culture on College Campuses in the Early to Mid-Twentieth Century

The spring riots underscored the force of youth culture on college campuses by helping to create the very idea of "college life," but this nascent subculture of college students remained isolated and its significance ignored by broader American society until the

education. Government subsidization along with financial assistance from the colleges themselves made post-secondary education a reality for more and more people transcending boundaries of social class and ideas of government interference. "College Enrollment of GIs Drops 33%," *New York Times*, 9 November 1950; "Colleges in Crisis," *New York Times*, 30 March 1952; "New GI Rights Bill is Passed By House," *New York Times*, 6 June 1952; "Colleges Disclose Big Freshman Gain," *New York Times*, 27 November 1952; "College Roles Rise By 3.1% Over 1952," *New York Times*, 8 November 1953.

³⁴ Clark, 176.

³⁵ Gusfield, 28.

twentieth century.³⁶ As college attendance became a reality for more and more young people, the importance of youth culture became more apparent to the public and to advertisers and other molders of American popular culture. While the young have always exhibited historical agency – fighting wars, staging rebellions, and participating in strikes – by the 1900s, women, blacks, and middle-class youth were slowly democratizing college campuses, albeit not integrating them, and developing close ties to popular culture. Young people’s increasingly unified rebellion against institutions established them as trendsetters, while paradoxically creating an urge to conform among those young people who fell into step with a growing national youth consciousness. Campus culture manifested itself in an emerging independence apparent in co-educational functions, fashion, music and dance, sports, consumerism, and sexual expression.

In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, college football, Ford’s Model T, ragtime, co-education, and the beginnings of the youthful rebellion against tradition changed college life. At the same time, Americans increasingly turned to the college campus for entertainment. Emerging in the 1880s, big-time college athletics created a national sensation. Football, a rowdy and dangerous sport at that time with few of the modern-day safety precautions or equipment, attracted regional loyalties and the contributions of wealthy alumni. Universities and colleges erected large stadiums and intense rivalries followed, cultivating a sense of local camaraderie. In an era before professional football and safety regulations or equipment, games evolved into death matches between older players whose student status was questionable. By 1905 player

³⁶ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, “The 1960s and the Transformation of Campus Cultures,” *History of Education Quarterly* 26 (Spring 1986): 2. Horowitz makes it very clear that she believes “college life” included only a minority of students – wealthy, white, and, for the most part, male. For my purposes, I believe that this minority influencing the mood on campuses and the surrounding communities during the spring riots is principally the same type of student that later participated in spring break.

deaths and corruption dampened the sport's popularity. But through football, the college campus had become a marketable commodity attracting a broad range of the community regardless of personal ties to the school.³⁷

The early twentieth century also saw the beginnings of independent transportation. Automobiles immediately became synonymous with freedom and their popularity swept throughout country. In 1900, there were only 8,000 cars in America, by 1910, that figure had jumped to 458,000. By 1920, it had reached 8.1 million, thanks to the ubiquitous Model T Ford.³⁸ Especially popular with middle-class families, the Model T was also a staple on many college campuses, inspiring rhymes such as the one below:

You he-froschie, keep your hands off my body!

The old college flivver
Gives me the fever.

Take a peek
At the college sheik (sic).

We take nobody's smotherin' dust.
To Oklahoma College for Women or bust!

A stalling flivver
Full of college slivers,
Wouldn't shake or shiver
Nor run on a gal.³⁹

As dating became commonplace on campus, cars, the popularity of music, and dances sparked romances among students and rivalries between students and the college

³⁷ Calvin B. T. Lee, *The Campus Scene, 1900-1970: Changing Styles in Undergraduate Life* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1970), 7; Also see, John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000).

³⁸ Mark S. Foster, *A Nation on Wheels: The Automobile Culture in America Since 1945* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning), 9.

³⁹ B. A. Botkin, "An Anthology of Lizzie Labels," *American Speech* 7 (October 1931): 38.

administration. Young co-eds of the early 1900s listened to ragtime and danced the Turkey Trot, the Grizzly Bear, the Bunny Hug, the Tango, and the Boston Dip. Ragtime, a piano-driven derivation of minstrel music and a precursor to jazz, shocked some adults who found the lyrics sexually suggestive, the syncopation savage, and the dances lewd. In the end, most college deans relented, allowing co-ed events, but dances continued to create controversies at some campuses, including Wellesley where the Boston Dip caused an uproar.⁴⁰ At the University of Michigan, the 1905 Michigan Junior Hop ended in a near riot when “a mob of students and townspeople, seeking admission to the gallery whence they might watch the great ball, overpowered the university officers and janitors and battered down the gymnasium doors.” College administrators banned the dance citing the riot, but added that students had rebelled by performing the tango and other unacceptable dances at the event.⁴¹ Early on, dancing was a catalyst for campus disturbances. The youth culture rebellion against the traditional customs of the nineteenth century had begun, but many women of this era still wanted to grow up and be a Gibson girl – maternal, stable, and modest.⁴²

It was the iconic flapper of the 1920s - brazen, boyish, single, and a trendsetter – that truly pushed youth culture into the twentieth century.⁴³ Benefiting from the affluence and exuberance of the post-World War I era, young people of the 1920s set a precedent for the following generations of youth culture. Youth culture in the 1920s internalized the sweeping changes in industry, technology, leisure, education, art, and entertainment

⁴⁰ Lee, 2-3; Ingeborg Harer, “Defining Ragtime Music: Historical and Typological Research,” *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 38 (1997): 410.

⁴¹ “Michigan Junior Dance Abolished by Faculty Because of Incipient Riot and Objectionable Dances,” *New York Times*, 23 February 1913.

⁴² Kenneth A. Yellis, “Prosperity’s Child: Some Thoughts on a Flapper,” *American Quarterly* 21 (Spring 1969): 44.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

while at the same time setting trends and making a difference.⁴⁴ Among college men and women, fashions and trends followed the vagaries of attitude, behavior, and consumer preference. In razor blade advertisements, Gillette cited a survey that stated 90 percent of Yale men used that brand. Collegians frequently supplied magazines with the newest styles and dances and the best novels and new music.⁴⁵ Young people, in general, and the elite and college-educated among them in particular, heavily influenced the popular culture of the 1920s. Author F. Scott Fitzgerald and his socialite wife, Zelda, in particular, became icons of the Flaming Youth of the decade. Advertisers and magazine and newspaper publishers quickly realized the marketability of young people's tastes.

Fads in music and fashion were among the most defining aspects of youth culture, simultaneously inspiring a sense of camaraderie and independence between students, and offering a propensity for rebellion against stodgy institutions and traditions. Historian Paula S. Fass asserted that "fads reflected the needs of the young for identifying symbols of conformity and differentiation."⁴⁶ The popularity of jazz and dances like the Charleston among students fueled a rebellion against mainstream culture that ultimately only succeeded in feeding the gristmill of popular trends. Beyond the dances and nightclubs, the interpretation and knowledge of jazz further nurtured a peer culture among students. Jazz also helped to make the decade of the 1920s synonymous with sexuality and vitality, influencing broader American culture.

Predictably, some critics condemned the proliferation of university styles, while others criticized what they considered to be apathy, anti-intellectualism, and carelessness

⁴⁴ Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 1-8.

⁴⁵ Hine, 199.

⁴⁶Fass, 233.

on campuses.⁴⁷ College life appeared to be an endless game of rowdiness, drinking, dating, and dancing, with classes and books a mere pretext for enrollment.⁴⁸ In a 1928 article in *Forum*, Robert Cooley Angell worried that a new fast-paced existence propelled by entertainment and commercialism distracted young people:

[I]n the larger cities, elevated and subway trains, roller coasters, and the throngs from the business district bustling to and from lunch have worked upon [students'] nerves . . . Thrilling forms of recreation and entertainment have been institutionalized in professional athletics, automobile races, public dances, and amusement parks, so that not only is excitement easily obtained but the craving for it is increased . . . Commercialism in the sense of an undue preoccupation with the production, appropriation, and consumption of material things is another quality rampant in America ...⁴⁹

Angell insisted that urban bustle, institutionalized entertainment, and excessive commercialism were detrimental to cultural development in the United States, and added that the growing disaffection among young people towards “all that is old and traditional” was the biggest problem on college campuses.⁵⁰ Colleges scrambled to produce rules that applied to the new offenses of the age from cheek-to-cheek dancing to women smoking cigarettes.⁵¹

The stock market crash of 1929 not only brought an end to the unrestrained gaiety of the Jazz Age, it also dealt a severe blow to youth culture on college campuses. While many students stayed in school to avoid a ruined economy, others left in droves, unable to afford the expenses of tuition and books. Students who remained often chose to live at

⁴⁷ Fass, 234.

⁴⁸ Horowitz, 3.

⁴⁹ Robert Cooley Angell, “Roots of College Evils,” *Forum* 79 (March 1928): 421.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 424-25.

⁵¹ Lee, 28.

home in order to save their families the cost of dormitory charges. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration began a student aid program in 1934 to keep students in school and off the dole, and college campuses still buzzed with activity, but with a distinctly somber tone.⁵² Although goldfish-swallowing made national headlines, many students turned to political activism, either supporting or decrying a broad cast of characters, including: Joseph Stalin, Huey Long, Father Charles Coughlin, and Franklin Roosevelt. In the mid-1930s, anti-war sentiment inspired protests on campuses across the country. Many students took the “Oxford pledge,” a vow to remain a pacifist. In 1935, 60,000 students protested nationally against loyalty oaths, fascism, imperialism, and racial injustice. At City College in New York, students carried signs that read, “Down with Hearst!,” “Build Schools – Not Battleships” and “Abolish the R.O.T.C.”⁵³ Some joined the ranks of the New Deal programs, finding employment with the Works Progress Administration.

During the Great Depression, many young Americans found solace in music. Many credit America’s youth with swing music’s breakthrough popularity. In frustrating times, with little money for the latest fashions and styles, swing dancing offered young people an outlet for self-expression. For the first time, audiences transcended race, class, ethnicity, and gender to encompass a broader swath of America’s young people and revolutionizing mass youth culture. Intense swing fans, often called “jitterbugs,” had some contemporary critics shaking their heads with accusations of loose morals, and others wondering what brand of fascism – a Barnard social scientist suggested “Musical

⁵² Ibid., 48-49.

⁵³ “Nation’s Students ‘Strike’ for Peace; Disorders Are Few,” *New York Times*, 13 April 1935.

Hitlerism” – would arise out of the mass psychology tormenting young swing devotees. But for the most part, adults emerging from the Jazz Age sympathized with jitterbugs.⁵⁴

The accessibility of swing music added to its popularity. Jukeboxes, radios, records, and touring bands kept young people jumping across the country. On college campuses, “Hot Clubs” were formed to collect and listen to jazz and swing records. Many Ivy League schools like Columbia University printed swing music columns in their student newspapers. But with swing bands touring throughout the United States, the music’s appeal was hardly limited to elite institutions. Regional variances emerged, with students in the Midwest preferring ballads and novelties, Tennessee kids shagging, and “sharpies” in the Bronx jitterbugging.⁵⁵ For those who could not afford records, radio provided a cheap alternative. Dates and parties often revolved around radio broadcasts featuring swing music, nurturing what historian Louis Erenberg has called “possibility for mass personal liberation and the democratization of cultural connoisseurship.”⁵⁶ Crippled by the Depression, dormant movie palaces invited swing musicians to play for hordes of young people itching to dance, becoming meccas for jitterbug fans.⁵⁷

Swing and big band music’s popularity survived the call to war, serving as a home-front soundtrack to World War II; for example, Glenn Miller disbanded his successful and lucrative swing outfit to enlist in the army, heading the Army Air Force Orchestra. Remarking on his decision, Miller said, “I, like every patriotic American, have

⁵⁴ Lewis A. Erenberg, *Swingin’ the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 37-41.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Erenburg later notes (pg. 225) that swing was ultimately unsuccessful in its promise, and bebop served as a “profound criticism of the failure of swing’s ecstatic promise of a modern America rooted in pluralism and individualism.” But the promise and hope still perpetuated the alienation between young people and adults, while youth culture spirited by swing music inspired and frightened broader American culture.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

an obligation to fulfill. That obligation is to lend as much support as I can to winning the war.”⁵⁸ Many other young men agreed, and left college campuses as enlistees and draftees. President Franklin Roosevelt encouraged men to continue their studies until called for duty, but reactions varied. At UCLA, 90 percent of fraternity men enlisted, but only 6 percent of Princeton seniors did so.⁵⁹

College administrations rallied behind the war, and most students followed suit whether they joined the armed forces or stayed behind. At Harvard, physical exercise became compulsory for all men “to toughen them to meet the physical demands that would be placed upon them as members of the Army, Navy, or Air Corps.”⁶⁰ Colleges and universities looked for ways to lessen the impact of enlistment on their own enrollment, while at the same time supporting the government. To expedite degrees before men reached draft age, some schools chose to reduce the time required to obtain a degree from four to three years. Princeton canceled its spring vacation and spring reading week in order to open its campus earlier for the summer training of military recruits.⁶¹ Harvard, Yale, and the University of Pennsylvania declared that only students whose studies, including medical and engineering majors, were deemed useful to the war effort could seek deferment. Throughout the war, members of the War Department pressed Congress to lower the draft age from 21 to 18. The department also sought to limit deferments for men under the age of 26. Despite these efforts, the average age of soldiers remained over 25, and nearly 5 million young men deferred their enlistment.⁶²

⁵⁸ Ibid, 181-85.

⁵⁹ Lee, 75.

⁶⁰ “All of Harvard Given to War Aim: Whole Set-Up Changed Since Pearl Harbor to Help Meet Our Needs,” *New York Times*, 7 June 1942.

⁶¹ “Colleges Acting to Meet Draft Age,” *New York Times*, 21 December 1941; “Princeton Vacation Off: Commencement Shifted Also to Provide for Service Men,” *New York Times*, 15 February 1943.

⁶² Albert A. Blum, “The Fight for a Young Army,” *Military Affairs* 18 (Summer 1954): 83-84.

Enlistment figures notwithstanding, the war itself defined youth culture in the early 1940s, with the American GI serving as the cultural icon. Immortalized by Norman Rockwell, the soldier Willie Gillis embodied the all-American young man going off to war.⁶³ On the home front, youth culture was subsumed by the war effort in salvage drives, USO dances, and WACs, and WAVES enlistments. On college campuses, in addition to the disruption of traditional activities like proms and spring vacations, students allied themselves with the national government offering support and intellectual manpower. The Office of Price Administration recruited 300 students from across the country to study the effects of the war on consumers and everyday living.⁶⁴ Rebellion succumbed to loyalty while the war raged. But in the 1950s, young people took back the reins, commandeering popular culture through music, film, television, and spring break on Florida's beaches.

Spring Break Discovers the Sunshine State

Florida's warm climate and history of tourism and promotion marked it as a likely place for youthful retreats. Long before spring breakers stormed the state's beaches, the rich and famous spent their winters drifting down Florida's rivers on steamboats or breathing salty air along the coast. During the nineteenth century, tourists, predominantly from the urban Northeast and Midwest, sought a healthy setting away from the grit of city-living. Doctors prescribed winter vacations with Florida's salty air and freshwater springs for

⁶³ Clark, 165-66. It is worth noting that in the October 5, 1946, issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*, Rockwell's Willie Gillis is shown on the cover as a college student smoking a pipe and studying. The everyman was now a college man.

⁶⁴ "Living Problems As War Result Being Studied," *New York Times*, 19 July 1942.

patients with respiratory problems. One late nineteenth-century travel writer described the seasonal onslaught:

Each so-called ‘season’ witnesses an influx of thousands of these visitors, in search of health or ‘on pleasure bent,’ usually wealthy, and equipped with more prejudices than their well-filled travel bags would contain. Their chief desire is to find an elegant hotel, having ‘all the modern conveniences’; and, once established there, to secure some cozy nook on a broad veranda, where they may watch the fruits and flowers growing in the open air, breathe the soft, balmy air, and lazily enjoy all the luxury and delights of June in January.⁶⁵

This tourist fervor brought investors, railroads, and promoters from the Northeast to capitalize on and embellish nature’s work. Men like Hamilton Disston, Henry Plant, and Henry Flagler, established some of the first exclusive resorts in Florida. Flagler, a former partner of John D. Rockefeller, developed resorts up and down the state’s Atlantic Coast. Starting in St. Augustine with the Ponce de Leon Hotel, Flagler worked his way down the coast creating palatial hotels that dominated the southern tourist industry and reinvented Florida’s beaches.⁶⁶ Fishing villages, isolated outposts, and remote farming hamlets were transformed into exclusive travel destinations. The *pièce de résistance*, Palm Beach was an entire community manufactured by Flagler and a popular spot for exceptionally wealthy vacationers.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ George M. Barbour, *Florida for tourists, invalids, and settlers: containing practical information regarding climate, soil, and productions; cities, towns, and people; the culture of the orange and other tropical fruits; farming and gardening; scenery and resorts; sport; routes of travel, etc., etc.* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1884), 13.

⁶⁶ Carlton Corliss, “Henry M. Flagler – Railroad Builder,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 38 (Jan 1960): 197.

⁶⁷ Mark Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise: A Chronicle of Man and the Land in Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 42; Flagler considered Palm Beach a major achievement. When he died in 1913, a

On the southeast coast of Florida, situated between the Atlantic Ocean and Lake Worth, Palm Beach rests on an eighteen-mile island with a width never exceeding three-quarters of a mile.⁶⁸ An early and primitive refuge for consumptives, Palm Beach received a luxurious makeover from Flagler. Starting with the Royal Poinciana, Flagler built a dynasty in Palm Beach, attracting wealthy residents and visitors like Cornelius Vanderbilt who arrived on his own private train in 1896 after crossing Flagler's newly built bridge across Lake Worth. The Palm Beach Inn and the Breakers hotel soon followed and by the turn of the century a casino called the Bradley Beach Club was operating nearby.⁶⁹ New England and New York society flocked to Palm Beach for the winter – the *New York Times* even printed a monthly column during the winter season titled, "Palm Beach Society." These "winter refugees" found in Palm Beach their Newport of the South.⁷⁰

The post-1918 Florida real estate boom and the generally prosperous economy of the 1920s encouraged a rush to the beaches. All over the state unprecedented development created and recreated cities, towns, beaches, lakes, and canals. Carl Fischer ripped up mangroves and pumped sand from the bottom of the ocean to create Miami Beach, a series of dredged finger canals were woven through Fort Lauderdale maximizing available waterfront property, and a Mediterranean Revival style of architecture initiated by Addison Mizner and Paris Singer influenced construction all

memorial service was held in the Royal Poinciana Chapel at Palm Beach. George Morgan Ward, *In Memoriam: Henry Morrison Flagler; born January 2nd, 1830, died May 20th, 1913* (Buffalo: Matthews-Northrup: 1914).

⁶⁸ Federal Writers' Project, "Palm Beach," *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 227.

⁶⁹ Derr, 43-44.

⁷⁰ John Nordheimer, "What's Doing in Palm Beach," *New York Times*, 24 February 1985.

over Florida.⁷¹ Throughout the 1920s, resorts sprouted up across the state, but Palm Beach reigned among the extravagantly wealthy and their children, many of whom descended upon the island during their Easter vacations from college.

Leaving their colleges for spring vacation, some students returned home, and others traveled with classmates. Early spring breaks involved traveling musical clubs and bands, sightseeing tours, and even camping treks, like the trip arranged by the Department of Hygeine (sic) and Physical Education at Smith College where seven students camped throughout the South on a tour dubbed “the Road to Vagabondia.”⁷² One spring vacation in 1889 – presaging modern Florida spring break – ended in violence and jail time, when five Princeton students traveling around New Jersey in a large wagon stopped at the Central Hotel in Red Bank and registered under the names “Box,” “Runt,” “Americo,” “Saint,” and “Billy.” They were joined the next day by two more Princeton students (one of which was Chester V. Dolph, the son of a U.S. Senator from Oregon), and proceeded to wreak havoc. They were eventually apprehended and Dolph was beaten over the head. The charge was disorderly conduct with one witness, a fourteen-year-old boy, claiming that “one of the students pulled a pistol on him and threatened to shoot if he did not hurry down the street.” Nevertheless, in the true spirit of spring break, the defendants were all released.⁷³

Wealthier students were able to travel for their spring vacations, and many chose resorts in Europe or the Caribbean. Nassau and Bermuda were also popular destinations. The Florida spring break initially caught on among the wealthy college students who

⁷¹ Ibid., 205.

⁷² “Brown Campus Deserted,” *New York Times*, 6 April 1913; “376 Girls Here on Tour,” *New York Times*, 6 March 1928; “Smith Girls on Camp Tour,” *New York Times*, 24 March 1927.

⁷³ “Students in Trouble: A Young Man Said to be Senator Dolph’s Son Clubbed,” *New York Times*, 14 April 1889.

traditionally met their families during spring vacation in exclusive Southern resorts, such as Hot Springs, Virginia, White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, Sea Island, Georgia, and Palm Beach, Florida. The students' vacations fell at the end of the winter season and their arrival coincided with Easter festivities and closing ceremonies. Tea parties, dinner dances, and beach parties awaited them in Palm Beach, and they brought the fashions and fads of college life with them. In the spring of 1907, the island hosted "Kentucky Military Institute Day" celebrating the arrival of a brass band whose members were "young men of prominent Southern families" and students of the institute. The men received royal treatment, cruising southward along the Gulf Stream with Henry Flagler and dining in Miami.⁷⁴ In 1925, a few hundred miles north of Palm Beach in Ormond Beach, another Flagler oasis, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. joined his five sons, all of whom were all on spring vacation from school.⁷⁵ At White Sulphur Springs in 1927, a resort dance instructor substituted the Black Bottom for the Charleston after learning that the former had proved popular with the "younger set" in Florida the winter before.⁷⁶

In 1926 the bubble of Florida real estate speculation burst, plunging the state into a crippling economic depression nearly three years before the rest of the country. Yet Palm Beach emerged unscathed. The "Palm Beach Colony," as it called itself, continued to host lavish spring vacations for its "student colony" well into the Depression.⁷⁷ Students and their parents still entertained at ocean villas and lakefront homes, and dined and danced at the Everglades Club and the Palm Beach Club.⁷⁸ The *New York Times*,

⁷⁴ "Society at Palm Beach," *New York Times*, 16 March 1907.

⁷⁵ "Rockefellers in Florida," *New York Times*, 3 April 1925.

⁷⁶ "Black Bottom Now White Sulphur Fad," *New York Times*, 15 April 1927.

⁷⁷ "Palm Beach Colony Hosts to Students," *New York Times*, 27 March 1929.

⁷⁸ "Parties for Youths at Palm Beach," *New York Times*, 26 March 1928; "Younger Set Rules Activities in the South," *New York Times*, 28 March 1934.

which kept tabs on all of the festivities, described a typical day at Palm Beach Spring Break 1929:

The morning hours are usually spent at the Bath and Tennis Club, with a few fast sets on the hard clay courts, followed by an hour on the sands, in the ocean or pool, and luncheon at the cafeteria on the beach, or down at the Gulf Stream Golf Club near Delray, topped off by a round of the course.

The tea hour generally finds all the young persons gathered in the orange gardens of the Everglades Club, with a different host or hostess for each day. Several of the evening entertainments will also be held at the Everglades Club and dancing will inevitably follow wherever the crowds gather.⁷⁹

In the mid-1930s, Palm Beach was “Still Gay,” and Miami was beginning to entertain wealthy students on spring break at estates in Coconut Grove and at the Surf Club and the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club on Miami Beach.⁸⁰ But the spring break tradition had spread to the middle class.⁸¹

While the elite still preferred the opulence of Palm Beach and Miami Beach, Fort Lauderdale emerged as a destination for other college students on spring vacation. Incorporated in 1911, Fort Lauderdale was called “the Gateway to the Everglades.” Indeed, it served as a point of entry for drainage projects and a resort for hunters and anglers headed for the glades. It also evolved into a resort town and benefited tremendously from the 1920s land boom.⁸² Nonetheless, when the Colgate University swim team was invited to the Collegiate Aquatic Forum during their 1935 Christmas

⁷⁹ “Palm Beach in Hands of Juniors,” *New York Times*, 24 March 1929.

⁸⁰ “Mrs. George P. Brett Gives Dance in Miami,” *New York Times*, 30 March 1938; “Miami Beach Dance for College Set,” *New York Times*, 27 March 1937.

⁸¹ “Palm Beach Still Gay,” *New York Times*, 22 March 1936.

⁸² *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State*, 317.

breaks, Fort Lauderdale's population was still under 10,000.⁸³ Later that year, the students returned for their spring breaks. When they came back to school with the tell-tale tans of a Florida vacation, the Fort Lauderdale spring break tradition had begun. As the Aquatic Forum expanded, and before long students from a number Midwestern and Northeastern colleges were soon raving about Fort Lauderdale's beaches. The student arrivals increased each year, though the numbers remained less than 200 prior to World War II. After the United States entered the war, strict travel restrictions convinced Ivy League students, many of whom spent spring break in Bermuda and Nassau throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, to travel to Fort Lauderdale. The city continued to draw more and more collegians each year. Some airmen stationed nearby even joined in the fun. By the late 1940s, nearly 2,000 students spent their spring breaks in Fort Lauderdale.⁸⁴ And this was only the beginning. During the 1950s, Fort Lauderdale's spring break crowds would draw national attention.

⁸³ Gary Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005): 317; Stuart McIver, *Fort Lauderdale and Broward County: An Illustrated History* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1983), 151.

⁸⁴ "Collegiate Tidal Wave Began with a Ripple," *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 27 March 1960; Claude Ash, "Fort Lauderdale Greets the College Crowd, Spring Visitors Concentrate on Beer, Bathing and Bongo Drums," *New York Times*, 10 April 1960; Anne Wendt, "Spring Recess By the Sea," *New York Times*, 13 April 1958.

Chapter 2

Spring Break in the 1950s: A Prologue to *Where the Boys Are*

In April 1953, “10,000 young men and women leaped into automobiles, scorched the highways south, and spilled into Fort Lauderdale,” akin to “varsity Visigoths entering a stucco Rome.”⁸⁵ With these well-chosen words, *Time* captured the true emergence of the Florida spring break phenomenon. After nearly two decades of swelling crowds at Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Palm Beach, and elsewhere, the collegians’ spring vacation became a collective cultural and social event. The ingredients were a booming Florida tourism, a youth consumer culture, and a rising, raucous college crowd spilling out of campuses across the country.

The growing intensity of campus spring riots presaged the 1953 escapades in Fort Lauderdale. One year earlier, the annual revels of spring rioters again made national headlines after a decade-long hiatus during which war dampened the spirits of all but a few. The 1950s signaled a resurgence of the springtime antics, but with a new edge; both the participating number of students and colleges involved increased dramatically. Not since before World War II had such disturbing behavior prevailed on American campuses. Indeed, on every continent, from Syria to Tunisia, Venezuela to Cuba, and Yugoslavia to Italy, students rioted all over the world where ideologies and cultures clashed in the wake of decolonization and postwar realignment. Unlike their foreign counterparts, however, American students claimed no coherent message. In fact, with the

⁸⁵ “The Visigoths,” *Time* 61 (April 20, 1953): 27.

Korean War raging and Joe McCarthy naming names, the absence of debate and political concern seemed all the more conspicuous.

The 1952 spring riot season spread quickly with a broader reach than previous years, and many women were now full participants. “Panty raids” pervaded the activities. At the University of Missouri, 2,000 men stormed the women’s dormitory on their own campus as well as that of nearby Stephens College stealing lingerie in the process. At the University of Georgia, while football players guarded the women’s dorms from “panty raiders,” women tossed their underwear out of windows. Women raided men’s dorms for “shorts” at the University of Toledo and the University of Michigan.⁸⁶ Five hundred Stanford University men broke through police lines to gather lingerie from dorms, and students at Miami University, University of Oklahoma, Indiana University, State University of Iowa, and Columbia all staged panty raids.⁸⁷ At Indiana University, the director of the women’s residence halls placed a barrel full of women’s underwear in front of the dorms, hoping that easy access would deter further raids.⁸⁸

Yale and Harvard students observed the spring season by battling police in the streets. The Yale riot stemmed from an argument between two ice cream vendors, Good Humor and Humpty Dumpty. The dispute involving the two men escalated, and when the police arrived, undergraduates poured into the street taking sides – Good Humor or Humpty Dumpty. The group, mostly freshman, battled with police and each other, broke car windows, threw beer cans and pillows, exploded firecrackers, and proceeded to march

⁸⁶ Lee, 96-97; “‘Spring Madness’: Michigan Men Raid Girls’ Dorms and the Women Raid Right Back,” *Life* 32 (April 7, 1952): 59.

⁸⁷ “Campus ‘Panty Raiders’ – How Many Await Draft?” *U.S. News & World Report* 32 (May 30, 1952): 26; “Campuses Enjoy a Riotous Spring: The Fad for Lingerie and Bruises Worries Deans and Psychologists,” *Life* 32 (May 26, 1952): 28-31.

⁸⁸ “Manners & Morals: Girls! Girls! Girls!,” *Time* 59 (May 26, 1952): 27.

to a nearby hotel. The police beat the students back to “the gates and into the Old Campus” with firehoses and clubs. The melee resulted in four arrests and assorted injuries among the 1,500 Yale men involved. The president of the university apologized to the community, but the police were unmoved.⁸⁹ In Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1,500 Harvard men gathered in Harvard Square to nominate Pogo, a cartoon opossum, for president of the United States. The event heated up when police arrived to break up the crowd; the students brawled with police for nearly four hours.⁹⁰

Although many retained a “boys will be boys” attitude about the panty raids and riots, criticism of the antics of 1952 quickly gathered steam and deans and administrators were genuinely alarmed. Psychiatrists worried about these “impish pranks with a sex flavor,” and, at a loss, renowned sexologist Alfred Kinsey confessed, “Campus riots are a long psychiatric and psychological problem. It is somewhat out of my field.”⁹¹ Also a biologist, Kinsey quipped, “All animals play around.”⁹² Some wondered what college life had come to. The principal of the Germantown School of Friends declared:

Hazing, fraternity rushing, excessive drinking, commercialized athletics and other campus mores that long ago should have been outmoded are not reassuring to the citizen who looks at the high cost of a college education. When college boys engage in battles with the police, destroy property, and behave insultingly toward girls, or vice versa, it is dismissed as ‘a combination of youth and spring,’ while in the slums of our great cities we call similar behavior delinquency, or in prison riots we call it insurrection.⁹³

⁸⁹ “Good Humor and Humpty Dumpty Fall Out, 1,000 ‘Riot’ at Yale,” *New York Times*, 14 May 1952.

⁹⁰ “Manners & Morals,” 27.

⁹¹ “Campuses Enjoy a Riotous Spring,” 28.

⁹² “Manners & Morals,” 27.

⁹³ Burton P. Fowles, “Letters to the Times: Why Students Riot,” *New York Times*, 25 May 1952.

Others inquired as to how many panty raiders attended college with a draft deferment. Congressmen with sons in Korea began to question the college deferment system authorized by a draft law enacted in 1951. The law deferred students who maintained good grades, scored high on a “mental test,” or joined the Reserve Officers’ Training Corp. Men who opted for deferment became liable for service until the age of thirty-five, while the age limit was twenty-six for others. With the approval of their schools, students applied for the deferments each year. Wary of the unfavorable publicity, many college administrators suggested at the time that the young panty raiders were in “uncertain standing.”⁹⁴ Carleton Rutledge wrote to the *New York Times*: “It was only a year or two ago that the papers back home were full of discussions of how to exempt these young morons from the draft so they might continue their education and become better men for our country, civilization and society. My opinion is that such young whelps should be drafted at once, given a rough training and shipped to the front lines.”⁹⁵

The behavior that led one historian to name the 1950s “the decade of the panty raid,” was set against a conservative political backdrop dominated by the Cold War.⁹⁶ Cold warrior politicians harassed the faculty and administrations of colleges in the name of national security and state legislatures pressured universities to implement loyalty oaths. For example, in 1949, the Regents of the University of California, determined to

⁹⁴ “Campus ‘Panty Raiders’ – How Many Await Draft?” 26.

⁹⁵ “Student Raids Protested,” *New York Times*, 31 May 1952.

⁹⁶ Lee, 96.

rout out all Communist elements within the university system, required employees to declare an oath: "I am not a member of the Communist Party, or under any oath, or a party to any agreement, or under any commitment that is in conflict with any obligations under this oath."⁹⁷ One contemporary poll indicated that 95 percent of department heads objected to the oath, and they later took their objections to court.⁹⁸ That same year, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) launched a campaign to survey the content of college textbooks for "subversive" material.⁹⁹ The committee reviewed textbooks from Wellesley, Radcliffe, Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Amherst, Boston University, Smith, Simmons, the state universities of Vermont, Rhode Island, and Maine. In her last commencement speech for the college, retiring president of Wellesley lamented that such invasive tactics were proof of "the fear which permeates our modern age."¹⁰⁰ By 1952, legislators and college administrators had largely succeeded in ridding universities of professed Communists and now focused on employees who claimed Fifth Amendment rights when testifying before congressional committees. HUAC actively pursued the academic community, searching for atomic spies, Communist sympathizers, and any "subversive elements."¹⁰¹ In 1953, Professor Abraham Glasser was suspended from Rutgers University after he invoked the Fifth Amendment when questioned by HUAC.¹⁰² Many other academics faced a similar fate or were fired for their defiance. But there was no shortage of those willing to testify, feeding the paranoia. Dr. Bella V. Dodd, former member of the Communist Party, testified in 1952 before the Senate Internal

⁹⁷ Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 116.

⁹⁸ "Court Test Looms Over College Oath," *New York Times*, 27 February 1950.

⁹⁹ Benjamin Fine, "Education in Review: College Heads Resent Implication of Loyalty Oaths, Assail House Survey of Textbooks," *New York Times*, 19 June 1949.

¹⁰⁰ John H. Fenton, "Wellesley's Head Cites Age of Fear," *New York Times*, 14 June 1949.

¹⁰¹ Schrecker, 142.

¹⁰² "Rutgers Suspends Glasser," *New York Times*, 20 March 1953.

Security subcommittee that approximately 1,500 teachers in the American colleges were communists. While he felt that communist activities remained centered in the New York metropolitan area, Dodd claimed to know of traitors teaching at institutions across the country including the University of Michigan, Wellesley, Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Chicago, Northwestern, Howard, the University of California, and the University of Minnesota. Some faculty members fought back against the threats of politicians and administrators.¹⁰³

Far from inspired by the rebellion of some professors, many students adhered to the mantra, “join nothing – it’s safer.”¹⁰⁴ Frustrated faculty members in colleges around the country found that fear and silence or apathy dominated the mood of campus. Some students participated in the attacks on faculty members as in the case against Abraham Grasser where “student-informers” testified against the Rutgers professor, but most avoided any active involvement.¹⁰⁵ Dubbed the “Silent Generation” by contemporary critics, students shied away from activism, worried that they would jeopardize their future. One poll of nearly 3,000 male college students published in 1953 demonstrated the lack of enthusiasm for the war in Korea or the effort to stop the spread of communism. Participants were asked, “Do you get the feeling that the war in Korea is not worth fighting?” Eighteen percent responded, “once in a while,” thirty-seven percent responded, “sometimes,” and twenty-six percent responded, “very often.” When asked whether they felt the fight against communism was worth an “all-out war,” only twenty-

¹⁰³ Fine, “Education in Review.”

¹⁰⁴ John B. Oakes, “The Real and Lasting Damage,” *New York Times*, 7 March 1954.

¹⁰⁵ “Professor Witness Assails House Unit,” *New York Times*, 13 March 1953.

six percent felt that it was “very worthwhile.”¹⁰⁶ In the early 1950s, there was an apparent disconnect between the spirited debates and vitriolic accusations of the political world and the daily doings of college students. Of the many ways that the Cold War affected America, the few outcomes that clearly manifested themselves in the views of college students were a disinterest in politics, a desire to conform, and the search for security.¹⁰⁷

While increasingly affected by the glaring generational gap emerging in postwar America, college students were conformists at heart looking forward to a life of hard work and hard-won success.¹⁰⁸ Rebellion did occur, but usually in peer groups, as in the spring riots, or outside of college life, evidenced in the intellectual underground that emerged in New York.¹⁰⁹ A study of campus culture conducted in 1958 came to the conclusion that students wanted “to be ‘different,’ but the difference usually [took] the direction of conformity to certain basic patterns of peer behavior . . .”¹¹⁰ Many students now entering the university scene wanted an authentic college experience while they impatiently awaited the affluence and new comforts of postwar America.¹¹¹ The 1950s marked a return to the traditions and rituals of college life that had existed prior to World War II; a student subculture realigned and campus activities played a more vital role in students’ lives.

The concept of campus culture expanded as the number of college students exploded. G.I.s who filled the campuses following World War II were graduating, but the

¹⁰⁶ Edward A. Suchman, Rose K. Goldsen, and Robin M. Williams, Jr., “Attitudes Toward the Korean War,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 2 (Summer, 1953): 171-2.

¹⁰⁷ Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak, *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 38-39.

¹⁰⁸ J. Ronald Oakley, *God’s Country: America in the Fifties* (New York: Dembner Books, 1986), 288.

¹⁰⁹ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1987).

¹¹⁰ Janet A. Kelley, “Varying Mores in School and College Cultures,” *Journal of Educational Sociology* 31 (March 1958): 246.

¹¹¹ Oakley, 90.

legacy of the G.I. Bill continued. It had provided educational opportunities for thousands of veterans and changed prevailing attitudes about federal financial assistance and college itself, making higher education an everyman's possibility and paving the way for Korean War veterans, as well. By 1954, roughly 750,000 military veterans had taken advantage of the educational benefits of the Korean G.I. Bill.¹¹² But the percentage of military veterans in college dropped as general enrollment dramatically increased. In 1950, thirty percent of eighteen to twenty-year-olds were attending college, compared with only two percent in 1870 and twelve percent in 1930. The middle-class presence on campuses expanded, as well, and parents of all classes expected their children to go to college – including their daughters.¹¹³

In the 1950s, the standard views on women in society determined a limited curriculum for women and curtailed their ambitions and goals for careers and families. These ideas reached beyond the walls of coeducational institutions. Looking back at her years at Smith, a prestigious women's college, Claire Lassiter recalled the unique obstacles that women faced:

I was interested in the World Court, the League of Nations, and had an idea I'd like to work in that sort of endeavor, moving nations closer to each other. At the same time, I had a general sense that I would get married. About the closest I ever came to having a fantasy about combining my interests with marriage was, wouldn't it be wonderful to marry a college professor. But the way to have access to that atmosphere of ideas and intellectual stimulation would be to marry an academic.¹¹⁴

¹¹² "A Generation on Trial," *New York Times*, 28 August 1954.

¹¹³ Horowitz, 189. Race is the glaring omission here. In the 1950s, integration was still a decade away for many institutions. Even when African Americans were admitted, few were welcomed into college life on campuses.

¹¹⁴ Brett Harvey, *The Fifties: A Women's Oral History* (New York: Harper Collins, 1983), 44-46.

When Adlai Stevenson spoke to Smith College's graduating class of 1955, he encouraged them to "take open eyes and open minds out with them into the society which they will share and help transform." However, he added that most of the women before him were most suited for "the humble role of housewife."¹¹⁵ Male students agreed. When asked about his idea of the perfect wife, a Princeton senior declared, "She shouldn't be submissive, she can be independent on little things, but the big decisions will have to go my way . . . the marriage must be the most important thing that ever happened to her."¹¹⁶ The average age of married couples plummeted during the 1950s as home and family became the primary bulwark against societal ills, immorality, and Communism. And while the number of women increased in college enrollment, their percentages decreased – from forty-seven percent in 1920 to thirty-five percent in 1958. By 1959, thirty-seven percent of women were dropping out before graduation. While women were twice as likely to enter college as their mothers, they were also much more likely to drop out.¹¹⁷ Betty Friedan and other feminists would later condemn the circumscribed path of college-educated women, but in the 1950s, most female students preferred the certainty of marriage over the uncertainties of a single life and a career.¹¹⁸

Nevertheless, the overwhelming reality remained that more and more young people opted for a college education. For most men and women, an education meant further access to the fruits of American prosperity – whether through a career or by

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 44-45.

¹¹⁶ Loren Baritz, *The Good Life: The Meaning of Success for the American Middle Class* (New York: Harper & Row), 211. The quote is originally from David Reisman's "Abundance for What?" I have reproduced it here exactly as it appears in *The Good Life*.

¹¹⁷ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 79.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 46-47.

marrying a college-educated man. Citing an educational survey conducted in 1952, Dr. Raymond Walters, president of the University Cincinnati, attributed college attendance to a variety of factors: “Widespread publicity had been given to national needs and the opportunities afforded for young people trained in engineering, science, business, agriculture, school teaching, nursing, and other fields. A probable factor also was the current Selective Service policy of deferment from immediate military drafting of those young men who do good work in college.”¹¹⁹ The college campus of the early 1950s was among other things a place to avoid war, steal panties, receive job training, meet your future husband or wife, and fulfill the American dream.¹²⁰

Spring vacation was, above all else, an escape that provided a sense of independence and release. But its allure was also related to the fun and unity of college culture, the rebellion of the spring riots, and the thrill of a grown-up vacation. For some it was a last hurrah. In April 1951, a group of men from Mt. Union College in Alliance, Ohio, ventured to Miami for their final Easter break. Out of twenty-three, seventeen were eligible for the draft or in the reserve and following their graduation later in the spring they expected to be leaving for Korea. Lacking money, they lived on orange juice and two-dollar meals, until they met the president of the University of Miami, a Mt. Union

¹¹⁹ “College Rolls Dip Less than Feared; Survey of 830 Institutions Lists Influx of New Students as a Major Factor,” *New York Times*, 22 December 1952.

¹²⁰ Oakley, 287.

alumnus, who fed them at a picnic and introduced them to young Miami “co-eds.”¹²¹ Students fled dreary weather, exams, adult supervision, the regimen of academics, and other pitfalls of college life. They sought the camaraderie of youth, sunny skies, beaches, and adventure. Some spring breakers were looking for a last fling before starting their adult lives, while others were trying to get a jumpstart on adulthood by desperately searching for a mate. But whatever their motivations, college students on vacation reflected the anxieties and excitement of campus life from dating, marriage, and drinking to pranks and peer culture.

While a number of resort cities, including Miami, Clearwater, Daytona Beach, and Nassau attracted young vacationers, Fort Lauderdale clearly became the epicenter of spring break in the mid-1950s. The year 1953 marked the beginning of Fort Lauderdale’s big crowds, rowdy behavior, and inebriated masses. After the Mayor’s Hospitality Committee sent invitations to 500 Eastern and Midwestern colleges and universities, 15,000 college students descended on the city in droves. *Holiday* magazine described the scene with bemused detachment:

Gangs of boys ran nude on the beach at night and showered like ancient Romans under the facilities provided for bathers on the beachwalks. Incipient biologists acquired and threw an overdead hammerhead shark into a hotel swimming pool in dedication to a vendetta with the hotel management which had previously summoned police to eject them from wee-hour swimming in private property. Amorous couples seeking seclusion in the pine grove of one homeowner met retaliation. Harassed beyond reason, the householder hired a bulldozer and cut trenches in his

¹²¹ “College Boys Have Last Fling in Miami: Week at the Beach for \$54 Each,” *Life*, April 30, 1951, 113.

yard and, as of last spring, the anti-Cupid ditches were still there.¹²²

The crowds converged on Atlantic Boulevard on their way to the beaches “blocking traffic, emitting their distinctive cries, and sniffing the heady air of freedom. Dawn – and every subsequent dawn – brought proof that they had not been idle. Greek letters appeared on the municipal water tower [and] coconuts crashed through windows.”¹²³ On a limited scale such chaos was familiar to college communities that had experienced annual spring riots, but Fort Lauderdale had stumbled into something much bigger.¹²⁴

The city was aghast. For years the students had more or less fit in with the rest of the “respectable” community, often appearing in the newspaper participating in local events. The year before, four women from Skidmore College had been honored at a “splash party and barbecue,” five students from Michigan State University had received special attention in a society column, and sixty students from Yale, Cornell, Northwestern, Michigan State, and Duke University attended a dance sponsored by local alumni associations.¹²⁵ Fort Lauderdale had always welcomed the collegiate spring break, and in early 1953 it had made a special effort to attract additional students to supplement a fickle tourist industry.¹²⁶ During the 1953 winter season, the city had experienced its first lull in tourist traffic in several years. Pundits charged that civic programs and municipal services were woefully inadequate for the throngs of visitors, and many

¹²² Carl I. Biemiller, “A Subtropical Bit of the Midwest with Overtones of Venice – That’s Fort Lauderdale,” *Holiday* 16 (November 1954): 70.

¹²³ “The Visigoths,” 27.

¹²⁴ Gary R. Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida), 318.

¹²⁵ “Easter Vacationers,” *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 3 April 1952; “Party Line and Personal Patter,” *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 28 March 1952; “Undergrads Plan to Attend Dance,” *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 25 March 1952.

¹²⁶ “Northern Collegians Throng City Beaches,” *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 21 March 1953.

tourists were simply going elsewhere. Parking services and traffic congestion were among the direst problems, rankling tourists and locals alike.¹²⁷

Fort Lauderdale was a resort city on the move, with 52,000 permanent residents and 500,000 visitors annually.¹²⁸ While the Great Depression had taken its toll on Florida's beach communities, Fort Lauderdale and other cities had received a financial boost from an infusion of military personnel during World War II. In fact, George Herbert Walker Bush, later president of the United States, was stationed on an airbase in Fort Lauderdale in 1943.¹²⁹ The city had later encouraged everything from gambling to alligator wrestling to attract vacationing crowds propelled by the excitement of a postwar spending frenzy.¹³⁰ Highways, cars, middle-class affluence, and astute marketing fueled the rising consumerism of the decade that brought a new generation of tourists to Florida.¹³¹ Calling itself the "Venice of America," Fort Lauderdale used all manner of promotion to entice middle-class tourists to join the customary wealthy winter visitors. By the early 1950s, the Gold Coast's tourist season had grown longer, with more tourists arriving in February, March, and April.¹³² Indeed, even summer tourism became a hot prospect in Florida. All over the state, airline, train, and bus fares were lowered for the summer months; and in a 1950 poll, Florida came in third behind California and Hawaii, but ahead of Europe, when Americans were asked where they wanted to spend their

¹²⁷ "Unreasonable to Blame Vacant Rooms on Beach on Traffic Congestion," *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 4 March 1953; "Adequate Facilities for Parking Needed to Avoid Paralysis," *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 16 March 1953.

¹²⁸ Beimiller, 61.

¹²⁹ Paul S. George, "Fort Lauderdale: Creating a Wartime Boom," *Forum* 22 (Fall 1999): 29-30.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*; Philip J. Weidling and August Burghard, *Checked Sunshine: The Story of Fort Lauderdale, 1793-1955* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1966).

¹³¹ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003); Jack J. Westeyn, "Main Motor Routes that Lead South," *New York Times*, 15 January 1950.

¹³² Arthur Himbert, "In Easter Florida, Winter Season at Resorts on Gold Coast Hits Peak Month Later than Usual," *New York Times*, 2 March 1952. The Gold Coast encompasses Southeast Florida's resort communities, including Palm Beach, Broward, and Dade counties.

summer. In 1952, for the first time, Fort Lauderdale launched a marketing campaign directed at summertime visitors.¹³³

The city also made a concerted effort to attract and retain year-round residents, expending money on much-needed infrastructure improvements such as bridges, streets, and a long-awaited tunnel to clear up traffic on U.S. 1.¹³⁴ The construction of the lavish Bahia Mar resort in 1953 was a testament to the city's increasingly decadent image, but, at the same time, Fort Lauderdale also tried to convey a more staid identity. A visiting journalist admired the city's "Midwestern atmosphere and culture which makes Fort Lauderdale more of a 'home town' to most tourists than any other resort towns along Florida's Gold Coast. It finds expression in a sense of community wholesomeness, a freshness, and an aura of substantiality seldom emphasized in more rakish resorts."¹³⁵ Talk of a university in the area, youth recreation centers, and cooperative organizations among resort owners further demonstrated the city leaders' ambitious goals to draw both residents and visitors.¹³⁶ The city took a gamble in broadening the scope of its college spring break crowds, but the spring college season in Fort Lauderdale had started with hope and anticipation, as the first wave of collegians appeared in the city.

¹³³ Arthur Himbert, "Florida Beckons: Atlantic, Gulf and Inland Resorts Expect Another Records in Summer Crowds," *New York Times*, 11 June 1950; C. E. Wright, "Florida Off-Season: Boom in Spring and Summer Business Is Expected to Continue This Year," *New York Times*, 13 April 1952; Mormino, 83.

¹³⁴ C. E. Wright, "Fort Lauderdale Opens a Bottleneck," *New York Times*, 5 December 1954; C. E. Wright, "Boom at Fort Lauderdale: Town's Traffic Problem Increases with its Tourist Trade," *New York Times*, 22 April 1956; Paul S. George, "Downtown Fort Lauderdale: Its Demise and Renaissance in the Post-War Era," *Broward Legacy* (Summer/Fall 1991): 10. George comments that the bridge on U.S. 1 crossing the New River caused massive traffic problems because it remained upright for long periods of time each day to allow for boat traffic. It was dubbed the "worst bottle neck of U.S. 1 from Maine to Florida."

¹³⁵ Biemiller, 62; Weilding and Burghard, 258-266.

¹³⁶ "Clubs Support Unified Plan of Recreation," *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 19 March 1953; "Beach Resort Owners Form 'Co-op' Goup," *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 19 March 1953; "Group to Discuss University," *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 5 March 1953.

In the last weeks of March 1953, when “Joe College” and “Betty Coed” began arriving by planes, trains, and automobiles in late March, giddy reports in the local newspaper guessed at the spring vacation totals and far-flung schools that would be represented, and mused over the “fancy convertibles” and “ancient jalopies with as many as six and eight in a car.”¹³⁷ The complaints trickled in, at first, including, nude bathing on the beach, disorderly conduct, profane language, and exploding firecrackers. Seven Ohio students were jailed for swimming in a hotel pool, and they appeared in court the next day barefooted and in their swimming trunks before a solemn judge who fined them \$35 each. Three other spring breakers stole a Fort Lauderdale Transit Co. bus, which was found, abandoned near an Elks Club fifteen minutes after the theft.¹³⁸ Less threatening were the students who filled the local bars. Many were caught with fake IDs and forged birth certificates, though some simply persuaded older students to buy them beer and then headed for the beach.¹³⁹

The Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce arranged a meeting to discuss “methods of eliminating much of the disorderliness of college students,” with eleven student representatives, members of the police department, and city leaders, including City Manager H. Milton Link and Richard W. Ward, manager of the Chamber of Commerce.¹⁴⁰ The city’s position stressed that the students were indeed welcome, but the vandalism and criminal behavior could not continue. The college representatives were

¹³⁷ “Northern Collegians Throng City Beaches.”

¹³⁸ “Visiting Collegians Learn Costly Lesson,” *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 1 April 1953.

¹³⁹ “Control of Collegians Pondered,” *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 7 April 1953.

¹⁴⁰ “Collegiate Antics Topic of Parley,” *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 3 April 1953.

asked what Fort Lauderdale could do to improve their stay and prevent trouble. A series of dances were suggested, but one student claimed that any event sponsored by the city might be “shunned” by the students. Another student from the University of Virginia recommended that the city forward any violations committed by students to their college’s student councils. A representative from the University of Miami suggested signs “asking the students to have consideration for other people.” While these naive proposals were being discussed, more nude bathers were arrested, 2,000 Michigan students arrived in the city, and two fifteen year old Laingsburg, Michigan, girls ran away from home. Their parents guessed that Fort Lauderdale was their destination.¹⁴¹

For its part, the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, a very conservative paper, tried to shame the students into submission by printing every threat issued by the city and the police, all arrests with names, colleges, and ages, a chastening interview with a “quiet” German woman who had recently graduated from college herself. Gertrude Vydra insisted, “I think they don’t know what they have.” She added that the German college student has “to work very, very hard to get through. They work at night, on Saturdays and Sundays and on their vacations . . . They improvise their fun rather than purchase it.”¹⁴² When asked his opinion, Judge Ennis R. Shepherd of the Fort Lauderdale municipal court, who presided over a majority of the students’ cases, declared, “[I]t appears that some of the students lose all sense of responsibility and propriety when they get here on vacation . . . some of them think it is smart to fight

¹⁴¹ “Collegiate Antics Topic of Parley,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 3 April 1953; quote in “Incoming Collegians Advised to Behave,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 4 April 1953; “Aid in Search for Girls Asked,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel* 4 April 1953.

¹⁴² John Hopkins, “‘Don’t Know What They Have,’ German Girl Says of Collegians,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 3 April 1953.

policemen and to tear the shirts off their backs and do numerous other things that they wouldn't ever dream of doing at home.”¹⁴³

Towards the end of the season, tragedy struck. In the early morning hours of Easter Sunday, nineteen-year-old William McCormick, a student at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, lost control of his car and struck several students walking south on State Road A1A, before he careened into five cars parked alongside the road. The accident occurred just north of the small community of Lauderdale By The Sea, injuring four students and killing two. Eighteen-year-old Sue Macken was killed immediately, thrown nearly fifteen yards upon impact. Twenty-year-old James Floyd, an end on the University of Virginia football team, lay along the side of the road and waited for an ambulance to arrive. His back ripped open, he screamed in agony and begged police to shoot him. He later died at Broward County Hospital from skull fractures and internal injuries. State Highway Patrolmen E. C. Sillins described the scene as a “nightmare.” Hundreds of people gathered around the wreckage, some awoken by the sirens and still clad in pajamas, while others were dressed in nightclub or beach attire. McCormick, the driver of the car, claimed to have had one drink and fallen asleep at the wheel. He was brought up on manslaughter charges the next day.¹⁴⁴

Contending with civil unrest and death, city leaders, newspaper editors, and police officers tried to present a unified front of dismay and concern. The local paper ran a front-page photo of the crumpled girl's body laying in the sand and bramble on the side

¹⁴³ “Control of Collegians Pondered,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 7 April 1953.

¹⁴⁴ When Are We Going to Learn a Car in the Hands of Some People Is a Very Dangerous Weapon?” *Fort Lauderdale Daily News and Evening Sentinel*, 7 April 1953; Frank Ciccone, “‘All I Felt Was a Jolt,’ Dazed Student Says,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 6 April 1953; Douglas McQuarrie, “Restraints Needed, Sheriff Says After Accident Fatal to 2,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 6 April 1953.

of the highway. The paper insisted that the picture was “used solely to make people stop and think about the enormous ‘toll’ that is exacted each year on American highways.”¹⁴⁵ The State Beverage Department, along with the Broward County supervisor, launched an undercover investigation examining underage drinking. Agents arrested one bartender and a package store employee, but overall officials found much to praise in the county’s efforts to keep underage students from drinking.¹⁴⁶ The police department discussed plans to prevent further accidents along the dark strip of highway north of Fort Lauderdale, where students flocked after the bars closed.¹⁴⁷ Broward County Sheriff Amos Hall and Marvin V. Hinshaw Jr., director of the Fort Lauderdale Apartment House Association, suggested mandatory chaperones from the colleges and universities.¹⁴⁸

On the other side of the country, trouble in California mirrored that in Fort Lauderdale. In Balboa and Balboa Island (with a combined population of less than 5,000), 35,000 Los Angeles-area students crowded the beaches dancing, swimming, sailing, and generally creating a traffic nightmare. Police arrested over 150 and sent another 150 home. In Palos Verdes, one student collected admission to a spectacle that included the dousing of an old automobile in gasoline, lighting it, and pushing it off of a cliff.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Orville Revelle, “Rewarding Reaction,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 11 April 1953.

¹⁴⁶ “Bar Owners Tried to Control Student Drinking, Official Says,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 10 April 1953.

¹⁴⁷ Douglas McQuarrie, “Restraints Needed, Sheriff Says After Accident Fatal to 2,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 6 April 1953.

¹⁴⁸ “Restraints Needed;” “Control of Collegians Pondered.”

¹⁴⁹ “The Visigoths,” 27.

In a decade obsessed with the growing problems of juvenile delinquency, the students' exploits in Fort Lauderdale and California communities raised a few red flags. In the 1950s, particularly between 1953 and 1956, many Americans feared the youthful among them. Some felt adolescence itself was a delinquent stage of life. As one historian notes, ". . . fears of youthful rebellion took on added dimensions, in the midst of general internal security and prosperity, whipped up by a combination of anticommunist hysteria and racial unrest."¹⁵⁰ Formed in 1953, the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency sought to find the causes of youth crime and violence. After 1955, with Senator Estes Kefauver at the helm, the committee vehemently attacked mass media for its complicity in the waning values of America's young people.¹⁵¹ Kefauver charged that juvenile delinquency was "a symptom of the weakness in our whole moral and social fabric."¹⁵² Fueling the fire, psychiatrist Fredric Wertham authored *Seduction of the Innocent* to expose the pernicious effects of comic books.¹⁵³ Television, film, and music producers, actors, broadcasters, publishers, comic book writers, and musicians were called to testify, but most passionately denied any role in the corruption of America's youth.¹⁵⁴ Above all else, the hearings and the ensuing literature devoted to youth crime created a media frenzy that affected public opinion. According to a 1959 poll, Americans

¹⁵⁰ Ronald D. Cohen, "The Delinquents: Censorship and Youth Culture in Recent U.S. History," *History of Education Quarterly* 37 (Autumn, 1997): 254.

¹⁵¹ James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 143.

¹⁵² "Youth Crime Deployed: Kefauver Brands Delinquency Threat to U.S. Welfare," *New York Times*, 27 March 1955.

¹⁵³ Thomas Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (New York: Avon Books, 1999), 240; C. Wright Mills, "Nothing to Laugh At," *New York Times*, 25 April 1954; "Youth Crime Deployed."

¹⁵⁴ Gilbert, 144-45.

ranked juvenile delinquency above open-air testing of atomic weapons, school desegregation, and political corruption as a major issue facing the nation.¹⁵⁵

Senator Kefauver found particular fault with the state of Florida's handling of its youth. In a 1956 article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Governor LeRoy Collins of Florida pondered the unique problems of youth in the Sunshine State: "There was an attitude in our state for a long time that to attract the tourists who contribute so vitally to our economy we had to give them the opportunity to 'live dangerously' and squander their money recklessly." According to Collins, gambling and "quickie" divorces not only marred fun and leisure that the state tried to promote, but young people were being exposed to an "unwholesome" environment."¹⁵⁶ A Youth Advisory Council was formed to monitor Florida's youth and make recommendations to parents and schools. The council advised on a broad range of issues from inquiries into the feasibility of abolishing capital punishment to suggestions of the "daily reading of the Bible, or some type meditative material, reciting of the Lord's Prayer, and the pledging to the Flag."¹⁵⁷ In Florida and the rest of the country, wary eyes were on the rapidly growing youth culture. Although college students of the 1950s were typically considered more subdued than high school students – having assumed the moniker of the Silent Generation – the pranks, capers, and mayhem of the spring riots and now spring break left many questioning the reserve and conservatism of the college crowds.

¹⁵⁵ Gilbert, 144 and 63.

¹⁵⁶ LeRoy Collins, "How We Solve Our Teen-Age Problem," *Saturday Evening Post*, 21 April 1956.

¹⁵⁷ Youth Advisory Council, "Second Annual Report of the Youth Advisory Council to the Executive Officers of the State of Florida," 8 March 1960, LeRoy T. Collins Papers, Special Collections, University of South Florida.

The student antics of 1953 threatened Fort Lauderdale's plans already in motion to attract the many other well-behaved tourists. City leaders, hoteliers, residents, and business owners feared the bad publicity of rampaging college students. They worried that winter tourists still in town during spring break would think twice about returning, and that prospective summer visitors would stay clear of Fort Lauderdale – any number of Florida cities would have welcomed the opportunity to woo a dissatisfied customer disgusted by disruptive and rowdy students. But city leaders ultimately pushed forward with their efforts to attract student vacationers. With the wisdom of 1953's collegiate assault behind it, the city readied itself for another spring break. The following year, despite protests from hotel owners, Mayor C. Malcolm Carlisle again mailed invitations to schools. While still welcoming the students to Fort Lauderdale, he warned that their behavior “would be a direct reflection on the reputation of their alma maters.”¹⁵⁸ The University Club was organized to register students, assist with accommodations, plan events, and advise on recreational activities, arranging fishing trips and sight-seeing tours. Off-duty police officers were hired at restaurants and bars to check IDs.¹⁵⁹ Police Chief Roland R. Kelley, an ex-FBI man, encouraged his forces to help but not harass the students and direct them towards the city's recreational activities.¹⁶⁰

The press put a sweet face on 1954's spring breakers. Pretty blondes in convertibles, like Kathy Knox of Sweet Briar College, who was headed for Spain during her junior year, and heroes like Ohio State student Jerry Gillig, rewarded for rescuing a

¹⁵⁸ Dick Meyer, “College Kids ‘Welcome,’” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 8 April 1954

¹⁵⁹ Meyer, “College Kids ‘Welcome’”; Frank Hogan, “Police Outsmart Beer-Thirsty Students,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 4 April 1954.

¹⁶⁰ Biemiller, 70.

local dog, made headlines that year. The newspaper reminded readers that these were indeed college students and not wild hordes. One piece simply showed a group of Duke University students lounging on the beach, flipping through their yearbooks.¹⁶¹ A few arrests were reported, but police denied any serious problems. Public intoxication, disorderly conduct, and a few University of Miami students throwing empty beer cans at cars, were mild infractions to veteran police of spring break '53.¹⁶² By mid-April, the mayor commended the nearly 18,000 students on their exemplary behavior and made plans for an even bigger Easter vacation for 1955. Mayor Carlisle added, “. . . We feel that this ‘invasion’ adds much to not only the present year’s business, but [will] be felt in future years when these students are adults and come [back] to Florida for their vacations.”¹⁶³

Student numbers increased throughout the 1950s, as did their antics, both in quantity and creativity. Petty thievery was a popular pastime. Students, anxious to gather “souvenirs” for their dorm rooms, stole everything from stuffed fish, signs, and ashtrays to lawn furniture and fire extinguishers.¹⁶⁴ The *Fort Lauderdale News* printed long lists of arrests along with names, ages, hometowns, colleges, offences, and fines. For example, the first mass court appearance of the spring break season in 1959 was recorded with all available student information:

Jailed when they couldn’t come up with \$20 fines
were Arthur R. Schuman Jr., 18, Wynnewood, Pa., a
student at Holy Cross College, Worcester, Mass. and Carl

¹⁶¹ “No Place Like Home, Absolutely NO Place,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 6 April 1954; “Courtesy Pays,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 6 April 1954; “College Vacationists,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 1 April 1954.

¹⁶² “Collegians Jam Beach; No Trouble,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 5 April 1954.

¹⁶³ “College Kids ‘Welcome.’”

¹⁶⁴ “Collegiate Tidal Wave Began with a Ripple,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 27 March 1960.

F. Schlingmann, 20 of New Jersey. If their fines aren't paid they will serve five days.

Bonds of \$25 each were forfeited by Edward S. Murray, 18, Wynnewood, a Villanova University student; Robert N. Petrie, 21, Miami Beach and Thomas H. Bliss, 21, Ridgewood, N.J.

Charles C. Wolf, 20, a student at Washington University, St. Louis was fined \$20 for drinking in public and \$15 for giving false information to police.

John N. Calandro, 20, Harper's Woods, Mich., a student at the University of Detroit, was fined \$20 for giving a false identification card.

Donald D. Fitzgerald, 21, Minneapolis, a student at the University of Minnesota, was fined \$25 for public intoxication.

Fined each for drinking an intoxicating beverage on a public street were Michael J. Sacchini, 19, South Bend, Ind.; Louis Rabin, 22, Miami, a University of Miami student; Jay R. Soukup, 20, Demarest, N.J., Rutgers University.

Also, George L. Frazee, 20, Barnegat, N.J., Rutgers; Donald R. Edwards, 20, 1947 Lincoln St., Hollywood, University of Miami; John S. Helske, 22, New York, Lehigh University; Fred B. Skyrms, 21, Pittsburgh, Lehigh; and Nick Deones, 21 Minneapolis, University of Minnesota.¹⁶⁵

Public intoxication and disorderly conduct were the most frequently mentioned crimes, though alligators and sharks still made it into local swimming pools.¹⁶⁶ The paper also began to record acts of theft and vandalism against the students. Reports of stolen bongo drums, wallets, radios, and money, and busted taillights demonstrated that the students themselves were beginning to feel the crunch of such a massive event.¹⁶⁷

The local attitude towards the annual invasion remained upbeat, but city leaders found it increasingly difficult to keep up. All leaves of absence were suspended for Fort

¹⁶⁵ "Two Collegians Jailed, 11 Fined for Whoopee," *Fort Lauderdale News*, 25 March 1959.

¹⁶⁶ "Collegiate Tidal Wave Began with a Ripple."

¹⁶⁷ Al Rockefeller, "Two Collegians Jailed, 11 Fined for Whoopee," *Fort Lauderdale News*, 25 March 1959.

Lauderdale police, who worked seven days a week for the duration of the spring break season.¹⁶⁸ Overtime pay added up. In 1958, one hundred policemen worked nearly three thousand hours of overtime at a cost of five thousand dollars to the city. At the city committees organized an array of activities, planning dances and other activities to keep the kids busy. But college students generally stayed away from these sanctioned events. One claimed, “We have dances at home. We don’t come down here for planned entertainment.”¹⁶⁹

Not surprisingly, many residents and business owners began to question the benefits of all this chaos. Cheap gifts, deck pants, and straw hats flew off the shelves in some beachfront stores, but high-end stores catering to the winter tourists lost business. The bar trade boomed. At one collegiate hotspot in 1954, sales leaped from 78 half barrels of beer in February to 231 half barrels in March.¹⁷⁰ In the first three days of April, the bar used 67 half barrels.¹⁷¹ In 1959, one bar owner estimated that students drank 20,000 glasses of beer a day. Most collegians arriving in town stopped in at a bar for a round of drinks before they even found a place to stay.¹⁷² Hotel owners had mixed feelings about college students as guests. Many invariably faced damages after the student invasion, but some maintained a peaceful atmosphere through careful screening and strict rules. The Marlin Beach Hotel found the Kappa Kappa Gammas sorority girls from Ohio State University model guests who preferred all night bridge to drinking

¹⁶⁸ “Collegiate Tidal Wave Began with a Ripple.”

¹⁶⁹ Anne Wendt, “Spring Recess by the Sea,” *New York Times*, 13 April 1958.

¹⁷⁰ “Beer Runs Out, So Collegians Dunk Furniture,” *Miami Herald*, 25 March 1959.

¹⁷¹ “Collegians ‘Foamin’ at the Mouth,’ Just Like Washday with All the ‘Suds,’” *Fort Lauderdale News and Evening Sentinel*, 5 April 1954. A half barrel is approximately six and a half cases of beer.

¹⁷² “Police Outsmart Beer-Thirsty Students”; “Beer Runs Out, So Collegians Dunk Furniture,” *Miami Herald*, 25 March 1959.

parties.¹⁷³ The Yankee Clipper accepted only a few students whose parents could guarantee the bill.¹⁷⁴ But the goal remained to mold the students into future tourists for Fort Lauderdale. In 1958, a publicity director for the city insisted that “many of the vacationists who come here now with their families and can afford the seasonal rates of \$20 and \$35 a day are the same who made their first acquaintance with this place when all they could buy was hamburgers and a beer or two at places along Atlantic Boulevard.”¹⁷⁵

“We do not seek to recast American society. We do seek an ever-rising standard of living by which we mean not only more money but more leisure and a richer cultural life.” AFL-CIO president George Meany’s comments regarding 1950s blue-collar America described much of the country during that period.¹⁷⁶ More of the “good life” seemed to be the demand for most Americans peeking out from beneath the veil of cold war terror and social conformity, and advertisers and marketers were listening. In 1956, market segmentation became a new and lucrative concept in creating and expanding new standards of living. Until the mid-1950s, the American public had been treated largely as a monolithic market and sold mass-marketed goods and ideas based on people’s ability to buy. Modern market segmentation recognized the nuances of the American public outside

¹⁷³ Beverly Paulson, “Kappa Kapps by the Dozen Make Hotel Like a Dorm,” *Miami Herald*, 26 March 1959.

¹⁷⁴ Clark Ash, “Fort Lauderdale Greets the College Crowd,” *New York Times*, 10 April 1960.

¹⁷⁵ Wendt, “Spring Recess by the Sea.”

¹⁷⁶ Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak, *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 8. Miller and Nowak suggest the context of the Meany quote that I use here.

of income, encouraging companies to target cultural differences influenced by sex, race, and age when advertising their products. In her study of mass consumption in postwar America, Lizabeth Cohen finds the result to be a “new axiom of marketing, whether applied to cigarettes or refrigerators: homogeneity of buyers within a segmented market, heterogeneity between segmented markets.”¹⁷⁷ While conformity still remained important within subgroups, a new sense of individuality emerged interwoven with consumer demands and market-driven needs. By 1957, there were over five hundred stations and forty million homes with televisions (85 percent of all homes in America) watching an average of five hours a day. Tens of thousands of sponsors and over a billion dollars supported the growing number of programs on television.¹⁷⁸ Television dramatically increased the impact of market segmentation, and became a vital link between companies and young people. But it also created a national consciousness among America’s youth, who began watching the same network programming despite where they lived.

Advertisers began to recognize the value of the youth market. They understood the influence that young people had on adult spending and that early exposure to products could create a lifetime of customer loyalty, but they also found ways to cater to young people specifically.¹⁷⁹ Fort Lauderdale used this logic when it focused its marketing efforts on bringing college students to the city during spring break. The mayor’s invitations to the colleges and universities and the clubs and organizations formed to welcome students promised a very different vacation from the average Fort Lauderdale

¹⁷⁷ Cohen, 295.

¹⁷⁸ Eric Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: the Evolution of American Television* (New York: Oxford University Press), 198.

¹⁷⁹ George P. Moschis and Gilbert A. Churchill Jr., “An Analysis of the Adolescent Consumer,” *Journal of Marketing* 43 (Summer 1979): 40. See also, John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969).

tourist. And each year, the city learned a new lesson and tailored its marketing efforts for the next year. The city's publicity director, a hotel owner in the area, repeatedly made comments about the potential of the students to become future tourists, bringing their own families and spending more money. The collegians themselves benefited from the opportunity of expressing themselves as individuals separate from their parents, teachers, and other adults, and as part of a separate subculture.¹⁸⁰ But as the crowds increased, the students became more audacious in their demands and expectations, and city leaders and police lost some of their power to persuade.

In 1959, 25,000 students spent their spring vacations in Fort Lauderdale. The police department opened a satellite station on the beach and arrests steadily rose, reportedly for "drinking and rowdyism" and "whoopie."¹⁸¹ Porky's, a local roadhouse later immortalized in film, advertised an all-you-can-drink special that caused a near-riot when the taps ran dry. Patrons were asked to pay \$1.50 to drink their limit from 4 to 6 p.m. While students spent the first hour drinking seven barrels of beer, a rival bar intercepted the delivery truck driver headed for Porky's. When the beer ran out, several students threw bar stools and other furniture into a nearby lake.¹⁸² In the downtown area, the incessant noise and hell-raising took its toll on Fort Lauderdale's older residents whose complaints kept police busy. Police Chief Joe Iacono declared war on the revelers.

¹⁸⁰ Cohen, 309.

¹⁸¹ Rockefeller, "Two Collegians Jailed, 11 Fined for Whoopie."

¹⁸² Paul S. George, "Where the Boys Were," *South Florida History* (Winter 1991): 5, "Beer & the Beach," *Time*; Beer Runs Out, So Collegians Dunk Furniture, *Miami Herald*, 25 March 1959.

“You can put this in big black headlines. I’m waiting for ‘em!” he insisted, referring to the more unruly students vacationing in the city. When students threw a “canon-cracker” into a woman’s yard, the noise nearly stopped the woman’s heart. “This area is full of oldsters who visit here for rest and quiet and I’m not going to let a few hoodlums disturb their rest and endanger their lives.” Iacono warned, “From now on, no one is going to be allowed to sleep anywhere in this town unless they rent a room. If they don’t have \$25 on them, they will be arrested for vagrancy – and if they have the money, they will be arrested on some other charge.” “If the visiting college students aren’t more careful,” he added, “they may inadvertently become murderers.”¹⁸³

The police were clearly frustrated, but local media tried to present a balanced view. Amidst the fracas of spring break ‘59, the *Fort Lauderdale News* chose a few fresh-faced collegians to showcase the fun-seekers rather than the trouble-makers. Darrell Joslyn of Michigan, Mary Lou Egan of Miami, and local lifeguard Jack Chew were photographed devouring five ice cream sundaes after a long night of “revelry.”¹⁸⁴ The paper depicted the Baker’s Dozen, a Yale singing group, who performed during their vacations doing a “neat job with novelty numbers, popular songs and barbershop ballads” with a talent that ran the “full scale from old time melodiousness to modern progressive.”¹⁸⁵ And, in an article, titled “Gang on a Gasser,” the *Fort Lauderdale News* interviewed some “college gals” to uncover an authentic spring break experience. “The MOST is a moonlight cruise with seventy couples . . . Then, there’s jai alai, dog races, dances, and the beach,” one University of Kentucky sorority girl exclaimed. Offering a bit of slang education, the staff writer explained, “Anybody vague about the meaning of a

¹⁸³ “Collegians Future Killers?” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 27 March 1959.

¹⁸⁴ “Old College Try,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 25 March 1958.

¹⁸⁵ “‘Baker’s Dozen’ to Sing,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 26 March 1958.

‘gasser’ now? If ya must get technical, it’s a kingsize blast. A blast’s a wingding. And wingding’s a really LARGE party.”¹⁸⁶

But, perhaps, the most lasting piece of publicity that year was a small article in the education section of *Time* magazine titled “Beer & the Beach.” After a full report on drunken vandalism, sunburns, marathon car rides south, and fake IDs, a girl was asked why she came to Fort Lauderdale. She replied famously, “This is where the boys are.” A year later, Glendon Swarthout’s novel of the same title would draw even more attention to the beaches of Fort Lauderdale. But by December 1960, the film *Where the Boys Are* would immortalize the city as a spring break mecca.

¹⁸⁶ Jocelyn Hale, “Gang on a Gasser,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 22 March 1959.

Chapter 3

Spring Break '61: The Mighty Deluge

For fifty weeks of the year, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, is a small corner of tropical heaven, basking contentedly in the warm sun. During the other two weeks, as colleges, all over the country, disgorge their students for Easter vacation, a change comes over the city. The students swarm to these peaceful shores in droves – 20,000 strong. They turn night into day and the small corner of heaven into a sizable chunk of bedlam. The boys come to soak up the sun and a few bottles of beer. The girls come, very simply, because this is where the boys are.¹⁸⁷

-*Where the Boys Are*, 1960

In January 1960, Random House published Glendon Swarthout's third novel *Where the Boys Are*. Swarthout, a popular novelist of impressive range and an English professor at Michigan State University, decided to follow his honors students down to Fort Lauderdale on their spring vacations in 1958. From these two weeks of research, he created a top-ten bestseller and a national sensation. Originally titled *Unholy Spring*, Swarthout changed the name after *Time* printed the musings of a young college student.¹⁸⁸ Her infamous reply to why she had traveled to Fort Lauderdale for spring break was "this is where the boys are."¹⁸⁹ Swarthout used the quote for the title of his book, placing the phrase in the lexicon of American popular culture, and forever saddling Fort Lauderdale with an alter ego as the number one destination for sex-crazed and beer-addled college kids on their spring vacations. Indeed, the book and its film adaptation

¹⁸⁷ *Where the Boys Are*, DVD, directed by Henry Levin (1960; Warner Home Video, 2004).

¹⁸⁸ "Books and Authors," *New York Times*, 9 July 1959.

¹⁸⁹ "Beer and the Beach," *Time*, April 1959, 58"

lured tens of thousands of collegians to the city, rocketing spring break to the front-page headlines for years to come.

In his novel *Where the Boys Are*, Swarthout presents a satire of college life with young freshman Merrit, as narrator, taking her story of indecision and realization from her ambiguous university “U” to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. She describes herself with simplicity, “I am five-nine in heels and I weigh in at one thirty-six. My statistics are 37-28-38. I wear an eight and a half B shoe. I may not be feminine, but I am damn ample”¹⁹⁰ Along with her friend Tuggle, a senior majoring in Elementary Education, Merrit heads to Florida for a whirlwind trip of sex, drinking, mayhem, and revolution. Why does everyone go to Fort Lauderdale? Merrit explains:

Physically to get a tan . . . Psychologically, to get away . . . Biologically, they come to Florida to check the talent. By that I mean to inspect and select . . . And the terrific thing is that many of the boys are from the Ivy League: Harvard, Princeton, Yale, etc. A lot of them go to Bermuda and Nassau to snob around with girls from Eastern schools but the intelligent ones, having heard about Midwestern girls, tear down here to see if it’s true. So if you are a girl and want to meet the authentic Ivy League article; and who doesn’t; Lauderdale is where to go.

Merrit and Tuggle stay at a small motel near the beach in Fort Lauderdale. Their neighbors are two mousy collegians desperate for Ivy League husbands and a few lustful Ivy League men. But Merrit and Tuggle quickly meet TV Thompson, a quirky and calculating Michigan State student who woos women with a tale of alienation and rape and nurtures a growing commitment to the Cuban Revolution; Ryder Smith, a Brown University student with a yacht and a decision to make about whether to stay with his

¹⁹⁰ Glendon Swarthout, *Where the Boys Are* (New York: Random House, 1960), 9.

uncle's company or find a corporate career; and Basil Demetomos, an Ohio State student and military veteran whose personal fortune funds the tour of a "dialectic jazz" quartet during which he pays the audience to listen in order to remain an uncompromised musician. All three men convince Merrit to have sex with them, and she spends her vacation in a drunken haze deciding which to marry while wrangling with the issues of "The Influence of Walt Disney on Religion, Large Families, Education, The High IQ, Faith, The Luck of Henry Thoreau, Stimulation, How Society Makes It Tough for Kids, Love, etc."¹⁹¹

Swarthout portrays spring break in Fort Lauderdale as a pivotal point – a rite of passage – in each of his characters' lives. While soaking up the sun in Florida, Swarthout's characters consider whether to major in English, Home Economics, Education, or be a dreaded "Uncom;" stay with the family business or enter the stifling corporate world; remain an isolated and pure musician or succumb to love; become a elementary school teacher or a wife; storm the television industry or storm the beaches at Guadalcanal. They represent all the stereotypes of youth culture from the media-obsessed, family-oriented, blandly normal, or elitist of the group to the artistic, revolutionary, sex-crazed, or confused. And they are all searching for meaning outside of these stereotypes, to no avail. When Merrit asks TV if he believes in God, he answers, "I believe in Walt Disney." When she asks Ryder the same question, he replies, "Why not? As a matter of fact, I do, but I can't say He rates very high with me as an executive."¹⁹² In his efforts to satirize campus culture, Swarthout stretches the limits of possibility,

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 10.

¹⁹² Ibid., 25, 114.

utilizing Merrit as the consummate disbeliever, mocking the adult world and American society, but wanting more. To adults, in general, Merrit complains:

Historically, we have missed everything draggy. We were too late for hot wars and depressions . . . Jobs are abundant and pay well. We may marry practically when we choose and hence are never frustrated sexually. It is a new thing for a generation to go around feeling fortunate all the time . . . Society has a schizoid notion that perhaps it should retrieve what it's given . . . Spare the Sputnik and spoil the child. We are not grateful enough, responsible enough, ambitious enough, individualistic enough, serious enough. We are silent and delinquent and inscrutable and we don't care a used cigarette filter about world conditions or citizenship or morality or democracy or organized religion. In other words, we are not like YOU . . . You are damn right, we're not. You did not shape us in your image, you made us what you would have liked to be, and now you are not satisfied. I'm sorry. We are.¹⁹³

While Merrit claims for her generation a temperament of silence, ingratitude, and delinquency, she positions herself ideologically and philosophically against her country's prescribed views by having sex, drinking, rebelling against higher education, and, finally, acting as an agent for revolution. Swarthout exaggerates Merrit's contradictions to the point of absurdity, but he is criticizing the narrow expectations of youth and the resulting frustrations of both young people and adults.

Halfway through the novel, Merrit, as narrator, "change[s] the tone completely." She declares, "From this point on my material is no longer comic and trivial but stark human drama."¹⁹⁴ One of the mousy neighbors from her hotel is raped by unscrupulous Ivy Leaguers, and the tormented girl attempts suicide by throwing herself into the hotel

¹⁹³ Ibid., 182-183.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 100-101.

pool tied to a beach chair – “Suzy, The Suicidal Mermaid.”¹⁹⁵ Then, weakened by indecision and drunkenness, Merrit, Tuggle, and their entourage of men meet the voluptuous Ramona, known at an upscale hotel, as the Scylla of Sex, where she performs a scintillating underwater dance. While an unlikely activist, Ramona convinces them to raise funds for the Cuban Revolution. But after an evening of singing college songs for nightclub patrons and collecting donations, the group wants to contribute more. Calling themselves the Lauderdale Legion and carrying signs that read “Spend Spring Term in Cuba” and “Enroll in Revolution 202,” they march to the beach the next day singing, “Our forebears got their kicks – From the Spirit of Seventy-Six – But the Spirit of Fifty-Eight is GREAT!” TV Thompson delivers a speech, promising frozen daiquiris while they “clean up the whole Caribbean in a couple of weeks,” but the thousands of students basking in the sun are unmoved.¹⁹⁶ Demoralized, the Lauderdale Legion sulk back to Ryder’s uncle’s mansion and throw a “madathon” party on the last night of spring break. After hours of drinking and illicit sex, hundreds of inebriated students, at last, heed TV Thompson’s call and see how important the revolution really is. They board Ryder’s yacht loaded with liquor and weapons and disembark for Cuba, but the boat sinks several yards from the dock. The dazed students emerge from the water and leave for their respective colleges. But they are proud of their brief stand for Cuban freedom. The novel ends with Merrit, pregnant and unsure of the father, lounging on a now vacant beach making plans to leave college and return to her small hometown.

With teen angst, sex, pregnancy, Walt Disney as God, dialectic jazz, and biting satire, *Where the Boys Are* was a departure for Swarthout, but a successful one. His

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 178.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 199-202.

previous novel, *They Came to Cordura*, a biting critique of the American campaign to capture the Mexican leader Pancho Villa in 1916, had taken him fifteen years to write. It was a “timeless [story] of human behavior under great stress” from an author of “promising talent,” according to the *New York Times*. A bestseller and Random House’s nomination for the Pulitzer Prize in 1958, the book became a major motion picture starring Gary Cooper and Rita Hayworth a year after its publication.¹⁹⁷ By comparison, Swarthout wrote *Where the Boys Are*, considered a “bizarre assignment” by one reviewer, in less than a year and treated the subject of campus culture with tongue firmly in cheek. His epigram reads, “This is a story, and any resemblance to real kids or a real U, living or dead, is not only coincidental but fantastic.”¹⁹⁸ The book received generally favorable reviews. *Time* applauded Swarthout for writing a “comical and exuberantly exaggerated investigation of a subject most parents prefer not to think about: what the children are up to.”¹⁹⁹ Some felt the novel needed more structure than the ramblings of a college student and others were alarmed at Swarthout’s change in subject matter and tone, but everyone seemed to agree with a *New York Times* reviewer who called *Where the Boys Are* “a highly carbonated elixir of sex, sunshine and beer.”²⁰⁰ In Fort Lauderdale, the chief of police told reporters that 20,000 college students had come to the city the previous year and that he hoped Swarthout’s book would not attract anymore. Mayor John V. Russell bristled, “That book had better be factual,” adding that cities can be slandered just like people.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ Glendon Swarthout, *They Came to Cordura* (New York: Random House, 1958); “Country of No Answers,” *Time*, 11 April 1960, 24-25.

¹⁹⁸ Swarthout, *Where the Boys Are*.

¹⁹⁹ “Adults Are Barfy,” *Time*, 18 January 1960, 58.

²⁰⁰ “Books of the Times,” *New York Times*, 16 January 1960; quote from “Loveathon at Fort Lauderdale,” *New York Times*, 7 February 1960.

²⁰¹ “In and Out of Books,” *New York Times*, 23 August 1959.

The book was widely read and caught the attention of the film industry well before its publication. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) purchased the filming rights in July 1959, attaching producer Joe Pasternak to the project.²⁰² Pasternak, a veteran of Hollywood films, quickly assembled an appealing cast combining young stars, big names, and a few unknown actors. By early March 1960, MGM announced George Hamilton as one of the movie's stars, playing Ryder.²⁰³ Dolores Hart assumed the lead role of Merrit, and newcomer Paula Prentiss, née Paula Ragusa, played the part of Tuggle. Yvette Mimieux, an actress of French and Mexican heritage, signed on to the film, and Joe Pasternak wooed Connie Francis, a popular singer, into her first acting role.²⁰⁴ Broadway actor and former *The Harvard Lampoon* editor Rory Harrity played a lascivious Ivy Leaguer.²⁰⁵ Frank Gorshin, later known for his role as The Riddler on television's "Batman," starred as Basil, and Jim Hutton played TV Thompson. Chill Wills, a character actor of American westerns, took the part of the "Police Captain." Shooting began in Fort Lauderdale in the early summer.

George Wells's screenplay adaptation of *Where the Boys Are* removed much of Swarthout's satire, changing and omitting details to create more sympathetic characters. He managed a simple plot illustrating the adventures of four young women who travel to Fort Lauderdale for spring break. But he added two new main characters that travel from "U" with Merritt and Tuggle: Melanie, Mimieux's character, based loosely on the book's tragically attacked student who attempts suicide in a pool; and Angie, Connie Francis's vehicle into film, a tough-talking but loveable girl who provides comic relief. After

²⁰² "Of Local Origin," *New York Times*, 16 July 1959.

²⁰³ "M-G-M to Remake 'Four Horsemen,'" *New York Times*, 3 March 1960.

²⁰⁴ Connie Francis, interview included in "Bonus Features," *Where the Boys Are* DVD 2004; "The Two Faces of Yvette Vex Life," *New York Times*, 6 May 1960.

²⁰⁵ Howard Thompson, "Producers Push War-Film Plans," *New York Times*, 25 June 1960.

appearing in *Where the Boys Are* and releasing her album of the same name, Francis's fame soared. The film's title song, a slow romantic ballad, provided the intended tone for Wells's screenplay, favoring romantic not physical love.

While sex still remains a prominent theme in the film, Wells tones down the characters' experiences and alters their perspectives. Merrit's chastity is saved in the film version, though she is still a provocative character with challenging views on sex. She invokes the work of Dr. Alfred Kinsey and tells her professor that women have every right to have sex before marriage.²⁰⁶ But her own views on morality informed by peer culture complicate Merrit's intellectual ideas about equal opportunity and a nascent sexual revolution.²⁰⁷ Ryder starts out as an aggressive paramour, but relents in the end to wait for love. TV Thompson is no longer a rapist, just a zany journalism student from Michigan whose love interest is Tuggle not Merrit. And Basil falls in love with Angie – after he loses his glasses. Melanie is the tragic figure who has sex with two men and is later raped by one of them. She attempts suicide by throwing herself into traffic, only to end up in the hospital shrieking, “They weren't even Yalies!” Merrit escapes the film without child, and she, Tuggle, and Angie are rewarded for their chastity with boyfriends: Merrit with her Ivy League beau, Ryder, Tuggler with TV, and Angie with Basil.²⁰⁸

No one in the movie mentions the Cuban Revolution.²⁰⁹ Popular opinion regarding Fidel Castro had changed from the writing of the book to the film's production.

²⁰⁶ Dr. Alfred Kinsey shocked Americans when he published *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948 and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* in 1953 – both became top-ten bestsellers. His provocative research revealed the prevalence of premarital sex, masturbation, homosexuality, and extramarital sex, all of which were taboo subjects in postwar America. For more on Dr. Kinsey, see James Jones, *Alfred C. Kinsey: A Public/Private Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997).

²⁰⁷ Jon Lewis, *The Road to Romance and Ruin: Teen Films and Youth Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 59.

²⁰⁸ Swarthout, *Where the Boys Are*.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

In justifying the novel's radical transformation to film, Joe Pasternak claimed, "We changed the novel because it contains elements that we felt did not belong in a movie. Castro was not the only thing. There was also some sensational sex that we threw out. But on this Castro matter – the author was very sympathetic to Castro." He added, "We felt that the only revolution these youngsters should be involved in was their personal revolution."²¹⁰

By 1960, the film industry had set its sights on the youth culture revolution. With television continuing to dominate entertainment, movie executives turned to the youth market as their last hope. Young and attractive actors like Warren Beatty, Sandra Dee, George Hamilton, and Dolores Hart, as well as popular teenage singers inexperienced in acting like Ricky Nelson, Fabian, Bobbie Darin, and Connie Francis were used to draw younger crowds. While treading lightly along the well-worn path of teenage-angst films like *Rebel Without a Cause* and *The Wild Ones*, *Where the Boys Are* joined newer films like Elia Kazan's *Splendor in the Grass* in attempting to portray candid views of youthful sexuality, protest, and delinquency. Despite frank dialogue and alarming scenarios, traditional ideas of morality prevailed in these movies.²¹¹ Characters who resisted the temptations of premarital sex generally escaped the dismal fate of those who succumbed. In the case of *Where the Boys Are*, the bold but demure Merrit finds love with a new Ivy League boyfriend at the end of the film. However, the promiscuous Melanie, after a

²¹⁰ "Pasternak Bars Politics in Film," *New York Times*, 4 August 1960.

²¹¹ Seymour Peck, "Hollywood's Script Calls for Youth," *New York Times*, 20 November 1960. The film industry was also producing for television in order to take advantage of its popularity. See Eric Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: the Evolution of American Television* (New York: Oxford University Press), 213.

desperate search for a husband ends up in a hospital bed suffering from hysteria and the humiliation of a stained reputation.²¹²

The film received mixed reviews, but it thrust to the forefront discussions about the realities of college life versus the fallacies portrayed by the movie industry. Critics disagreed about the film's success as a comedy, or whether to take the subject matter seriously. Some worried about its open treatment of sex, and others moaned at its attempts to capture the youthful slang of the times. The *Fort Lauderdale News* found *Where the Boys Are* to be a "fine, fresh comedy . . . with a real healthy look at our adults of the near future."²¹³ *Time* magazine described it as the kind of picture "every intelligent moviegoer will loathe himself for liking – a corny, phony, raucous outburst of fraternity humor, sorority sex talk and house-mother homilies" depicting "one of the more frantic phenomena of the affluent society: the annual Spring-Ding or Florida Flip of the book-bashed, sun-starved North American undergraduate."²¹⁴ Christian-based *America* warned that "moral indignation over the film runs a grave risk of being misdirected," and "the real villain of the piece . . . is the contemporary dating system, which exposes young people to temptations that demand unusual strength of character."²¹⁵ Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* found the film to be "a little bit shocking and sad" because the "sex-hipped behavior it demonstrates is dished up as though it were the funniest and most natural sort of thing for college kids." Crowther added that "it looks and sounds like a chummy dramatization of the Kinsey report."²¹⁶ The *New Yorker* called it a "deplorable

²¹² *Where the Boys Are* DVD.

²¹³ Dick Hoekstra, "Where the Boys Are' Displays Fine, Fresh Comedy," *Fort Lauderdale News*, 22 December 1960.

²¹⁴ "New Comedies: Where the Boys Are," *Time*, 20 January 1961.

²¹⁵ "Where the Boys Are," *America*, 4 February 1961.

²¹⁶ "Screen: Collegiate Chase," *New York Times*, 20 January 1960.

tale” where “the Good Girl wins a senior from Brown University who possesses an I.Q. of 140 and a fifty-thousand-dollar yacht, while the Naughty Girl gets run over by a car.”²¹⁷ Even so, no one could deny the popularity of *Where the Boys Are*. A box-office hit, the movie was the highest grossing low-budget feature of the early 1960s.

The box-office success of *Where the Boys Are* cemented Fort Lauderdale’s claim as the definitive spring break destination, strengthening the city’s own sense of identity as a place for vacationing collegians. *Where the Boys Are* was Fort Lauderdale’s first world premier, staged at the Gateway Theater on December 21, 1960. The glitz and fanfare surrounding the opening turned the city’s wariness to excitement. The film seemed to legitimize the past troubles of spring break. Stars of the film, Paula Prentiss, Jim Hutton, and Maggie Pierce, arrived in Fort Lauderdale, and Chill Wills donned a police uniform from the movie for the event. A parade carried the actors and actresses, the writer and producer, and “local dignitaries” to the theatre, where comedian Woody Woodbury led the ceremonies. Following the screening of the film, there were festivities at Pier 66, where Zsa Zsa Gabor made an appearance to support fellow Hungarian and producer of the film, Joe Pasternak.²¹⁸ Caught up in the excitement, three young students from Kent State University were photographed braving the cool waters of December to bask on Fort Lauderdale’s now famous beach. “We came here to enjoy ourselves, and we’re going to, weather or no,” the collegians insisted, demonstrating the eagerness and sheer determination of the hordes of students that would arrive four months later.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ “Where the Boys Are,” *New Yorker*, 28 June 1961.

²¹⁸ “Here Are ‘The Boys,’” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 21 December 1960; “‘Boys’ Premiere on Stage Tonight,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 21 December 1960; “Zsay, Who Waz Zsat Lady at Ze Pier 66 Laszt Night,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 22 December 1960.

²¹⁹ “Where the Boys, Girls Are,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 23 December 1960.

In all 50,000 college students came to Fort Lauderdale in the spring of 1961, hungry for the excitement of a *Where the Boys Are*-kind of spring break. The city, its own population only 83,000, was overwhelmed. When the first wave of students arrived in late March, a grim anticipation awaited them, the glamour surrounding the filming of *Where the Boys Are* having worn off. The celebrities and cameras had all left and the city braced itself for the aftermath of the film. In the first week, police arrested dozens of college students, and even a few high school students, for public intoxication and disorderly conduct, and jailed a nineteen-year-old Fenn College student for careless driving after he struck and killed a young sailor from Montreal.²²⁰ Vandalism and theft were also popular. In the first week alone, students were blamed for setting fire to a Seminole thatched hut in a municipal park, hurling rocks through a plate glass window, uprooting a palm tree and throwing it into a resort pool, stealing bathing suits off of clothes lines, and taking a wallet from a sleeping sunbather.²²¹ Police tended to fault local high school students for initiating troublesome behavior. As one officer explained, “We wouldn’t have half the trouble with these college kids if the high school youngsters would stay clear of the beach area. The high school young ‘uns are the lads who seem to start everything.”²²² Unconvinced, a few local residents retaliated against the college

²²⁰ “School Students Fined by Court,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 23 March 1961; “Students Have Frolic Binge, Worry Police,” *Fort Lauderdale News Sunday Sentinel*, 26 March 1961; “Student Trial Up,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 24 March 1961.

²²¹ “Students Blamed in Vandalism,” *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 23 March 1961.

²²² “Students Have Frolic Binge, Worry Police.”

students – clipping articles about the arrests and court trials, and then sending the articles back to hometown newspapers and the students’ colleges and universities.²²³

Having heard the rumors, seen the film, or read the book, students were anxious to experience an authentic Fort Lauderdale spring break. Numbering approximately 15,000 at the beginning of the spring vacation season, they had specific expectations. The *Fort Lauderdale News* sent a reporter to the beach to get the students’ perspectives. In one interview, two juniors from the University of Missouri admitted that they were there to escape girlfriends who wore their pins, and find some action at a “big beer blast” on the beach. A pair of women basking on the beach, who had arrived penniless, discussed their plans to scam their dinners by dating liberally and “mooching” off of their schoolmates. And two University of Pittsburgh men who claimed that they were well aware of the meal swindles still delighted in what they found to be a favorable female to male ratio.²²⁴ High school students joined in the fun. Local teenage girls flocked to the beaches in search of college men.²²⁵ A high school student from nearby Dania stopped traffic when he led a limbo contest into the middle of busy thoroughfare Atlantic Boulevard, and was immediately arrested for attempting to incite a riot. And another student faked a drowning in the Intercoastal Waterway.²²⁶ By the end of the first week, Police Chief J. Lester Holt was warning all non-college tourists to stay away. The beaches were too crowded.²²⁷

As the crowds grew, so did the tension between the police and students. Late on Palm Sunday, a reported 15,000 college and high school students faced-off with police at

²²³ “Collegians’ ‘Antics’ Sent Home,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 23 March 1961.

²²⁴ “‘Invasion’ Task Force Small in South Broward,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 24 March 1961.

²²⁵ “Students Off to Beaches,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 27 March 1961.

²²⁶ “Students Have Frolic Binge, Worry Police,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 26 March 1961.

²²⁷ “Lauderdale Wonders if It’s Worth It,” *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 26 March 1961.

a popular spring break spot at the corner of Atlantic Boulevard, which separated a long row of taverns from the beach, and Las Olas Boulevard.²²⁸ New policies restricting the students' access to two beaches sparked the disturbance. For years, with Fort Lauderdale Beach lit and patrolled by police in the evenings, students had made the trek from Fort Lauderdale north to Jade Beach or south to Dania Beach for late night rendezvous and drinking parties. In 1961, with crowds nearly doubling from the previous year, Jade Beach, which was private property in an unincorporated area of Broward County, was closed off entirely; Dania Beach, a section leased to the city, was closed at night. The beaches had always been loosely monitored, but residents' complaints and car accidents convinced police to step up their enforcement. Some felt that this left the students with no place to go at night.²²⁹

The *Fort Lauderdale News* reported, "The entire city police department was ordered to the beach shortly after 10 p.m. when a prankster lying in the middle of Atlantic Blvd. off E. Las Olas blocked traffic and touched the fuse that turned fun-loving students into a rioting mob."²³⁰ One student called it a "kind of sit down demonstration to get the beaches open."²³¹ After a large group followed the prankster's lead and rushed onto Atlantic Boulevard to lie down in the street, the police moved in to arrest them, prompting other students to throw beer cans, bottles, and firecrackers, while chanting, "Give us the sand – give us the city – give us the beach." Two reporters described the

²²⁸ Other papers reported that 3,500 students had participated in the riots. At the time, the police estimated that 15,000 students were in town at the time, and all of them rioted that Sunday. "15,000 Riot at Beach," *Fort Lauderdale News*, 27 March 1961; "Police Put Down Riot by Lauderdale Students," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, 27 March 1961.

²²⁹ "Beach Closings Stir Hassle: Student Mob Riots at Fort Lauderdale," *Tampa Times*, 27 March 1961; "Police Put Down Riot by Lauderdale Students;" "2000 Students Run Wild in Ohio Protesting Curfew, Other Curbs," *Washington Post*, 28 March 1961; "All We Want is Jade Beach," *Miami Herald*, 28 March 1961.

²³⁰ "Fire Hoses Halt Fight," *Fort Lauderdale News*, 27 March 1961.

²³¹ "Beach Closing Stir Hassle: Student Mob Riots at Fort Lauderdale," *Tampa Times*, 27 March 1961.

scene as “bedlam personified,” adding “We had to duck flying beer cans and a couple of bottles as we grabbed pictures of boisterous students. We could pick out the coeds that were here without their parents’ consent. They’d duck every time we’d point the camera in their directions.” Students climbed atop parked cars and “edged their way up the side of buildings along Atlantic Blvd. to get better vantage points.”²³²

Eventually, a full-scale brawl broke out, resulting in several injuries and nearly fifty arrests. Students reportedly “surged through police lines, heckling officers and continuing to pepper them with empty beer containers.”²³³ All shops and bars along the beach were closed down, and access to the beach was barricaded. Police called for assistance from the surrounding communities of Dania, Pompano Beach, Plantation, and Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, assembling a force of 150. Twenty-four Florida Highway Patrolmen and thirty-five deputy sheriffs also arrived to help control the crowd. Thousands of students, including a few locals, threw missiles and insults. Four policemen were injured by flying cans and bottles, and another officer, Patrolman H.S. Mays, was struck in the stomach by a Michigan high school student while ushering a collegian into the paddy wagon. Mays lost his prisoner, but he caught his assailant, Robert Alt, eighteen, of East Grand Rapids High School, who was arrested and held for assault and battery on a police officer. Bail was set at \$500. Alt was also one of six students injured during the riot, suffering a head wound from a bottle. Two students, Jim Dickie, a football player from Indiana State Teachers College, and Mickey Lamonica, a pre-law student from the University of Miami, tried to calm the crowd. Dickie grabbed a police microphone, climbed atop a paddy wagon, and pleaded with the rioting students to leave

²³² “And Beer Cans Fly: ‘Give Us Sand . . . City,’” *Fort Lauderdale News and Sun Sentinel*, 27 March 1961.

²³³ “Police Put Down Riot by Lauderdale Students.”

the scene. Lamonica ducked into a police cruiser and used a loudspeaker to convey the same message. Although one student threw a beer can at Dickie and shouts of “traitor . . . traitor . . . traitor . . .” could be heard over the din of the crowd, the two students did their best to disperse the crowds.²³⁴ But after nearly two hours of fighting, it took firemen from both Fort Lauderdale and Dania and over two hundred gallons of water to finally quell the riot.²³⁵

By three a.m., Fort Lauderdale was peaceful again, with little trace of the earlier battle except for the “bloodstains on the streets and sidewalks, damaged automobiles, and the thousands of bottles and cans strewn about.”²³⁶ Forty-eight were arrested, forty-six of whom were jailed, mostly for disorderly conduct. Among them was one woman, Jackie Wiley, eighteen, from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who attended the University of Miami. After cursing a policeman, she was charged with “using profanity.” Twenty-seven of those arrested were college students, seven were in high school, and fourteen were non-students. One sixteen-year-old high school student from Ohio was arrested when he was spotted “perched on a ‘Don’t Walk’ sign hurling beer cans.”²³⁷ But the arrests did not represent all the troublemakers. According to one officer, a thousand could have ended up in jail. “There wouldn’t have been enough jails in South Florida to hold them all,” he declared. The six wounded students, whose injuries ranged from lip lacerations to bloody noses, were taken to Broward General Hospital or Lauderdale Beach Hospital.²³⁸

²³⁴ “College Pair Seek to Calm Fort Lauderdale Rioters,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 27 March 1961; “Beach Closings Stir Hassle.”

²³⁵ “15,000 Riot at Beach,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 27 March 1961; “Police Win Booze Brawl,” *Fort Lauderdale News and Sun Sentinel*, 27 March 1961; Pat Mangan, Collegians Get Curfew, Guard Threat, *Miami Herald*, 28 March 1961.

²³⁶ “Police Win Booze Brawl.”

²³⁷ “Collegians Get Curfew.”

²³⁸ “15,000 Riot at Beach.”

On Monday morning, police and city leaders attempted to assess the previous day's violence. In a press conference called by the mayor, Chief Les Holt denied that a riot had taken place. "It was an unruly crowd that created a tense situation for a few minutes," he explained, but he believed that police had kept control of the crowd.²³⁹ However, he again asked local residents to stay away from the beach, and took the opportunity to refute rumors that the police had used tear gas. Nevertheless, the mayor issued a warning that any further trouble would force him to ask the governor to call the National Guard. He added that he planned to ask the City Commission to consider a curfew for the college students and the closing of all the beach bars for the duration of spring break.²⁴⁰ Later at a meeting with the Commission, Chief Holt insisted that "It would be over before the National Guard could get here," adding that the "best way to treat [the students], is with a smile."²⁴¹ Privately, patrolmen told reporters that a curfew would be unenforceable.²⁴² Sheriff Alan B. Michell, an ex-Army colonel, deflected all pleas to open Jade Beach by insisting that he was sworn to enforce the "No Trespassing" and "No Parking" signs placed along the beach. Perhaps police in Fort Lauderdale should open their own lighted beach to the students for their drinking and sexual escapades, he suggested.²⁴³

The *Miami Herald* sent reporters to Fort Lauderdale to get the students' reactions to the riot. Danny Larusso of Newark State Teacher's College claimed, "It wasn't a riot. Nobody was emotionally distressed . . . But I'm not interested in having another to see if we could develop one." Drake University freshman Dinah Yoder agreed: "It was just a

²³⁹ "Collegians Get Curfew."

²⁴⁰ "15,000 Riot at Beach."

²⁴¹ Duane Jones and Pat Mangan, "'Unruly' Students Subdued," *Miami Herald*, 28 March 1961.

²⁴² "Collegians Get Curfew."

²⁴³ "15,000 Riot at Beach."

big mob of kids hopping around to see what was going to happen next.” Yale sophomore Allen Cone applauded the restraint of the Fort Lauderdale police, while Bradley University senior Frank Rico claimed that the trouble began when police started “resisting.” Another student insisted, “I’ve been here before and I’ve never seen such a big bunch of phonies as are here this year. Fellows trying to pawn themselves off as college kids. These are the guys who make and stir up a lot of the trouble. That movie had a lot to do with bringing in the phonies. And not just fellows – a lot of girls too.” One Illinois collegian found the same problem, “The difference this year is that we have Miami and Fort Lauderdale under-age or over-age jerks joining in. They don’t fit.” Joe de Angelo, from St. Johns University in Queens, New York, said, “Such a mob of new ones came in over the weekend that the sidewalks were jammed and they started milling in the streets. Then some started yelling about opening up Jade Beach and taking off the restrictions . . . That’s when it started.”²⁴⁴

Some students complained that poor city planning, combined with the closing of the beaches, was at the center of the controversy. A Bradley University junior from Hawaii commented that the city should provide entertainment. He added, “In Hawaii we have specially assigned hotels for the college kids, with canteens and planned entertainment. There’s never any trouble.” The group of Bradley men agreed that there would be more demonstrations if the beaches remained closed, one maintained that “You just can’t pack 40,000 on a sidewalk.” Pam Moore, a native of Fort Lauderdale and a sophomore at Connecticut College for Women, said, “I definitely think that Jade Beach should be opened for the collegians. The kids came down here to use the beaches and

²⁴⁴ “Beach Crashers Help ‘Dilute’ College Spirit,” *Miami Herald*, 28 March 1961; Helen Ferguson, “College Yell: All We Want Is Jade Beach Open Again,” *Miami Herald*, 28 March 1961; Karl Wickstrom, “Mob Power Throbs at Billy Club Point,” *Miami Herald*, 29 March 1961.

now there's nothing to do." David Sellig, a junior at the University of Illinois, asked, "What do they expect us to do?" We drove 30 hours straight, 1,500 miles, and we didn't come here to sit in the hotel room and play bridge.²⁴⁵ To complicate the issue, more students were arriving, along with sightseers from neighboring towns and cities.

Throughout the day, as crowds packed the beach and traffic jammed Atlantic Boulevard, tension was building. Despite pleas and warnings from the mayor and police department, local residents were drawn to the electricity of the previous night's violence.²⁴⁶ By nightfall, groups of students had gathered at the corner of Atlantic and Las Olas, along the beach, and in front of Elbo Room, a popular college-age bar. Desperate for peace, Mayor Johns went to the beach and asked the students to "behave like ladies and gentlemen – just as [the students] do at home and at school."²⁴⁷ Police formed a barrier along the streets, keeping people on the sidewalks and demanding that they keep moving. Karl Wickstrom of the *Miami Herald* reeled as "a policeman rammed a long brown billyclub into my stomach and put me in reverse gear. It wasn't hard enough to hurt. I stumbled backward with 400 others in a 10-person deep line of Bermuda shorts with legs in them."²⁴⁸ When police hauled off their first arrests to a satellite station set up in the Forum Club on Atlantic Boulevard, the crowd catcalled and booed, throwing bottles, cans, and firecrackers. Hot-headed officers began to handle the students roughly, and the crowd rushed forward, breaking through the police lines.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ "College Yell: All We Want Is Jade Beach Open Again."

²⁴⁶ "15,000 Riot at Beach."

²⁴⁷ Jones and Mangan, "'Unruly' Students Subdued."

²⁴⁸ Wickstrom

²⁴⁹ "200 Arrested in Riots and More to Come . . .," *Fort Lauderdale News*, 28 March 1961; Jan McFetridge, "Swell Time by Students Spells Riot," *Fort Lauderdale News*, 28 March 1961.

The crowd seized control of the street, as spectators peered over balconies and sat on the hoods of parked cars along Atlantic Boulevard. The students chanted, “Give us Jade Beach” and “We want the National Guard.” Chief Holt again called for reinforcements from the Highway Patrol, Sheriff’s department, and neighboring police departments. Patrolmen closed all of the bars, sending more students into the street, and blocked all entrances to the beach, halting traffic.²⁵⁰ Twenty-two-year-old George Dalluge from Mankato State College in Minnesota climbed to the top of an arched traffic light overhang and proceeded to lead the group in the National Anthem, Minnesota college fight songs, and “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad.” The performance reignited the crowd. “No one knew what to expect next,” claimed one journalist on the scene, “Walking had ceased. Now the rage was to push or be pushed. Peeking through heads I saw at least two dozen kids being hauled off in the little green and white wagons which stood bright and shiny, waiting to serve their purpose.”²⁵¹ Cheering students threw dozens of cigarettes up to Dalluge until he finally caught one and ceremoniously lit it. Watching in disbelief from the balcony of the Forum Club, City Commissioner Edmund R. Burry muttered, “This is a disgrace.” And Mayor Johns, declared, “I can say only one thing, these students have no respect for law and order.”²⁵²

Dalluge hung from the traffic light for over an hour, egging on the crowd. He continued his acrobatics, while shouting along with the students, “We want the National Guard – bring on the fire trucks – push ‘em back, push ‘em back.” He explained to reporters below that he was on top of the light “because we have no other place to go.” When police demanded that he come down, he bargained for amnesty, “Promise to let me

²⁵⁰ “200 Arrested in Riots.”

²⁵¹ McFetridge, “Swell Time by Students Spells Riot.”

²⁵² “200 Arrested in Riots.”

go free and I'll come down." "We can't do that, boy," a policeman answered. Dalluge replied, "Well then I won't come down." Patrolmen finally used a Florida Power and Light truck to reach and arrest him. The crowds soon dispersed, and the police returned three threatening but unused "bright red tear gas bombs" to a patrol car. The final tally for Monday evening put the arrests at over two hundred with charges ranging from disorderly conduct to inciting a riot. Chief Holt estimated that ninety-eight percent of the arrests were college students, but the whole crowd was approximately forty percent local.²⁵³

The next day, the courts struggled to keep up with the mass arrests. Municipal Court Judge Raymond A. Doumar, who witnessed the riots along with other officials from the Forum Club balcony, held court in the city jail and began processing students at 7:30 a.m. Associated Judge Wynne Casteel Jr., convening the first simultaneous sessions of court sessions in the city's history, heard the students' cases in court chambers at police headquarters.²⁵⁴ An outraged Judge Doumar ordered increased bonds and jail sentences, and admonished students, "You are a disgrace to your schools. We tried it your way and now we are going to do it our way. You're going to jail if you're found guilty." Judge Casteel was no less stark, "Jail sentences may mean the end of college careers for some of you," he granted, "but we must have respect for law and order. You have only yourselves to blame."²⁵⁵ The two judges heard 141 cases, sentencing sixty-five students to jail terms of three to seventy days, and fining the rest. The acrobat, George

²⁵³ Wickstrom, "Mob Power Throbs at Billyclub Point;" Seymour Beubis, "Light Turns Red for College 'King,'" *Fort Lauderdale News*, 28 March 1961; Bill Tarleton and Ed Hensley, "City Tries for Peace on Beach," *Fort Lauderdale News*, 28 March 1961.

²⁵⁴ "200 Arrested in Riots;" "Arrests, Street Dance Help Quiet Students," *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 29 March 1961.

²⁵⁵ "200 Arrested in Riots."

Dalluge, received the longest sentence: seventy days – sixty for inciting a riot and ten for resisting arrest.²⁵⁶ Dalluge admitted that it was “stupid” to climb the traffic light, but he insisted, “I didn’t think I did anything wrong. I was trying to calm the kids down by getting them to sing. I got a thrill when they started off with “The Star-Spangled Banner.” He expressed concern about the effect the arrest would have on his education, and his mother who was still dealing with the recent death of his father. After years of working through school as a cab and truck driver, he worried about his future at Mankato State College where he was training to become a teacher. “I don’t know what I’ll do now,” he confessed, “I guess I can’t graduate. Maybe I’ll go in the service when I get out of here.”²⁵⁷

In a special session, the City Commission met with the mayor, police, and other officials to resolve the crisis and avoid another night of riots. As students continued to arrive, raising the number of spring breakers in the city to 30,000 and 40,000, Mayor Johns blamed Sheriff Michell’s strict policies on Jade Beach for the riots. Michell denied responsibility, insisting that the students had traveled to Fort Lauderdale not Jade Beach for their Easter vacations. Governor Farris Bryant sent a message, offering the services of the National Guard “if necessary” and expressing “grave concern” for the students’ behavior. Dr. C. E. Bininger, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, suggested a citizen’s committee to handle the students’ grievances. He said, “College students should be treated like convention delegates and not an invading horde.”²⁵⁸ Chief Holt rejected any aid from the National Guard and called for the closing of Fort Lauderdale’s beach at

²⁵⁶ “Arrests, Street Dance Help Quiet Students”; Beubis, “Light Turns Red for College ‘King.’”

²⁵⁷ Pat Mangan, “‘It Was a Stupid Thing,’ Says Student in Jail,” *Miami Herald*, 29 March 1961.

²⁵⁸ Ed Hensley, “Beach Peace Eyed,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 27 March 1961.

sundown, declaring, “Unless the beach is cleared someone will be hurt.”²⁵⁹ The commission denied this request, but Holt initiated a car check to keep college students from “mixing” with local high school students, and made plans to barricade the roads leading to the beach. Ultimately, the City Commission voted to host a street dance from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. in a five-block area along Atlantic Boulevard, several blocks from the troubled corner at Las Olas Boulevard. The commissioners hoped that music and dancing would diffuse the tensions between police and students, but insisted that any problems would be handled severely.²⁶⁰ Chief Holt forbade drinking at the dance, and added smugly, “We’ll see whether they want to dance or drink.”²⁶¹

On Tuesday night, police made a show of force on Atlantic Boulevard and on the beach, setting up roadblocks and barricades at all routes to the beach, and screening all cars. Officers and unpaid “auxiliary officers” lined the street, with one positioned every ten feet – effectively isolating the area. They ordered the students to keep moving and be quiet. Thousands walked up and down Atlantic, unsmiling and talking in hushed tones. No one was allowed to stop, even the cigar-chomping Sheriff Michell was told, “Come on, get moving – walk.” To an amazed reporter who witnessed the rebuff, Michell beamed, “That’s all right. They moved [Police Chief] Les Holt earlier. This is an old army trick – make ‘em walk it off.”²⁶² Others were less than thrilled. This is “Where the Cops Are,” said one student. Another from Yale, having just arrived in town that day, renamed Fort Lauderdale, “Budapest Revisited.” After checking out of his beachfront

²⁵⁹ “City Tries for Peace on Beach.”

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ George Lardner and Pat Mangan, “Lauderdale Jail Bulging; Police Arrest 100 More,” *Miami Herald*, 29 March 1961.

²⁶² Ed Hensley, “Hotelmen Howl Over Blockade in Beach Seige,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 29 March 1961; Karl Wickstrom, “Walk, Walk – Even the Sheriff Moved,” *Miami Herald*, 30 March 1961.

hotel, a New York man vowed never to return, exclaiming, “This is a police state if I ever saw one.”²⁶³ Over 5,000 people gathered at the corner of Las Olas and Atlantic, where intolerant police arrested students “for keeping their feet idle and their tongues busy.”²⁶⁴ By 11 p.m., over one hundred students were on their way to jail, mainly for disorderly conduct. Several blocks down, 2,000 students participated in the city’s planned entertainment. And on the beach, two hundred danced to the music of the Jesters, a rock ‘n roll band, from Miami. With police as chaperones, the city’s beach dance remained a tame affair with no drinking. Little trouble arose.²⁶⁵

The next day, some observers applauded Chief Holt’s heavy-handed tactics and sympathized with police officers struggling to keep students under control. The *Fort Lauderdale News* backed all police measures, editorializing, “this newspaper believes the law enforcement agencies in this area deserve the highest praise for the forbearance, tact and firmness they have displayed this week in dealing with the explosive situation at the beach. There can be no toleration of contempt for law and order in this community if we are to maintain the standards of morality and decency this city has always observed.”²⁶⁶ Others gave a more qualified endorsement of the police crackdown. For example, one student from Iona College in New York was “amazed at the policemen’s friendliness when not arresting one of us,” but added “You wouldn’t see that in New York. But I think the city better decide whether they want us or don’t want us.”²⁶⁷

Others felt that Holt had clearly gone too far. A few students complained that police road blocks kept them from crossing the Las Olas Bridge to attend the city’s beach

²⁶³ Lardner and Mangan, “Lauderdale Jail Bulging;” Wickstrom, “Walk, Walk.”

²⁶⁴ Lardner and Mangan, “Lauderdale Jail Bulging.”

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ “Order Must Prevail,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 29 March 1961.

²⁶⁷ Wickstrom, “Walk, Walk.”

dance. Others simply felt mistreated.²⁶⁸ “If Fort Lauderdale officials are trying to discourage us from coming here, they’re doing a good job,” one student declared.²⁶⁹ Venezuelan Consul-General Manuel Aristeguieta in Miami issued a formal protest against the arrests of two Venezuelan students. Sergio Torras, an exchange student at the University of Miami, said that a policeman arrested him when he asked how to get back to his car on a barricaded street. Sergio Birch of Ohio State claimed that he was “bruised by tight handcuffs, dragged by the hair from the entrance of the city jail to his cell, and called names once inside.”²⁷⁰ A thirty-five-year-old man from Westport, Connecticut, was arrested for inciting a riot while returning to his car after a golf game. And Deputy Sheriff Dan Heim, while out of uniform on Monday night, was “clubbed in the face with a nightstick” when he tried to assist officers in an arrest.²⁷¹ At the same time, local residents and business owners complained bitterly the roadblocks and barricades caused traffic jams. Upscale hotels and restaurants, in particular, suffered from lost revenues. One beach hotel reported fifty cancelled dinner reservations, and other hotels said that many customers simply did not show up. George Gill, an owner of a chain of beach hotels, felt that the barricades did more damage to his business than the students.²⁷² Marlin Beach Hotel’s Bill Powers claimed that “The blockade virtually put us out of business.”²⁷³ And Charles Knight, a former city commissioner and owner of the Lauderdale Beach Hotel, filed suit against the city for his loss of business.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ Lardner and Mangan, “Lauderdale Jail Bulging.”

²⁶⁹ Helen Ferguson, “Collegians Peace-Lovin’, Law-Abidin’ in Dayime,” *Miami Herald*, 29 March 1961.

²⁷⁰ George Lardner, “Did Police Crackdown Get Too Tough?” *Miami Herald*, 30 March 1961; George Lardner, “Venezuelan Consul Protests to Mayor,” *Miami Herald*, 30 March 1961.

²⁷¹ George Lardner, “Did Police Crackdown Get Too Tough?”

²⁷² Hensley, “Hotelmen Howl Over Blockade in Beach Siege.”

²⁷³ Patricia Brown, “College ‘Blockade’ Tough on Bistros,” *Miami Herald*, 2 April 1961.

²⁷⁴ Tarleton and Hensley, “City Tries for Peace on Beach.”

The most severe criticism came from the city jails, where there was unprecedented overcrowding. After three days of arrests, there were 255 student prisoners occupying a jail with 143 beds, prompting someone to hang a sign at the entrance that read “Where the Boys Are.”²⁷⁵ With some students sitting on cots without mattresses and others sprawled on the floor, Fort Lauderdale’s “Kangaroo Court” system drew widespread complaints. George Staacke, twenty-three, a senior at the University of Wisconsin claimed he was charged with unlawful assembly “because [police] told me I looked like I belonged in jail.” He continued, “But that was just the beginning. Court was even funnier. If you pleaded not guilty, they would set bond and a trial date in the middle of April. They know that most of the kids don’t have money for bond and that they all have to be back in school before mid-April. For that reason, most of the kids pleaded guilty . . . But I pleaded not guilty because I wasn’t doing anything wrong.” Another student, who preferred to remain nameless because he went to Marquette University, a conservative Catholic school, was arrested for public intoxication, but insisted that “They didn’t give me a drunkometer test or anything. How do they know I was drunk.” He pleaded guilty only to avoid added jail time. Len Janas, twenty-four, of Olmstead Falls, Oregon, a General Motors employee, said that he was detained and accused of unlawful assembly. “What in the world is illegal assembly, anyway?” he demanded before pleading guilty and receiving a ten-day sentence. When a reporter asked the jailed men if they would ever come back to Fort Lauderdale, they cried, “No! Never!”²⁷⁶

At another emergency meeting of the City Commission, commissioners and other officials ways to maintain the peace that would appease both the students and residents.

²⁷⁵ “Bars at Jail and Beach Vie for Elbow Benders,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 29 March 1961.

²⁷⁶ Seymour Beugis, “Collegians Blast Police,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 29 March 1961.

The Easter weekend, the peak of the season, was quickly approaching, and police predicted that a record 50,000 students would visit the city. The commission appointed Pastor C. E. Beninger, a vowed student advocate, as co-chairman of a Citizens Committee, delegated to organize student entertainment. With Florida's colleges and universities approaching their Easter breaks that weekend, the commissioners asked Governor Farris Bryant, who had already authorized Florida Highway troopers to assist local police, to appeal to University of Florida and Florida State University officials, asking them to discourage their students from visiting Fort Lauderdale. Bryant.²⁷⁷ Trying to mitigate the negative attention on the police but pacify disapproving citizens, Mayor Johns blamed the auxiliary force for any rough treatment the students had received, stating that the stand-in officers were unpaid, untrained, and "crude."²⁷⁸ City Commissioner Fred Ritzenheim agreed, calling the auxiliary patrolmen "very arrogant."²⁷⁹ Chamber of Commerce president Robert Gill told city commission officials that there was "no excuse for last night's mass arrest," adding, "You can't chase these students out of town by illegal means. Not one of out of 20 students arrested last night by police would be convicted in court if they were represented by legal counsel."²⁸⁰ By the end of the meeting, another street dance was planned, and commissioners had advised Chief Holt to provide a "positive program" to get entertainers through road blocks "without delay."²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Hensley, et al., "City to Sponsor Another Dance on Atlantic Blvd;" Hensley and Rockefeller, "Jailed Students Given Reprieve and Some Advice," *Fort Lauderdale News*, 30 March 1961.

²⁷⁹ Lardner, "Did Police Crackdown Get Too Tough?"

²⁸⁰ "Lauderdale Chief on Carpet," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, 29 March 1961.

²⁸¹ Ed Hensley, Al Rockefeller, and Bill Tarleton, "City to Sponsor Another Dance on Atlantic Boulevard," *Fort Lauderdale News*, 29 March 1961.

That night, students who headed for Jade Beach were harassed, while those who remained in Fort Lauderdale faced a more tolerant police force than they had encountered on previous nights. When two Jade Beach residents offered their property to students for parties, Sheriff Michell immediately intervened, demanding written authorization. He then declared that students would have to walk because no parking was allowed. On Wednesday, when carloads of students went looking for the “authorized” area of Jade Beach and others walked the seven miles, sheriff’s deputies met them with threats of arrest if they set foot on the private property not approved for their use. The deputies also refused to tell them where that approved area was. Along with twenty-six Florida Highway Patrol troopers assigned to the area, the deputies closely monitored the students until, fed up, the collegians left.²⁸² In Fort Lauderdale, by contrast, the police did not interfere with the students’ fun, allowing them to stop and talk and gather wherever they pleased. Bars resumed their business as usual, and several thousand students attended a second night of dancing hosted by the city. There were only five arrests, the first involved was a forty-year-old drunken merchant marine who had traveled to the city to “straighten out this mess.” Obviously pleased, Police Lt. Russ Franza commented that, “The way the students are tonight they can stay here for six months.”²⁸³

The change was apparent in the municipal court, as well. On Thursday morning, Judge Doumar addressed the students in the city jail mess hall, and in a surprise decision, released all of the seventy-eight remaining prisoners, except for George Dalluge. As the students cheered, Judge Doumar said he was willing to let “bygones be bygones,” admitting, “No issue has ever divided this city more than your visit here.” He explained

²⁸² “Owners ‘Open’ Jade Beach,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 28 March 1961; “They Came, They Saw, But Left Jade Beach,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 29 March 1961.

²⁸³ Hensley and Rockefeller, “Jailed Students Given Reprieve.”

that half of the city was in favor of the students coming to Fort Lauderdale and that half was not, but “I am one of the 50 percent group that want you here . . . It is not the desire of anyone to see you lose your graduation rights, but you must admit the behavior of some students left much to be desired. I, as a citizen, am as much to blame as your for a portion of this situation. We knew you were coming, but did not do anything to prepare for it. I will agree with you that perhaps many innocents were arrested, but there’s no doubt many of the guilty went free.” He concluded, “Now go out and get yourself at least one more day of Florida sunshine,” he told the relieved students.²⁸⁴ Tom Della Penna of Boston College spoke for many of the students when he told the judge, “It’s great to be out again.” His cousin, Louis Della Penna, a prep school student, agreed declaring, “I sure would like to see a little bit of the town . . . I got in at 5 pm Monday and was arrested at 9:30 pm.” Some, of course, were less forgiving. Charles Walker from Rutgers University declared, “I’m going to start running and keep on until I get home. I’ve had it as far as Fort Lauderdale is concerned.”²⁸⁵

In the aftermath of the riots and the arrests, letters to the *Fort Lauderdale News* expressed the views of the some of the students and city’s residents. The paper claimed that only once before had the paper been “deluged with letters about a news event,” indicating a “deep public concern.”²⁸⁶ Many letters urged city leaders to give the students the same attention that they would other large groups of tourists. Warren Hogan of Pompano Beach wrote, “The student demonstrations of late are not the most refined in the world, but I haven’t seen evidence that they are any worse than a lively American

²⁸⁴ Ed Hensley and Al Rockefeller, “Jailed Students Given Reprieve and Some Advice,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 30 March 1961.

²⁸⁵ Seymour Beubis, “Bearded Students Chastened,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 30 March 1961.

²⁸⁶ “Public Eyes the Students,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 30 March 1961.

Legion or Shrine convention. The major difference being that for [a] convention, we would plan ahead.”²⁸⁷ Another letter read, “Regarding all this fuss and ‘riots’ by students here: GIVE THEM THE BEACHES AT NIGHT . . . Now that the beaches are forbidden where else here can they go? I’d ‘rebel,’ too.”²⁸⁸ A student wrote in to ask, “Why don’t the people of this town stop dragging the ivy leaguers and the Joe Colleges and treat them just as they would any other tourist. If the public would co-operate, I’m sure this tourist, with the bongos and trench coats, and bermudas and sweatshirts, would co-operate also.”²⁸⁹ Several other students placed blame solely with the city, one wrote, “I hope city officials are feeling at fault for the riots – they lacked foresight. I hope their ridiculous disciplinary measures will embarrass the police force and the local courts – they lack foresight. We will give Ft. Lauderdale a chance to redeem itself next Spring, for we shall return. Will you be ready for us?”²⁹⁰

Some of the letters took issue with the students’ behavior. Maxine Zimmerman scolded students for their irresponsibility, “You are making Mr. Khrushchev very happy these days. This is exactly where he wants the mind of our leaders of tomorrow – fighting for all night drinking and necking parties on the beach, instead of fighting for the right to live in America and keep it free.”²⁹¹ And Mrs. James Devitt asked, “Isn’t it about time we told them that we don’t want them here? I’ve heard of Africa for Africans and Asia for Asians, how about Ft. Lauderdale for the people of Ft. Lauderdale?”²⁹² Larry Murray, a winter visitor to the city, worried about the bad publicity: “I read with disgust the trouble

²⁸⁷ Warren J. Hogan, “We’d Prepare for the Legion Why Not for the ‘Boys,’” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 30 March 1961.

²⁸⁸ “‘Give Them the Beaches’; Rebellion Understandable,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 30 March 1961.

²⁸⁹ “Readers Rap Collegians, City,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 30 March 1961.

²⁹⁰ “Old-Fashioned Horse Sense Needed,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 3 April 1961.

²⁹¹ Maxine Zimmerman, “Tomorrow’s Hope Is Today’s Shame,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 30 March 1961.

²⁹² “Nothing Holy,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 30 March 1961.

you had with hoodlums from the colleges and universities up North. It seems a pity that the good business people in Ft. Lauderdale would permit such a condition, just for the sake of a few taverns and hamburger joints.”²⁹³

As the scrutiny went on among students, residents, and eventually, the national media, the city scrambled to placate the college crowds during the rest of their stay. One resident asked, “How much did it cost us in time, effort, and perhaps cash to get the film, ‘Where the Boys Are’ shot in Fort Lauderdale? Are we to throw this great promotional effort to the winds?” The answer from city leaders was a resounding “No.” Ultimately, Fort Lauderdale feared losing the students to Daytona Beach, whose city leaders’ were publicly planning to make a bid for spring break the following year. And despite complaints from local hotel owners, no one wanted to forgo the approximately one million dollars the students spent in Fort Lauderdale each year.²⁹⁴ City commissioners agreed to invite the students back for the spring break ’62. As Commissioner Ernest Orr Jr. put it, “I, for one, hope they haven’t been discouraged by the lack of planning for their visit this season, and I have every reason to believe that with the cooperation of the commission we can work out a program to make them want to come back to Ft. Lauderdale.” City publicity director Forrest Crane added, “I’ve been for the students all along, and from my talk with college leaders, I’m certain they’ll be back in even greater numbers next year.” In the same spirit, Pastor Bininger, co-chairman of the newly-formed Citizens Committee, was already busy soliciting local residents willing to host Easter dinners for the visiting college students.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Larry Murray, “City is Receiving Bad Name in North,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 3 April 1961.

²⁹⁴ “City Studying Suggestion to Lure College Students,” *Daytona Beach Evening News*, 29 March 1961.

²⁹⁵ “Broward Welcome Mat Put Out for Students,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 1 April 1961.

By the time a record crowds of 50,000 arrived for the Easter weekend, the fear of renewed violence had subsided. Incoming student visitors were shocked by the relative peace on the beaches. One student, Maurice Bosstick of Indiana State University, admitted, "All we heard were the bad things. It's very nice here." Indeed, the only moment of concern came when a bomb threat was called into the Elbo Room.²⁹⁶ While a few students circulated petitions to change the next year's venue for spring break, most seemed content with filling the beaches and the bars of Fort Lauderdale.²⁹⁷ On Easter night, a strong sign of normalcy returned to the city with the resumption of an annual spring break tradition. "They finally did it," said a desk sergeant at the police station. "They threw a six-foot hammerhead shark in the swimming pool at the Trade Winds Hotel. But we caught the guy this time. It really shook him. When he saw us, he fell into the pool, too." The student, Victor Galline from the University of Wisconsin, apologized and dragged the shark out of the pool.²⁹⁸ The next day, Judge Doumar released George Dalluge, after receiving a letter from an official at Mankato State. Just seven days earlier, Doumar had sentenced Dalluge to seventy days in prison.²⁹⁹ His release was a testament to how badly the city wanted to make amends with both students and residents who disapproved of the city's rough treatment of the young visitors.

The media continued to speculate on the cause of the riots, blaming boredom and lack of women on the beach. But Mayor Johns felt that the students needed a spiritual lesson. To cap off the season, he invited evangelist Billy Graham to a beachside revival. A world-renowned revivalist, Graham was no stranger to Florida. As a child he had

²⁹⁶ Pat Mangan, "Collegians Find Beach 'Peaceful,'" *Miami Herald*, 2 April 1961.

²⁹⁷ "Beach Hums Happily and Officers Smile," *Miami Herald*, 31 March 1961.

²⁹⁸ "Finally, Shark Put in Pool," *Miami Herald*, 3 April 1961.

²⁹⁹ Bill Bishoff, "Pole Climber Goes Home After 7 Days," *Fort Lauderdale News*, 3 April 1961.

suffered from attacks of influenza and was sent to Florida by doctors hoping that the warm climate would improve his health. In the 1930s, Graham attended the Florida Bible Institute in Tampa where he graduated in 1936. As assistant pastor of the Tampa Gospel Tabernacle, his duties included working with people living in trailer parks and visited prisoners in the Tampa jail.³⁰⁰ He was later ordained as an evangelist in 1939 at the Peniel Baptist Church near Palatka, Florida. Soon after, Graham left Florida, but returned often to preach at conventions and revivals. In spring 1961, he spent four months living with his family in Vero Beach, traveling to various events around Florida. In late March, he preached at a week-long crusade in Miami Beach, where Mayor Johns asked Graham to address the thousands of students currently in Fort Lauderdale.³⁰¹ Graham told the mayor that he had heard about the riots, and “I’ve been praying for your people every day.”³⁰²

With the date set for Tuesday, April 4, the city quickly prepared for the event. Officials allowed Graham to advertise with sound trucks that announced the upcoming sermon. And high school students were dismissed from school to attend.³⁰³ On Tuesday, just one week after the second riot, Graham spoke and Anita Bryant sang to 10,000 students and local residents from the back of a flatbed truck. Calling the collegians “rebels without a cause,” Graham began by saying, “I’m not going to preach to you. The older generation forgets sometimes that they were young people once, too.”³⁰⁴ When he asked, “What do you believe in?” Someone answered, “Sex!” Graham responded quickly, “Sex? Yes, that’s important, too. Without it we wouldn’t be here today.” He concluded

³⁰⁰ Lois Fern, “Billy Graham in Florida,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 60 (October 1981): 174.

³⁰¹ Fern, 184.

³⁰² Charlene Scott, “Graham Will Address Lauderdale Students,” *Miami Herald*, 3 April 1961.

³⁰³ Fern, 184.

³⁰⁴ Seymour Beubis, “Graham Conquers,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 4 April 1961.

by saying, "Give yourselves to Christ and it will have been worth coming to Fort Lauderdale to meet him. Light your candle here and the world could be lit up like a giant torch."³⁰⁵ Reactions to the sermon were mixed. A few students in the Elbo Room could be heard singing, "He's a jolly good fellow." One student said, "He's not for us. I was interested to hear his style. He's a tremendous speaker . . . But I don't think he made any lasting impression here." Another took some hope away from the speech, saying, "Maybe it's like Mr. Graham said. Maybe a match can be lit here."³⁰⁶ Though the students shouted throughout the sermon, only one young man publicly protested the appearance by walking into police headquarters and demanding that Graham be arrested for inciting a riot. "He's got all traffic to the beach blocked and is causing crowds to gather."

The following weekend marked the official end of the spring break season. An audible sigh of relief must have been heard from the city of Fort Lauderdale as it said goodbye to the last of the students and closed the satellite police station at the beach. Officials estimated that 50,000 students had spent nearly \$2.5 million in the city, but the price tag to the city came to over \$80,000 in overtime for police and events planned for the students. Some policemen had worked as many as 229 hours in three weeks with 16- and 20-hour days.³⁰⁷ The city's relationship with the college students was now a contentious one. They had failed in trying to shape their own image for the students. Instead, due to a lack of preparation and a refusal to take the students seriously, *Where the Boys Are* continued to garner a separate identity for Fort Lauderdale, while the city scrambled to plan events and policies for 1962. No matter how hard it would try to shake

³⁰⁵ "John Underwood, "Amid Sand and Hint of Sin, Billy Makes Plea for Christ," *Miami Herald*, 5 April 1961.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ Al Rockefeller, "Our College 'Invasion' Is Officially Over," *Fort Lauderdale News*, 9 April 1961; Pat Mangan, "City Totes Bill For Collegians' Visit - - \$80,000," *Miami Herald*, 4 April 1961.

the spring break image, Fort Lauderdale would always be “where the boys are.” Though the student invasion did not stop in 1961, an important milestone was passed that year. Young people had demanded to be heard. Their message was muddled, but a momentum was evident. Earlier that year, a youthful president had taken office, rousing the silent generation, and later that year, the young Freedom Riders would risk their lives for racial equality. The same week that the students rioted in Fort Lauderdale, 2,000 collegians at Bowling Green State University in Ohio made national headlines during three-day protest challenging school policies – including a ban on kissing girls goodnight, holding hands on campus, and drinking on and off campus.³⁰⁸ While the 50,000 spring breakers may have merely been inspired by a film that spoke to them about “college life,” and lured by a tradition of Florida sun and sand during Easter break, young people also tested their collective might in Fort Lauderdale that year.

³⁰⁸ “Ohio Students Air Their Woes,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 4 April 1961; “Boycott Planned by Ohio Pupils,” *Fort Lauderdale News*, 28 March 1961.

Conclusion: Fort Lauderdale vs. Daytona Beach

Although the violence and mass arrests of spring break '61 were a jolt to Fort Lauderdale, city officials eventually saw past the angry, young faces to the consumers of tomorrow. With 50,000 students arriving within a three-week period, an industry was developing. Indeed, spring break has become a billion-dollar industry and a rite of passage for college students. As American consumer culture paid increasing attention to young people, the Florida spring break attracted impressive crowds, through marketing campaigns and corporate sponsorship. By 1984, 400,000 collegians came to Fort Lauderdale for their spring vacations. The preferred cities of destination have since changed—from Fort Lauderdale to Daytona Beach, and from Panama City to Key West—but Florida's spring break tradition endures, with cities and corporations competing for the attentions of college students across the country.

Before the 1961 season ended, Daytona Beach was vying for the students, attracted a considerable number, but with mixed results. The Associated Press interviewed a few students about their experience in Fort Lauderdale, who intimated that Fort Lauderdale's reign was over and they would try Daytona Beach the next year. While city leaders refused to commit themselves, the gears were in motion for a spring break takeover. For several years, one enterprising motel owner had carefully cultivated a small spring break crowd from several southern colleges. He blamed Fort Lauderdale officials for the riots, insisting, "They never should have ordered the kids around the way they did. You don't order college kids around. It's like waving a red flag." With a liberal

policy of drinking on the beach and a reputation as “the World’s Greatest Beach,” Daytona Beach lured hundreds of spring breakers that year, and many curious sightseers who had read the press clippings.³⁰⁹ However, trouble accompanied the newcomers. Fifty arrests for disorderly conduct soon followed along with a bizarre charge of “abandoning a civilized approach to society” when two students from Orlando were caught dancing “using very suggestive motions” that were only appropriate for “private parties.”³¹⁰

Despite a stumbling start, the next year, Daytona Beach officially made a bid for spring break, supported by a modest marketing budget and a few enthusiastic local business owners. All winter the city officials and local business owners plotted. The owner of the Safari Motel drove thousands of miles to colleges “from Goucher to Sweetbriar, from Duke to Auburn” convincing students to come to Daytona Beach for spring break. He promised everything from free beer and food, to reimbursements of gas for students that stayed at his motel. City Commission Stanley Nass hired popular jazz musicians to play for collegians and organized groups of local fraternity men to greet the crowds. At the beginning of the 1962 spring break season, one businessman rented a boat in Fort Lauderdale and released thousands of ping-pong balls imprinted with an invitation to Daytona Beach. That year, 20,000 students came to Daytona, and Fort Lauderdale experienced its first lull in spring break traffic in nearly a decade.³¹¹

Initially Fort Lauderdale bristled at the affront of losing spring break, but they never really lost the students. Beginning in 1962, Daytona Beach and Fort Lauderdale managed a peaceful coexistence, sharing the burden of spring break. By the mid-1960s,

³⁰⁹ “Cool Cops Calm Collegiate Cats,” *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 2 April 1961.

³¹⁰ “Frisky Beach Set May Go to Jail,” *Daytona Beach Evening News*, 3 April 1961.

³¹¹ “Date in Daytona,” *New York Times*, 4 March 1962; quote in “Youth Takes Over in Daytona Beach,” *New York Times*, 26 March 1961; Lucy Izon, “350,000 Students Ready to Descend on Daytona Beach,” *Toronto Star*, 20 February 1988.

Daytona Beach's spring break crowds generally surpassed those of Fort Lauderdale, but the latter maintained a steady student invasion of 30,000 to 40,000. Daytona was experiencing the same problems that Fort Lauderdale had, but on an increasingly larger scale. Despite the protests of some and an increasing student arrests, many of Daytona's civic and business leaders ignored the probable logistical crises and subsequent political fallout of becoming Florida's new spring break destination. Instead, Daytona preferred to focus on the potential economic benefits and the national attention.

After another riot in 1964, Fort Lauderdale began to make a conscious effort to distance itself from the hordes of raucous collegians that had increased the city's annual revenues by millions but simultaneously spoiled the quiet beach community's social balance and sense of identity. With new residents, stricter police regulations, and higher hotel rates, Fort Lauderdale instead nurtured its image as an upscale resort and a family-friendly community. During the 1966 spring break, 30,000 students were expected in Fort Lauderdale, a significant decrease from 1961's 50,000 spring breakers. One police patrolmen commented, "Let's face it, the collegiate invasion is dwindling each year. What the college kid wants – the blanket, the beer and banjo – this area isn't built for."³¹² That same year, nearly 100,000 students traveled to Daytona Beach. Fort Lauderdale's tryst with collegians was still far from over, but Daytona had taken the lead as the state's spring break destination. Soon other coastal Florida cities would follow suit, attracting spring break crowds in order to broaden their tourist base and gain notoriety. When the crowds became too unruly and a more reliable tourist base took over, the city quietly

³¹² Bernard Weinraub, "Collegians Pack a Florida Town," *New York Times*, 8 April 1966.

bowed out and allowed another hungry town to court the students. A vibrant city with a thriving tourist industry, Fort Lauderdale had presented a pattern for success.³¹³

³¹³ “543 Students Arrested at Daytona Beach,” *New York Times*, 18 April 1965; C. E. Wright, “Easter Invasion: Daytona Beach Girds for Student Influx,” *New York Times*, 15 March 1964; Martin Tolchin, “A Quiet Moment in Daytona Beach,” *New York Times*, 28 March 1964; “Florida Beach Resorts Gird for Student Binges,” *New York Times*, 14 March 1967.

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