

A PIECE OF LaROCQUE

by Tom
LaRocque

The old folks ought to fight back

The annual crush of college students on their spring break has begun in Florida, and a lot of the year-round residents there don't like it. Sure, it's an economic boon if you happen to own a bar or a hotel. But to those whose livelihoods don't depend on tourist traffic, the sudden appearance of several hundred thousand Budweiser T-shirts is no more welcome than monsoon season.

I never made it to Florida when I was in college. Many of my fellow students did, however. Usually their excuse was the need to relax, forget about studying, recover from the pressure of mid-term exams, and so on. Usually they returned red-eyed, sunburned, dazed by alcohol or drugs, and exhausted by marathon road trips. Which produced a need to relax, forget, recover, and so on.

It's no wonder some of the locals are upset, with what goes on down there. Certain contests, for instance. I'll spare you the baser details, except to say that some of the winners have wound up pictured in men's magazines. Others, less fortunate, have wound up in the de-tox wards of hospitals.

It is interesting that collegians have singled out Floridians as their victims. Florida is populated mainly by what kind of people? That's right,

old people — retirees, who moved to the sunny south for peace and quiet, not drunken debauchery. Now, during spring's rites, they leave town, or they board up their condominiums and wait it out.

I sympathize with them, but I think they're handling the situation in the wrong way. Submitting to the annual Crazy Convention only proliferates its tradition. To quote consumer advocate David Horowitz, what they ought to do is "fight back."

I'm not suggesting guns, barricades on the beaches, or geriatric goon squads. They'd be outnumbered, and outmaneuvered by their invaders' youth and general lack of concern with self-preservation. It would be like bow hunters sniping at kamikaze pilots. A more subtle approach is in order.

Suppose a couple of dozen University of Wisconsin Badgers arrived on the beach to find an equal number of grandmas and grandpas. The older crowd would be playing shuffleboard with wild, reckless abandon and blasting Tommy Dorsey music on their portable stereos. They'd be obnoxious and loud, and ignore the newcomers except to say things like, "Hey, junior, want a martini?" Then they'd all laugh uproariously.

Chances are the young badgerers would move on to

another beach. Then, suppose they came upon a group of oldsters talking shamelessly about surgery they've had, or doctors they've heard of. They'd complain about how Medicare isn't what it used to be. They'd try to draw the collegians into the conversation with questions like, "Did you know the average health insurance deductible — that's the part you pay yourself — has gone up six times in the last seven years?" Then they'd all laugh uproariously.

Finally, the college kids would confront a group of aged merrymakers planning the sort of contest which interests men's magazines. Except that all the contestants would be around 80. Young men would be asked to serve as judges. And as they turned to leave, old women would make a point of playfully slapping their rumps.

With enough of this kind of focused abuse, it seems that Florida residents would gradually regain control of their beaches. Or at least drastically change the demographics of their visitors. As for the kids, they'd find other things to do in the spring. Like skiing. Or studying.