



**T**hey're blaming it on Sonny Bono in Palm Springs, Calif., where college students on spring break once took over every March, turning the generally tranquil city into a playground.

Bono, former Palm Springs mayor, led a series of crackdowns on students who came to wreak havoc on city. Now families, attracted by festivals, line the streets and fill the swimming pools, once crammed with college students.

"There was no control at that time," says Julie Baumer, director of marketing and tourism for Palm Springs. "It was out of hand."

So out of hand that motel managers like Robert Shults, who operates the Motel 6 in Palm Springs, says the students weren't worth the trouble.

"We're not trying to discourage spring break, but we have an extraordinary set of rules while they stay with us," Shults says. Students must wear wristbands at Motel 6 at all times. The hotel enforces curfews, and students are forced to sign a blank credit card voucher as a safety deposit.

And Palm Springs is not alone.

Jeffrey Lutz, a junior at Duke U., spent spring break last year in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Security at the Red Tree Inn there was tight, he says.

"One night our mixer got nailed by one of the policemen," Lutz says. "When we stepped over the line, they were right there to put us back in our place."

And it is these rules that cities and business owners in prime locations like Palm Springs, Daytona and Fort Lauderdale know may spell the demise of spring break in their cities and on their beaches.

College students, who come to escape the structure of their universities, are not coming to play by the rules. "You can't fool around in Daytona Beach," says Melvin Cresto, a senior at the U. of Connecticut.

And tourism officials know once word gets out that students aren't free to party in pandemonium on spring break, they will go elsewhere. Patrick Kondianis, a sales director for Student Travel Services, which markets spring break vacations, says students are migrating in Florida from Fort Lauderdale and Daytona Beach to Panama City, where they feel less restricted.

"Panama City allows the kids to drink on the beach and that's a big concern for most spring-breaky type students," he says. "The attitude is more accommodating to the students."

In the late '80s, Daytona Beach attracted close to 500,000 students on spring break. In 1992, that number was down to 300,000.

"I won't go there again," says Nikki Noe, a junior at the U. of Wisconsin. Noe spent spring break two years ago in Daytona. "If you are going to spend that much money, you're going to want to have fun and not worry about getting busted for this and that."

But Daytona Police Officer Al Tolley says before the city start-



Palm Springs Sgt. Bill Herrick gives spring breaker Fahad Sollman a ticket for jaywalking.

## Cold Spots

*Prime break locations losing their appeal*

By Jeremy Kohler, *The Daily Campus*, U. of Connecticut

ed cracking down on students, spring break was just out of control. "There was very little coordination of the events that took place," Tolley says.

Now spring breaks in Daytona are orchestrated carefully by the city's Chamber of Commerce. And police control is tight.

"Even in the hotels, they had security walking around," Noe says. "You couldn't have alcohol by the pool and there were locks on the screen doors — you couldn't go out on the balconies at all."

And that makes places like Daytona and Fort Lauderdale less attractive to college students, who head to new spots — Panama City and South Padre Island.

"I think we're seeing a big shift toward Panama City," says Roger Harnack, a student at Embry Riddle Aeronautical U. in Daytona. "It took several years for it to shift here from Fort Lauderdale, but more and more are going to Panama City."

And that's fine with C. Dean Hofmeister, president of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau. "The word is out on campuses across the country — spring break in Greater Fort Lauderdale is a thing of the

past, something for the history books," he says.

Paul Kaklis, a sophomore at Louisiana State U., says he got the message. "They were really, really cracking down a lot as far as open containers and imposing fines," says Kaklis, who spent spring break last year in Fort Lauderdale. "It has changed dramatically."

During the six weeks of spring break in 1985, 350,000 students descended on Fort Lauderdale. For the past three years, less than 15,000 have come during the same period.

"[Fort Lauderdale] didn't want the craziness associated with spring break," says Kondianis, who's worked with the travel service for seven years.

But then cities like Fort Lauderdale don't get the tourism or the money students spend while on break there.

And for most spring break destinations, that's the bottom line.

"We didn't have a lot of trouble," says Carol Fotner, director of sales and marketing for Holiday Inn in Daytona Beach. "But we really didn't have a lot of business."

**"We have an extraordinary set of rules while they stay with us."**

## Spring break 'bargains' give students more than they bargained for

*Hurry! It's your last chance to register for a spring break trip to the sun-drenched beaches of Rio de Janeiro for the low, low price of \$99.*

And you'll be flying down in a cargo plane full of what you are told is baking powder, living in a shed because you thought *cobertizo* was an elegant word for hotel-on-the-beach-with-poolside-bar and wondering when the travel representative will come by to give you details on that fabulous party he promised.

Don't hold your breath.

Each year college students scramble to create the perfect self-indulgent break for the fewest pennies possible. And every year some students pay a slick salesperson for a deal, only to find themselves living in squalor, with no one to complain to for a week.

Kim Richards, a senior at Virginia Tech, knows that situation well. Arriving in Cancun, Mexico, her group found it was not staying at a hotel anything like what the students had been promised.

"It was a scary scene... the hotel was ratty, just creepy," she says. It was located away from the resort area, a 15-minute taxi ride to the beach, not the short walk the travel company had guaranteed, she says. Richards and her friends eventually paid extra money to move to a better hotel, but she says it was a hassle.

And hassles are the last thing on the minds of college students who flock to spring break hot spots. But if they do no more than tear down one of those fluorescent fliers that vows to shuttle them to spring break heaven and back again, they may be sleeping in the gutter.

Kirk Riley, vice president of marketing for Student Express Vacations in Denver, says his company provides planned packages for college break trips. Although there are companies that try to pull one over on students, Riley says he tries to do the best for the students. Students who simply go with the cheapest deal, he says, often end up paying more overall on things like cab fares and other inconveniences.

Richards discovered the woes of going with the cheapest deal during her spring break fiasco. "[The ad] was one of those things that makes it sound like it is \$500 for everything," she says. "It ended up being \$800 to \$1,000."

Every year students like Richards get an education in travel scams — sometimes in the form of a fake representative running off with student deposits, but more frequently in a company that erroneously has offered one package that mysteriously falls through or gets altered at the last minute.

Two sophomores at Lehigh U. were victims of a scam that left their group waiting at 3 a.m. outside a hotel in Mexico for more than an hour. Jan Schillay and Michelle Schulman blame their travel company for the inconvenience.

"They lied to us," Schillay says. "The second we got there we all had a feeling we were being screwed."

Any package deal that sounds too good to be true probably is, and to avoid scams students should investigate.

Obtaining a copy of the travel contract and reading the fine print is an easy way to avoid any scam, Riley says. And in the game of getting students to fork over big bucks for spring break journeys — anything goes. Organizations will do anything to attract students, says Harold Van, president of Campus Marketing, Inc. "There's always someone trying to get an edge," he says.

Riley suggests avoid dealing in cash and never make a check out to an individual. He said he once had a representative from the U. of Illinois make off with deposits from more than 300 undergraduates.

"We thought he was going to be a good rep," Riley says. "We never saw him again."

By Brett McPeak, *The Brown and White*, Lehigh U.