

## And now a word from our sponsor

Ah, spring break. That annual period of rebirth so long considered a sacred ritual — a chance to relocate drinking, partying and neglecting classes on our campuses to drinking, partying and neglecting classes in warmer climates. The simplest of pleasures.



But in case you haven't noticed, this beloved respite from the collegiate grind has been tainted. It has gone the way of Christmas, the Fourth of July and the Super Bowl, becoming unmercifully, shamelessly commercial.

You can't just escape and do your own thing anymore. Most of what you went to escape from is right there waiting for you: overzealous sales pitches, endless pandering, corporate pressure.

For example, the hotel I stayed at in Clearwater, Fla., a couple years back showcased beer-sponsored swimming contests for vacationing students (the majority of whom, last I heard, were underage). Now, I've got nothing against sipping a brew in the shallow end of a nicely heated, kidney-shaped swimming pool. But it used to be we students had to find ways to drink on our own, all the while hiding from hotel folks intent on avoiding damaged property. No more. Goodbye, fastidious, bash-busting hotel managers and the thrill of the chase. Hello, "Chug A Beer, Swim a Lap" night.

It's worse than buying pumpkins in July or marshmallow Easter eggs in December. Nowadays, MTV hits the airwaves with a series of spring break-related bacchanals in early February and winds things down sometime around Labor Day. For weeks on end, perky VJs put off their inevitable futures as Time-Life records salespeople, stalking Florida beaches for vacationing students to interview. You know, just your typical college kids — guys who've wandered in from the set of the Soloflex commercial and women showcasing the latest in dental floss apparel. You see them on campus all the time.

If it wasn't spring break, it would be another occasion or holiday. If there's money to be made, it'll be sponsored. ("Coming up next on MTV — It's the annual Arbor Day Wet Shrub Wearing Contest!")

But I do not blame big business for trying to squeeze Generation Xers out of Mom and Dad's dough. (It's certainly not our own money. We wandering souls of X can't even afford our own name, let alone reasonably priced \$9 Fort Lauderdale shot glasses.)

All this commercialization upset me initially, but then I said to myself, "Hey, there's free beer, ubiquitous bikinis, debauchery aplenty. I can get into this. Heck, I like volleyball as much as the next guy."

Why complain? So corporate America is infatuated with our attention and our patronage. Fine. Let them come. Wine us, dine us. We'll eat their food, drink their beer and saunter around in our wet T-Shirts.

It's either exploit or be exploited, so go on and horde freebies while you can, or one of these years you'll graduate and wish you had.

See you at the MTV Arbor Day compound. ■ **Connell Barrett, The Insider, Bowling Green State U.**

# You Deserve a Break Today:

## Just don't make it your leg

Life is short. Vacation hard. At least this is what a growing number of college students have taken to heart. And to the slopes, air and mountains.

For them, the ideal vacation goes above and beyond just spending a week under the sun (or under the influence).

Whether you call them daredevils, thrill seekers or extreme athletes, one thing is certain: They won't be calling you.

# SPRING BREAK '94

Instead, they'll be miles away, racing down a mountain, navigating under a giant sail or swimming 50 feet under the sea, exploring the ocean floor.

This spring break, Brian Smith, a junior at Cornell U., will rent a sailboat out of Coconut Grove, Fla., and sail to Paradise Island — solo. "There is such a sense of freedom being out alone on the open ocean," he says. "It's so liberating. There's nothing for miles. That's my idea of spring break — getting away from all the busy hustle of school."

For Mike Gueriera, a senior at the U. of Colorado, Denver, the ideal spring break is a little dif-

ferent. Like Smith, he gets the hell out of Dodge, but he prefers being above sea level. Gueriera often spends his breaks extreme skiing, last year at Crested Butte, Colo.

"That's the most hard-core skiing I had done, ever. I hiked past the lift for 20 minutes, to about 11,000 feet, sidestepping up a hill. It's usually very tight, flanked by rocks and trees. It's tight jumping turns that you have to do or get hurt."

The best part? "The combination of incredible speed and knowing that you have to make these turns that you've picked out for yourself," he says.

For Elissa Randall, a senior at the U. of North Carolina, spring break is often spent climbing up a mountain instead of coming down. Randall, an avid hiker and soccer player, flew to New Mexico for break two years ago to climb at Cochiti Mesa.

"It's a challenge to be on a sheer wall," Randall says. "First,

just to stay there, and then to go up the face, even if you don't top out the climb. I'd rather be outside in nature and not with hordes of people, doing something athletic instead of just sitting around."

Randall says her only beef with the sport is the difficulty of taking photographs while trying to climb. And the results aren't so good either. "When you get your [photos] back all you have are these huge butt shots."

And then there's the rush of being airborne — of falling 10,000 feet to your spring break destination, as students from Syracuse U. and Cornell U. do through Finger Lakes Skydiving in New York.

Why would students opt for a parachute and goggles over swim trunks or a bikini? "You're seeing skydiving more and more, in movies and on television... and more and more people say, 'Jeez, I'd really like to try that sometime,'" says John King, who owns and operates Finger Lakes Skydiving. And for some — believe it or not — it's a way to fulfill a graduation requirement.

"A few years back, a group of students were one phys. ed. credit short of graduating, and so they showed up here, took a jump and had me fill out some forms." The students made the jump successfully, and got their diplomas.

Of course, skydiving isn't foolproof. "There is always a possibility of severe injury and death with skydiving," King says, "but that's part of the attraction."

But you don't have to jump out of an airplane to fear for your safety. The beauty of an extreme sports break is found in the many ways you can endanger yourself. Like, say, heading south of the border to catch some waves.

Mike Phares, surf club president at Pepperdine U., recalls some unexpectedly hairy spring break moments in Baja, Mexico. "We've gotten caught by federales for sleeping on the beach, and we had to pay them off," Phares says. "We had one guy go over the falls on the waves and we thought he cracked his head open."

Of course, you can always look death and dismemberment in the face right in the good ole U.S. of A., fighting approximately one zillion of your spring break colleagues for free giveaways in Daytona.

But keep in mind the words of Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*: "The world is an oyster. But don't crack it open on a mattress." Or a beach blanket. **U**

MARK WYTHOM/ COLLEGIATE TIMES, VIRGINIA TECH

POLL

In a recent survey of 464 readers, 63% say they believe spring break has become too commercialized. What do you think? Call

(800) 6 U-VIEWS ext. 63

By Brian Salsberg, *The Cornell Daily Sun*, Cornell U.