

# Miami Beach, The All-Too-American City

By ROBERT SHERRILL

MIAMI BEACH.

**M**ANY of the 30,000 delegates, wives, newsmen and political hangers-on gathering in Miami Beach for the first Republican national convention to be held south of the Mason-Dixon Line in more than 100 years will think they have landed in a very queer place by Utah or Nebraska standards. But before their five-day stay is over they will doubtless feel at home; underneath its grotesqueries Miami Beach is—as one promotional outfit designated it a couple of years ago—an “all-American city.” It has all the attributes of the rest of the country, only here they have grown all-Americanly rank.

Wealthy, superoptimistic, pushy, sparkling Miami Beach has in less than one lifetime grown from a dense mangrove swamp inhabited by snakes and rats into one of the great resort and convention centers of the world. With 70,000 hotel rooms and apartment units, it has a greater concentration of such accommodations per acre than any other strip of previously worthless real estate. The community is deep into the normal second stage of United States frontierdom—plundering what it has salvaged.

Without shame or pretense, Miami Beach worships two gods—the sun and the fast buck—and there is every evidence that its prayers are usually answered: the skin of long-time residents invariably resembles baked plastic, and the city's skyline, respond-

ing to \$600-million a year in tourist income, is filling with new hotels and high-rise apartments, so much so that the ocean, which is supposed to be the big selling item, is seldom visible except from a hotel room.

The Miami Beach Convention Bureau, adept at making dramas of such affairs, takes the position that the Republican national convention is the most monumental event ever to occur in South Florida, and it has been drowning reporters in statistics to prove its contention—6,500 new telephones to service the hall, 230,000 miles of wire to connect the hall with the major hotels, 4,300 feet of catwalks in the three-story-high convention room, which has a seating capacity of 18,000. (One statistic the bureau does not stress is the new 2 per cent “resort tax”; it will be collected from conventioneers to pay for publicity designed to attract other conventioneers.) One has the feeling that Miami Beach romances all conventions this way. It had more than 800 of them last year, and big crushes are nothing new. The Southern Baptist Convention attracted about 20,000 in 1967, and in October the American Dental Association will arrive with 15,000 members. A couple of years ago, the American Legion had enough merrymakers on hand to parade for 14 hours.

As for the Republican convention, it will put no strain on the Beach; a newly expanded convention hall (equipped with an 1,800-ton air-conditioning unit that, some feel, may

not only cool the delegates but also deafen them) could handle the G.O.P. and Democratic conventions at the same time, and there is enough hotel space to house both parties' delegates simultaneously. Behind its excited press releases, the convention bureau is, if not jaded, very cool indeed, knowing right down to the penny what to expect from the average conventioneer—\$35.42 a day.

For a contribution of less than \$1-million to the G.O.P., Miami Beach won the convention, from which it expects to reap well over \$5-million, plus the publicity (an audience of 180 million is predicted for the first convention broadcast on color TV). Under these conditions Miami Beach, normally bored by all things political, is quite willing to break out the bunting.

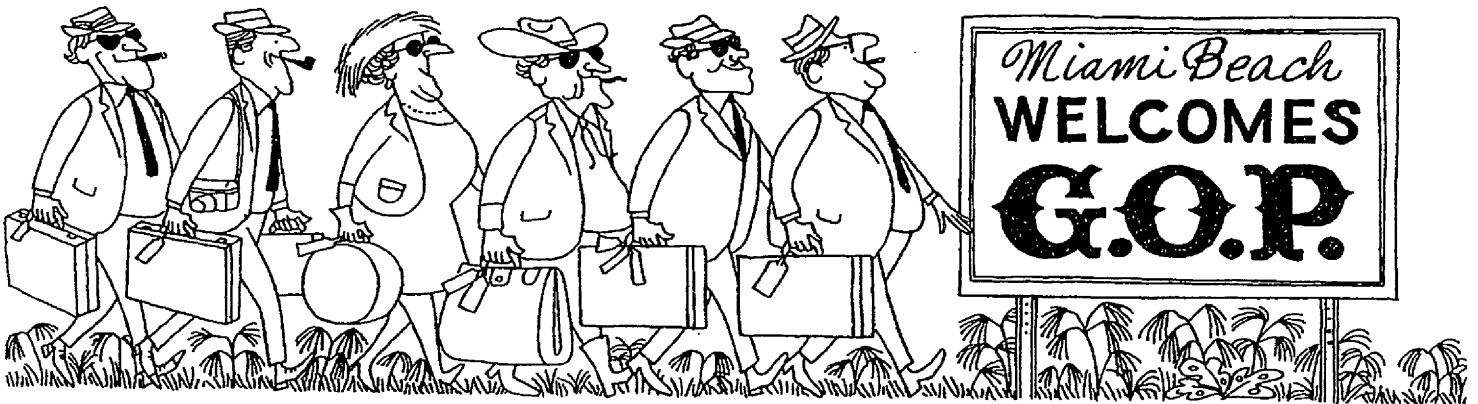
**T**HE spirit that turned a mudhole into Greater Miami (the conglomerate name for Miami Beach, Miami, Hialeah, Coral Gables and 23 other assorted municipalities) still swells the hearts of such men as Alexander S. Gordon, a Metropolitan Dade County commissioner who lives in Miami Beach but practices law in Miami and sees little but perfection in either place.

Just about every year a hurricane rips through South Florida. Excellent, says Gordon. “We ought to make hurricanes a tourist attraction. We ought to advertise: ‘Come experience the thrill of hurricanes. Come to our hurricane party. Sit in the

lobby of our hotels and let hurricane-force winds tousle your hair.’” The area's crime rate is always among the highest in the nation. Yes, says Gordon, a former F.B.I. man, that's true: “We have a fairly highly organized thing of bookmaking, bolita [a numbers game] and prostitution in Dade County—plus some abortion . . . but I think we have the highest-class hookers and prostitutes in the country.” As for the Miami Beach hotel prices, Gordon, who once was executive vice president of the Miami Beach Hotel Association, has a happy thought on that, too: “If you took the ordinary summer room-rate in Miami Beach it would still be less than for a broken-down room at the Waldorf Astoria.”

The leaders of Miami and Miami Beach long ago learned not to eat crow, but to pluck it and peddle it at high prices. Optimism is epidemic, and good fortune is measured in many ways (increased garbage tonnage is sometimes written up by the local press as a happy sign that the tourist season is on the boom).

**M**IAMI is the youngest major city in the United States; it is so young that it is largely made up of first-generation residents still subconsciously dragging along memories of old hometowns, which probably accounts for part of the political apathy. In Miami Beach, which is even more acutely apathetic for the same reasons, a good turnout for an election would be 25 per cent of the population—and most of these would be old



HI THERE, G.O.P.—The 30,000 delegates, alternates, wives, journalists and political hangers-on gathering in the sun may at first be perplexed . . .

## The Republicans are expected to produce over \$5-million — plus the publicity

folks whose interest in politics is limited to an effort to get free bus rides and more recreation halls.

Dade County has a form of metropolitan government that is supposed to homogenize Greater Miami's municipalities and mishmash of unincorporated areas, but it hasn't. There are still 27 mayors, 27 city councils, 27 police departments and, at last count, 24 fire departments (several that were little more than bucket brigades gave up). Until about two years ago there was such jealousy that the "Metro" government and the cities were hardly on speaking terms. Since then, a shaky cooperation has developed; Metro runs the airport authority, the port authority and other big county business and handles an assortment of dirty work that includes the maintenance of speed limits and street lighting. But the city governments still reign over such delicate—and sometimes profitable—matters as zoning. And a highly controversial movement to unify all fire and police departments may lead to a new schism in city-county relations.

**I**F there is little enthusiasm for political unity, neither is there much loyalty to the parts. It is said that half of the people on the City of Miami's payroll live outside the city to escape its taxes. The proportion of Miami Beach employes who live elsewhere—driven out by high prices and the lack of family accommodations—would be even greater.

Because they are the two major parts of the metropolitan area, one might expect Miami and Miami Beach to be closely allied. Quite the contrary. The causeways that connect the two across Biscayne Bay do so only physically; otherwise, most Miamians look upon the row of glistening hotels across the water as being no more a material part of their lives than a line of cumulus clouds on the horizon.

Many leaders of Miami, in fact, are embarrassed by the tinsel tourism of Miami Beach; and as the mainland city steps up its effort to create the image of a serious industrial center, it also attempts to tone down its part of the tourist come-on. A few weeks ago Otho Bruce, senior vice president of the First National Bank of Miami, the largest bank in the Southeast, said: "I'm amazed to find businessmen in high position who think Miami is just a tourist center." (He might be less amazed if he looked back on some of the advertisements put out by his city. A random selection of ads placed by Miami in *The New York Times* in other years produced such material as this, published on Jan. 3, 1960: "Yes, Miami is orange juice, coconuts, stuffed alligators, flamingos, palms and mangoes. It's everyone's dream come true—and it's yours for the taking!")

Bruce's is a rather ungrateful attitude since tourism is for Miami, as for Miami Beach, by far the most important industry, and a great deal

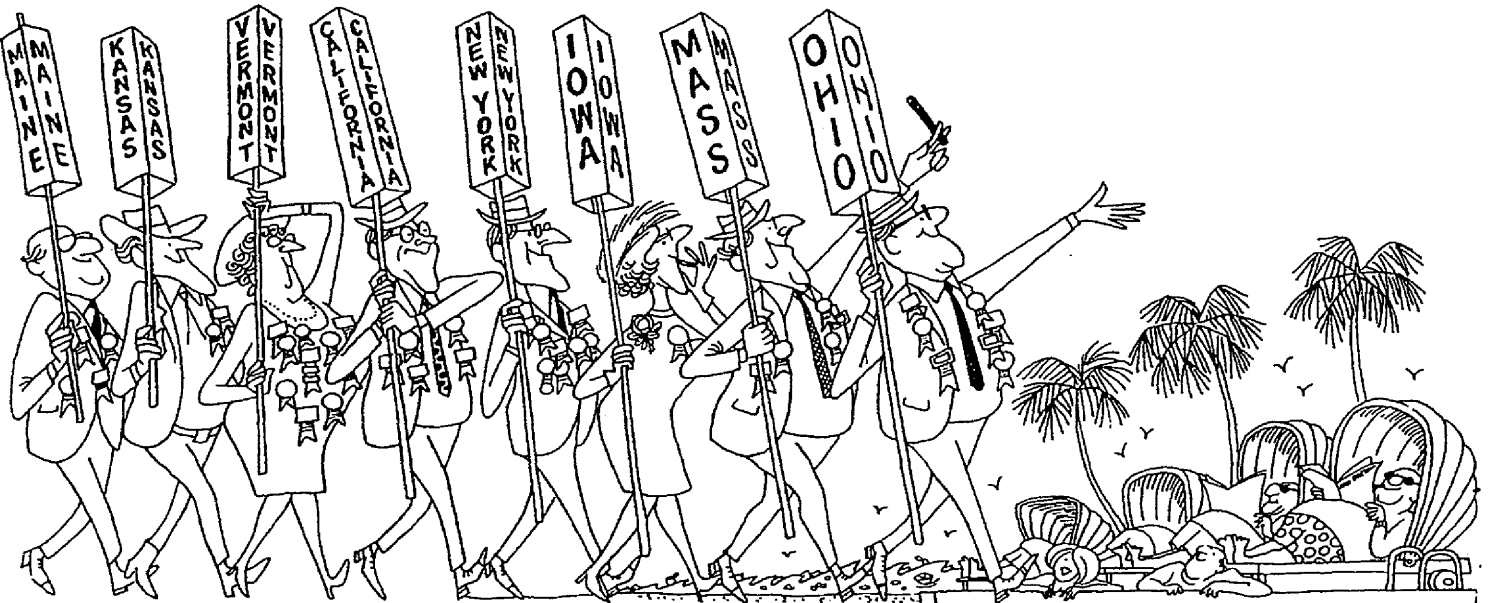
of the second most important industry, aviation, is dependent upon the first. Miami's sensitivity about being classed as a tourist spa may account for part of its inability to get things done. When Miami Beach got the Republican nod, it raised the money and was building a \$4-million addition to its auditorium within a month. Miami, by comparison, has been trying for 20 years to raise the funds and get community support to build Interama, an international fair for which 680 acres of mangrove swamp have been cleared and filled.

**M**IAMI BEACH was conceived as a playground for the wealthy white gentile (dogs, Jews and Negroes were seldom welcome in the earliest days), and its main appeal was exclusiveness guaranteed by exorbitant prices. Most of the exclusiveness is long gone, but the prices are still up there. The Chamber of Commerce implored hotel owners not to gouge during the Republican convention, fearing that those who came would leave vowing never to return, as many Democrats did after prices hit hijack levels at their convention in Atlantic City in 1964.

In Miami Beach gouging is a relative matter; some hotels say they are charging usual summer rates, some refuse to discuss the matter. But \$40 and \$50 a day seem to be common rates, according to reporters who have booked reservations, although a recent Chamber of Commerce news

release states: "The extreme high for midwinter is about \$50 a day, double, for a hotel room. . . . From this peak, rates drop in summer to a maximum of \$20 a day or thereabouts for the finest rooms." The Americana, headquarters for most of the New York delegation, refuses to tell its negotiated rate for the penthouse (complete with an outdoor drinking space that will handle 300 people) where the Astors are expected to do some entertaining on behalf of Governor Rockefeller; Rockefeller has a comparatively low-priced \$120-a-day suite (living room, dining room, two bedrooms, three baths and balcony) in the same hotel.

Nixon has a penthouse (two bedrooms, living room, dressing room, dining room, kitchen and—of course—ocean view) at the Hilton Plaza that would cost the average voter \$175 a day in the summer and \$250 in the winter. In the interest of security, the top three floors of the hotel are sealed off. Hilton Plaza officials aren't saying what Nixon paid for the penthouse and three floors of security, but Stu Blumberg, assistant to the hotel's president, implied that—because 215 Nixon backers had also rented rooms there—the former Vice President got a cut rate. Ronald Reagan is living a bit more sedately at the Deauville, making do with a two-level penthouse (living room, two bedrooms, 3½ baths and a bit of kitchen). Nobody will tell what the California Governor is pay-



... but once they drop their bags, grab their badges and see the sights, they'll discover a city that exhibits all the salient characteristics of home—

ing, but for you or Harold Stassen it would be \$175 a day.

In any event, as with many popular resort areas, there is no certain relationship between prices and services in Miami Beach, where the manners of the help fall notoriously short of "Continental" and where poshness seems to be laid on rather than built up.

A sign saying, "Thank you, Frank Sinatra, for filming 'Tony Rome' at Fontainebleau" stands surrounded by glossy pictures from the film adjacent to an elaborate mural in the hotel lobby depicting a hunting scene "au temps de François Ier." Two excellent pieces of imported antique marble statuary stand close to the entrance of a "messieurs" room which, in terms of ambiance and aroma, one might expect to find in a Pittsburgh bus terminal.

**I**NSIDE and out, Miami Beach is a town full of contrasting juxtapositions. Next to the South Beach surfing area, where the average age is probably 17, is a pier on which square dances are held; you can't participate unless you are over 65. The South Beach area used to be almost solid Social Security, but in recent months, because it is the only portion of Miami Beach where rents are low, it has become the habitat of a few hippies and Cubans, with the result that some rest-home residents now have their declining years enlivened

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only more so. Some have called it the plushest, goudiest rehabilitated mudhole in the entire Western Hemisphere.

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by the sweet smell of pot from a pad next door.

Flanking the new public library and the Bass Art Museum (in which hangs a framed resolution declaring Miami Beach to be "one of the outstanding cultural resorts in the United States") are two burlesque houses, at one of which Cindy Embers and 15 other exotic dancers do their thing; at the other the main attraction is Dixie Mason, "Miss Southern Hospitality." There is no pivotal culture here, nor even a culture with definable boundaries. It is a town in which one can gain immediate fame of a sort by being married underwater in one of the big hotels' swimming pools; it is a town in which the swankiest hotel considers it the ultimate in exclusiveness not to hang out a sign displaying its name (the assistant manager explains proudly: "That makes people ask").

**I**F there is one physical characteristic that ties the Beach together, it is a hardening artery. Since the average age is around 60, one might expect to find the community deferring to geriatrics and reverencing death. It doesn't. Not long ago a merchant suggested that the city put spikes on the fountains on Lincoln Mall to keep the old folks from sitting on them and cluttering up the scenery. The idea was turned down, but the oldsters themselves seem to have the same disregard for the prerogatives of creaking mortality. At a 25-cents-a-dance house recently, one of the dancers keeled over, and the band—out of respect—stopped playing. Most of the dancers were old people living on low incomes, and they almost rioted when they thought something as ordinary as death might cheat them out of their quarters' worth; the band quickly struck up again.

Brought in to fill the bald spots created when the mangrove jungle was cleared, the palm trees that represent Miami Beach on so many postcards aren't native growth, but neither are most of the people, including Mayor Jay Dermer, who, appropriately, lived the first half of his life in New York. At least 80 per cent of Miami Beach's citizenry is Jewish (it is reputed to be the only town in the nation that hires a kosher meat inspector, and the ambulances stopped using their electronic sirens when some citizens complained that the pulsing "wow-wow-wow" reminded them of Nazi SS wagons). They mightily resent the anti-Jewish tone of Bal Harbour, up the coast, and such clubs as La Gorce and Riviera, yet Miami Beach residents have played the ethnic game in reverse. When Elliott Roosevelt, who served one term as Mayor, tried for re-election, he was defeated; some of his opponents put it around that

President Roosevelt had not helped the German Jews before World War II as he should have.

ONE newspaper editor described the Miami Beach government as operating on the theory that "with wheeling and dealing you can get what you want. I wouldn't call it corrupt because I can't prove it. But I do know that councilmen spend \$50,000 to win offices that pay about \$7,000. Nobody has ever been able to prove somebody has been paid off, although I have heard it all my life. For instance, every high-rise apartment is supposed to have parking space for a car and a half. Again and again the zoning board permits a high-rise to go up with insufficient spaces. Driving down Collins Avenue, you might as well be in Philadelphia. You seldom can see the ocean. For all practical purposes there is no oceanfront for the public. People are complaining and criticizing, and yet the city government issues permits for high-rise after high-rise and that's it. Nobody has been able to prove anyone is paid off, but the suspicion is clearly there."

Mayor Dermer, a 38-year-old trial

**“Without shame or pretense,  
Miami Beach worships two gods—  
the sun and the fast buck—and  
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lawyer, agrees. He says he is "the first Mayor not controlled by the hotels," and his first act on taking office a year and a half ago was to introduce a motion to take the beaches back from the hotels. He charges that they are holding the land either through illegal squatting or through the cupidity of previous governments. "Air and water and beaches," he says, "belong to the people, and I intend to give them back. I don't think Miami Beach should surrender the last half of its name to a few hotel owners."

The United States Army Corps of Engineers came up with a plan in 1965 to build a new beach, a 200-foot-wide strip with a dune to cut down erosion by hurricane waves, but the City Council buried the idea under a sandpile of angry and fearful opposition, for the plan would have made the new beach public. Hotel owners warned that the beach would become "a Coney Island"; they talked in shocked tones of hot-dog stands and toilets on the beach and, worst of all, nonpaying swimmers.

The City Council vote against the plan (which has been approved by both Congressional public works committees) still stands at 5 to 2,

## ***Even hurricanes have silver linings in Miami Beach***

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but Mayor Dermer looks to next year, when he and "three of the councilmen tied to the hotel interests" will be up for re-election. "I intend to make this a major issue," he says. "Of course I am bucking a great deal of damned apathy, but I think the public can be made to understand what is happening to Miami Beach with all the terrible zoning laws and the lack of clean, honest government."

**T**RY as it will, the Miami area can't get into the nation's headlines for the reasons its civic leaders would like. When Fidel Castro took over Cuba there was a great outpouring of political refugees that nearly swamped Miami, and the phenomenon was duly reported in the national press. The solution of the problem, however, has been largely ignored. Of the 70,000 Cubans on relief in Greater Miami four years ago, only 15,000 remain on the rolls; the others have joined the area's life with great ingenuity, reviving downtown Miami with their own shops and becoming a welcome primary labor force for the garment, leather and furniture industries.

The Miami Chamber of Commerce regularly pumps out news releases telling of economic "firsts" (for five years Miami has led the nation in the number of new industrial plants), but the area's high crime rate keeps interfering, with the result that for most of the nation Miami is best known as the place where the Candy Mossler murder trial was held, or where the Star of India was recovered in a bus-station locker, or where super-bankrobber Georges Lemay escaped from the seventh floor of the escape-proof Dade County Jail, or where a judge recently ruled that insanity, not meanness, prompted Murph the Surf to lead a life of crime.

With probably the worst beach on the East Coast of Florida and with by all odds the worst summer climate, Miami Beach packs in the sun worshipers for one reason only—it was cultivated by some great ballyhoo artists. Steve Hanagan, later an adviser to F. D. R., put the place on the map with such gimmickry as the bathing beauty contest. But the Beach didn't really boom until after World War II. Most of its 376 hotels have been built since 1946 (during the same period, only two major hotels have been built in Miami proper). In recent years the publicity whizbang has been Hank Meyer, who exploited TV as Hanagan had exploited the newspapers, and who brought the bathing beauty contests of the twenties and thirties to a culmination in the Miss Universe contest of the sixties.

It was Meyer who was chiefly responsible for getting Jackie Gleason

to start producing his shows from the Beach. Meyer's technique is hardly subtle. To hook Arthur Godfrey as a Beach supporter, he got the City Council to name a street Arthur Godfrey Drive. To clinch Gleason, the municipal auditorium was renamed Jackie Gleason Auditorium, and the street in front of it was also named for Gleason.

The heir apparent to the Hanagan-Meyer line is Hal Cohen, 41, who was a newspaperman for 18 years in Detroit before heading south to become Miami Beach's publicity director (Meyer is still around as a \$36,000-a-year consultant), and whose own special talent as a publicist appears to be something unique for a resort: candor.

A couple of years ago, for instance, the state health department discovered that when the winds and tides were wrong raw, unscreened sewage from Miami Beach was washed home again, cluttering the beach with unpleasant solids. The official position of the city was, and still is, that the junk either did not exist (except in newspapermen's imaginations) or came from some mysterious, untraceable source.

Cohen, however, is more realistic. Sure, he says, "When a guy is swimming around in the ocean outside a hotel where he is paying \$50 a day for a room, he does find it esthetically unpleasant—to say the least—when half a grapefruit comes floating by his face." But, adds Cohen, Miami Beach is reducing the problem by extending its sewage outflow line and by installing machinery to chop the sewage up a little finer.

For that matter, esthetics and sanitation are not exactly the first concern of Miami, either. A dozen years ago the city (whose name is an Indian word meaning "sweet water") was openly dumping its raw sewage into Biscayne Bay, right at its doorstep. Its method of correcting that



**CHIEF POMERANCE**—He's bought shotguns, flak vests, machine guns and Chemical Mace.



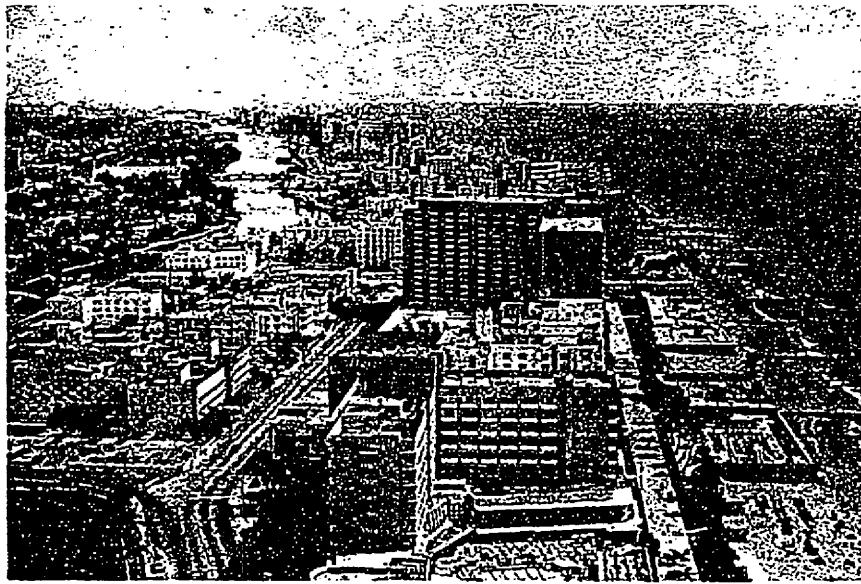
**MAYOR DERMER**—He vows to take the beaches from the hotels and give them to the people.

situation was to build a sewage disposal plant on Virginia Key—thus taking out of circulation one of the most valuable pieces of real estate in the area. And when the Miami plant is overtaxed and the wind is wrong, crossing the Rickenbacker Causeway to Key Biscayne can make one a bit testy.

In matters of architectural respect and city planning, Miami and Miami Beach show the typical callousness of the frontier. Gone are all the grand old hotels that were the ornate, monumental landmarks of Miami Beach's classiest era—the Nautilus, the Whitman and the Roney Plaza, the last to go; it is being razed to make way for another cold, glass-eyed hostelry. Miami Beach's idea of preserving history is perfectly caught at the Fontainebleau Hotel, Republican headquarters, which was built where the Firestone estate used to be. The only thing that remains of the estate is a large gate, and it is stuck away somewhere in the Fontainebleau's neo-rococo bowels where not even all the bellhops can find it. As a convention of architects meeting in Miami Beach two years ago officially noted: "Nothing constructed in this play paradise seems to have enduring value."

**G**REATER Miami's problem in such matters is not so much lack of purpose as lack of willpower. Over the years various plans have been put forward for rescuing Miami's downtown, for replacing the mostly Negro slums (of which some of the leading citizens are landlords) as for safeguarding the waterfront against exploitation. But every plan has died for lack of unified support from the community's most influential men.

One is tempted to call this group the power structure; in economic affairs the phrase would apply. Everyone knows who they are, and



**THIS IS THE PLACE**—Miami Beach's luxury hotels, looking north along Collins Avenue from 25th Street. A group of architects noted that construction in the city lacks "enduring value"—but that hasn't lowered the hotel rates any.

although there might be some argument as to ranking, most would agree that the top leaders would include officials of The Miami Herald, no doubt one of the most influential community newspapers in the country; of Southern Bell Telephone Company, and of Florida Power and Light Company. In addition, one would have to include near the top such independent operators as Mitchell Wolfson, whose Wometco Enterprises includes everything from television stations and theater chains to vending machines and bottling plants.

**I**N civic affairs, unlike economic affairs, these leaders are neither structured nor powerful, either because they choose not to be or because they are lethargic. Commissioner Gordon puts it quite accurately: "There is a flexible group around downtown Miami that plays at being the power structure. But they don't come up to their pretensions. A group gets together at the Miami Club—the only luncheon club with a limited membership—and that's enough to start the power-structure myth. They are people who have interested themselves in the economic affairs of the community. I hold no brief for them, but at least they are active, and that's admirable in a community that is awash with apathy. Any other group could take the lead if it tried. Labor isn't strong, but even labor, if it got unified and interested in things, could take over the power play in Miami."

Congressman Claude Pepper, whose district includes both Miami and Miami Beach, agrees: "There is no power structure in Dade County in terms of being able to deliver votes. A man who is a friend of Jews can get Jewish votes, but he can't deliver them." And Dan Paul, a lawyer who is one of the most consistent critics of civic disarray (and also, inciden-

tally, state chairman of the Rockefeller campaign), says: "This is not a forest of great oaks. There are a few saplings here and there, and that's about the extent of it. They're all so interested in making money and building up their businesses that they don't pay much attention to other things."

An illustration of this, he said, is now unfolding: Florida Power and Light is trying to establish an atomic power plant that would circulate through its innards each month all the water in Biscayne Bay, raising the water's temperature 10 degrees before returning it to the bay. This is a classic case of thermal pollution that could destroy the ecology of the bay but which has been stopped, temporarily at least, not by the protests of the local establishment but by the United States Department of the Interior. The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce saw nothing wrong with the idea of a bay full of slightly boiled fish, and it fits snugly into the crusade of The Miami Herald to create an atmosphere "favorable to business." (Alvah H. Chapman Jr., vice president and general manager of The Herald, is also president of the Chamber's board of governors.)

As another example of the business orientation of local government, Paul recalled that the Miami commission had decided to drop a utilities-rate case "for the patently insubstantial reason that the city couldn't afford to pay \$35,000 to a rate expert." Less than half an hour later, he said, the commission voted to give \$25,000 to the Miss Universe contest.

In his book "Cities of Destiny," Arnold Toynbee classed Miami along with Los Angeles as something less than a city, as mainly a hive of "renters," because for various reasons it has failed to develop a singleness of vision. It is not a creation, he said, but an eruption, and it has yet to



attain even "the rudiments of a soul."

Metropolitan metaphysics aside, Greater Miami can certainly claim a personality, part of which comes from its colorful defects and fascinating psychosis.

Masterplan or no masterplan, it plunges ahead. Slums? It wipes them out with expressways and interchanges, a tidal wave of concrete, and with urban-renewal projects that have dislodged at least 10,000 people—including 3,000 low-income families—in the last five years, gouging out a huge piece of the Negro quarter. It is a solution that leaks away, however, for now the ghetto is moving at the rate of one-and-a-half blocks a week to the northwest, into a largely white, middle-class area.

The area's leaders will, presumably, get back to that later; the nonpowerful nonstructure, whatever its failings, has goodwill and a conscience. It dislikes obvious sin and obtrusive mischief; Don Shoemaker, editor of *The Herald*, once had his home bombed for denouncing racial extremists. (Still, the Dade County school system, though it was the first major school system in the South to desegregate, seems incapable of finishing the job. Few schools are more than 10 per cent or less than 80 per cent Negro.)

**N**OTHING frightens and outrages the leaders more than the specter of organized crime—a specter that has been with them since Al Capone set up his winter home here. Periodically *The Herald* carries a series of stories disclosing the presence of professional bad men; periodically a sheriff is deposed, a judge who makes strangely benevolent decisions is embarrassed by the public's attention and prostitutes who earn \$700 a week are interviewed by legislative investigating committees. But only the profile, not the size of the problem changes, and in the end change is measured not by reform but by inconvenience. "It used to be you could find bookmakers on the street

corner," one lawman said, "but now they have retreated to their offices on the second floor."

Greater Miami is not so evil as the roster of its hoodlum citizens shows it is equipped to be. Where there is transiency, there is extra crime, and this place is always bloated with transients. Miami Beach, for example, has a permanent population of about 80,000, but on any given day 200,000 people may be in town. Not all of these visitors are nice people; nor, for that matter, are all the permanent residents. Like other people, gangsters enjoy balmy climates and so Miami, along with Phoenix and Los Angeles, has become the home of quite a few people with Mafia backgrounds or connections. Many have invested in legitimate businesses, especially Miami Beach oceanfront real estate. Joe Massei of the Detroit Purple Gang has lived in Miami for years. Jake and Meyer Lansky, who are the brains behind the casino operations in Nevada and the Caribbean, also have roots down in Miami. From New York's Mafia circles have come the likes of Joseph Bisogna, a member of the Carlo Gambino family who is in the food-locker business here. Major Charles Black, the Dade County sheriff's Mafia expert, says there are "about 150 of that underworld brotherhood roaming around" the area.

The Organized Crime Division of the Department of Justice and the F.B.I. keep these people constantly under surveillance. Most of them live quietly; it profits them to do so. Until they are caught misbehaving, it will be a bit hard to root them out of the community, United States constitutional guarantees being what they are. This gives Greater Miami's leaders little comfort, and the mere presence of the vice lords galls them ceaselessly. The irritant is partly responsible for a feud now developing between *The Herald* and Richard Gerstein, the prosecuting attorney for

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**FOUNTAIN OF AGE?**—Though Miami Beach's average age is about 60, the elderly are not held in high regard. One merchant, for instance, suggested that spikes be put on Lincoln Mall fountains (above) so old folks wouldn't sit on them.

## **Toynbee called Miami not a creation but an eruption**

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the state, who enjoys betting on the ponies (like J. Edgar Hoover) and is a regular customer at the gambling tables at Freeport in the Bahamas.

The Herald, which backed him enthusiastically for the first nine years of his service, has begun to intimate that Gerstein has grown soft, that he is letting criminals slip through his hands. Actually, Gerstein has maintained a conviction rate of more than 80 per cent over-all and 87 per cent in capital cases (though he usually avoids the risky ones), and the only jury trial he personally prosecuted and lost was Candy Mossler's. One recent grand jury gave his office a clean bill; two dozen previous grand juries over the years have praised his work. But still he is condemned because, as he sees it, "some people seem to think we should be able to do what 2,500 law-enforcement officers are unable to do, although I have an investigating staff of only five."

**H**E has a point. The range of quality among the 27 police forces in Dade County is wide indeed, but many of them cluster on the clumsy and dumb side. A few months ago, a Miami Beach policeman dropped a machine gun in police headquarters and it went off, wounding a secretary and another policeman. (The secretary, fully recovered, is said to have found work elsewhere.) When Danny Goldman, the 17-year-old son of a wealthy contractor, was kidnapped in Surfside a couple of years ago, the chief of police went to a séance to see if he could get a lead on the boy's whereabouts. A former sheriff of Dade County used one of his secretaries as bait in an effort to catch an abortionist; unfortunately, the lawmen who were following the abortionist's car got lost in traffic.

More common are the lawmen who simply aren't equipped to cope with the frisky underworld of the area, and whose eagerness to learn is somewhat dulled by the fact that some of them are paid all of \$85 a week. In North Bay Village, a town of 6,000 strung along a connecting road between Miami and Miami Beach, is one of the most notorious areas, dubbed "sin strip," a habitat of ranking and not-yet-ranking hoodlums and (by the North Bay Village Mayor's own count) between 750 and 1,000 prostitutes. Law enforcement here is not very energetic; the chief of police—when the town has one—is paid \$7,800 and patrolmen start at \$105 a week.

Miami's police chief, Walter E. Headley Jr., became a national symbol of the tough cop when he announced last Christmas (after a weekend that saw 58 major crimes

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of the armed robbery-mugging variety, including three murders, in Miami) that he was going to concentrate 20 police dogs and 50 shotgun-carrying policemen in Negro areas, where 85 per cent of the crimes occurred, and added: "When the looting starts, the shooting starts." Some called him a racist, but many—including several prominent Negro leaders—said it was a smart move. Headley says that since his edict, major crimes have dropped 62 per cent and: "We haven't fired a shotgun and the dogs haven't bitten the wrong person once."

Headley looks a lot like Wallace Beery, and his forthright talk sometimes makes him seem a bumpkin: "We use stop-and-frisk—oh, my God, yes—and especially since the Supreme Court upheld it. They must have been smoking marijuana the night before, to make that decision. It's the first time they've ruled in favor of the public for years." Despite appearances, Headley is a "street smart" lawyer who is popular with a majority of the people

and has survived repeated political upheavals during his 20 years as chief, including concerted efforts by two popular mayors to throw him out.

He thinks of himself as an important chief, fit to mingle with the mightiest, three of whom—Presidents Truman, Kennedy and Johnson—have sent him signed photos that hang on his wall. "Oh, good God, yes, I know Truman," he says. "I used to visit him when he came to the Keys. He once called me 'the best police chief in the country.'" Headley contends that he warned the Secret Service nine months before John Kennedy's death that there was a serious assassination conspiracy aimed at the President. As for President Johnson, Headley wrinkles his nose and passes him off as "basically antipolice."

**R**EPUBLICAN delegates who like Headley's philosophy may be comforted to know that 75 of his men have been assigned to protect the southeast corner of the convention grounds. Also on hand are state conservation officers, highway patrol-

men and state liquor agents, who have been prowling the local saloons for two weeks, just to let bartenders know they're in town and watching. However, most of the convention protection, as well as the over-all direction of the security forces, is the responsibility of the Miami Beach police, headed by Rocky Pomerance, a bulky (250 pounds) 41-year-old college dropout who used to box in the Army "for three-day passes" and played some low-grade semipro football. He is, nevertheless, something of an intellectual, a collector of old books and antiques who encourages his 200 men to attend college on the side. He finagled the City Council into paying all the policemen's tuition on courses for which they earn A's, 75 per cent for B's, 50 per cent for C's, and below that, "To hell with you, you're not trying."

Like most Miami Beach officials, Pomerance relies heavily on outward appearances. He has ordered ascots for his policemen, and he instructed them not to scratch their noses during the convention unless they

have to, because "those TV cameras have zoom lenses." It was his idea to plant flowering shrubs in front of the six-foot-high fence around the convention hall—to make it look less formidable. Unlike Miami's Headley, Pomerance underplays everything. He has stocked his arsenal in recent weeks with 40 shotguns, 25 flak vests, 10 machine guns, a supply of Chemical Mace and a portable light that can illuminate a city block. But he insists that this was not prompted by the Republicans. "The unfortunate part about this buying of equipment is that we were already thinking about re-equipping ourselves," he says, "and some people have misinterpreted our purpose."

People are always misinterpreting purposes in Greater Miami, which is something the delegates might bear in mind. There will doubtless be enough cops, of whatever quality, to protect them from bandits and protesters. And the Republican National Committee has taken out \$3-million in liability insurance (much of it written locally, of course). But as for the rest of it, they're on their own. ■