

After Hours

G E T T I N G A W A Y

When nice is not enough

MUCH as we hated to miss Remedios Diaz-Oliver's party for the Sister Cities Gala at Miami's Big Five Club, sorry as we were to skip the opening night of "Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris" at Miami Beach's Colony Theatre, we had other things on our minds last weekend. Such as the start of the season. *Next week.*

So much to do, so little time: to lose that extra five pounds that can make pantyhose such a trial. To (finally) get one of those witty bow-tie-and-cummerbund sets like all the

ON THE CIRCUIT

leading escorts wore last season. To oil the Rolodex so that it whirls — all the better to assemble those party lists. To enhance and cleanse oneself in preparation for the rigors of this Season's more extensive circuit, one that will also bring you monthly reports from men and women in Palm Beach and Broward counties who are somehow able to make some sense out of all their fun.

As we make our rounds, we swear to be true to the spirit of the great Grace Wing Bohne, The Miami Herald's social arbitress through most of the '60s and '70s. We will try to remember the one thing — the essential thing — that Grace tried to impress upon us fledgling social reporters: "If it's not nice, it's not honest." That was what Ms. Wing Bohne always said, and, in our book, what Grace said goes.

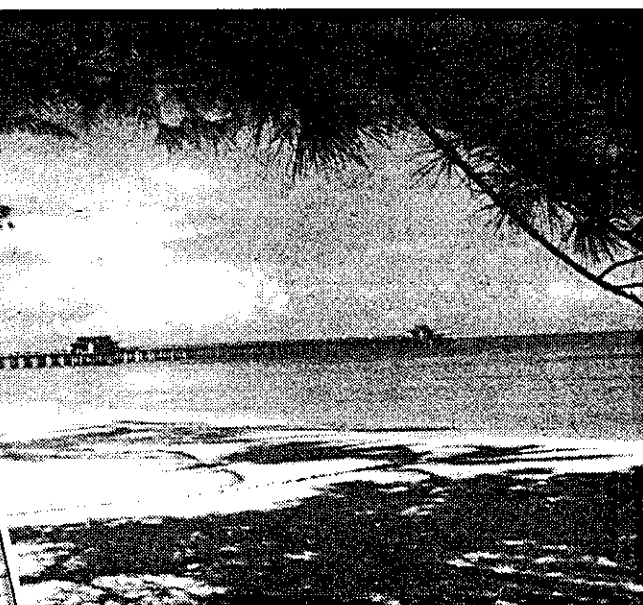
Sadly, however, nice is not always enough on the circuit. Sometimes the circuit hurts, and hurts again, and you must wear armor under your pleated-front J. Press tuxedo shirt to withstand all the slings and arrows. Sometimes the circuit insults and affronts, and you must insult and affront it back.

For those times when a social cut has been too severe to ignore, we have, thanks to a variety of generous sources, come up with a list of insults guaranteed to carry you through a difficult moment with style — while leaving a lasting scar on the enemy.

SEE CIRCUIT, PAGE 15



Joan Rivers: If lips could kill.



At left, a couple enjoys what brochures refer to as 'the gracious lifestyle of Naples.' Above, the 1,000-foot Naples pier serves as a well-known landmark where visitors view the little town's famous cotton candy sunsets.

Perfect, FLORIDA

With its sugar sand beach, cotton candy sunsets, \$20,000 per capita income, and refined zoning code, is Naples just another word for 'paradise'?

BY D.B. TIPMORE
REVIEW STAFF WRITER

FOR any loyal fan of the Gold Coast, it takes some doing to love Naples, Fla.

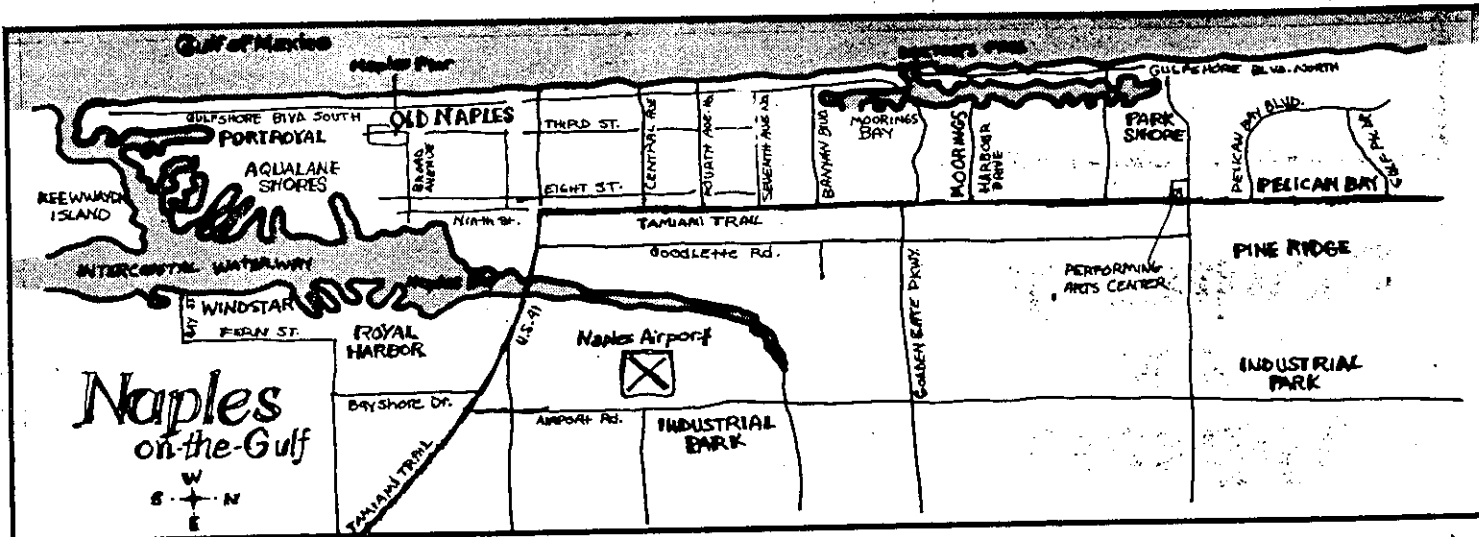
Naples, with its main street called Fifth Avenue and its 19,000 citizens busily keeping out the riffraff (the poor, the dark-skinned, the exceptional).

Naples, with its inclination toward Lincoln Towne Cars and its old-WASP obsessions such as golf and bridge.

Exclusive Naples, "the little town that could and did." The little town with its Millionaire's Row, its \$20,000 per capita income, its slow-growth zoning code, its "sugar sand" beaches and "cotton candy" sunsets.

Is Naples simply another word for paradise? Just ask any Neopolitan. Ask him (or her) to compare their city with its West Coast neighbors to the north: charmless (through development) Fort Myers and ruined (by development) Venice and lost (to development) Sarasota. Ask him (or her) to stack his city up against its Gold Coast spiritual in-laws such as Boca Raton (close, but no

SEE PARADISE, PAGE 13



WEST COAST PARADISE

PARADISE, FROM PAGE 11

cigar) and Palm Beach (tainted glamour). Don't ask about Fort Lauderdale. In the '50s, maybe. But not now.

Is Naples really better? Just ask Judy Keller, assistant executive vice president for the Naples Area Chamber of Commerce.

"The fashionable people who previously frequented the 'other coast,'" writes Keller in a current chamber of commerce release, "are now setting their social compasses for Naples, where city planners are assiduously avoiding growth pitfalls encountered by their burgeoning neighbors."

The "other" coast. Previously fashionable. Growth pitfalls. Burgeoning neighbors. These common Gulf-o-phile prejudices against our seaboard can be heard in almost every Naples self-appraisal, appraisals which bear heavy traces of auto-suggestion.

"We're the seashell Shangri-la," enthused an agent at one of Fifth Avenue's leading real estate brokerages. "Where else in Florida will you find these gorgeous beaches, these density codes? It's pretty close to perfect."

Actually, the agent, a gentleman who relocated to Naples from Washington Corners, Ohio, because the two communities matched each other in "quiet charm," was comparatively restrained in his civic zeal. He did not resort to some of the other, even more thrilled, descriptions of Naples that have also appeared in print.

Such as? The "Brigadoon of vacationers' dreams" was one which showed up during the summer of 1986 as an advertisement in the Collier County News. "A community for all seasons," is another local favorite.

Speaking of seasons, this little town also thinks of itself as nonpareil in the weather department.

"Somebody up there," writes Judy Keller, extrapolating on the special relationship with the Almighty which many Neopolitans feel they enjoy, "has placed us just south of an imaginary line dividing more temperate Florida and our subtropical clime — giving us top marks as a winter season mecca!"

Although the "imaginary" line is



GULFSHORE PUBLISHING CO.

At the rugged end of Naples' outdoor activities are its famous swamp buggy races.

purest fluff, the allusion to Mecca may point the way to a more realistic appraisal of the little town. Naples and the religious heart of the Moslem world are located on the same latitude, 26 degrees, a latitude also shared by Calcutta, the heart of the Saharan desert, and Mandalay, Burma.

Through a rich mix of poetic justice and geographical destiny, Naples has something in common with each of these locations.

Naples and Mecca

With Mecca, Naples shares a formidable reputation as a drawing card — not for Moslems, Lord help us, but for millionaires. Some people in the town, gauche as it may seem, like to boast that Naples has more than 100 millionaires permanently or seasonally based in and around the city.

Naples keeps track of these things. And its large homes. In fact, the peculiarly American pastime of gawking at expensive homes from the vantage point of a well-upholstered car is something of an art form in Naples. A rude river of automobiles often streams past the mansions along Gordon Drive in "Olde Naples." On a cruise through the swank Port Royal subdivision paralleling the Gulf, out-of-town guests are informed proudly as to which homes are owned by the top management of such industrial titans as Union Carbide, Texaco, and Outboard Marine. In 1974, the Collier County News reported — thankfully without exclamation — that top executives of four of America's largest steel companies were in town at the same time.

Not all the visitors are seasonal, however. And not all, unfortunately, are rich.

In 1950, Collier County had 6,488 people. Forty years later it has 145,000, and, courtesy of the Census Bureau, owns the title as the fastest growing metropolitan statistical area in the United States.

With that title, as with all titles, comes unpleasant side effects. Naples can, justifiably, puff up its chest about its estimable zoning codes, the result of Ohio manufacturer Henry B. Watkins' hiring of a Washington land planner during the 1940s to plat the city. Sadly for the little town, however, the codes do not apply outside its limits, and the familiar East Coast stubble of strip shopping centers and billboards and cheesy developments — so foreign to the manicured streets and shoppes of the city — now encircles the 11.5 square miles of perfection with an

SEE PARADISE, PAGE 14

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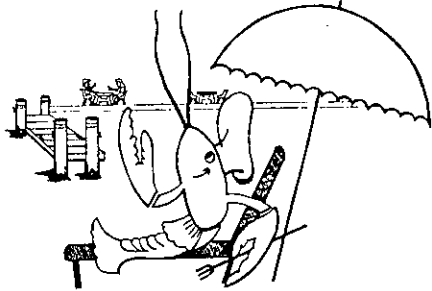
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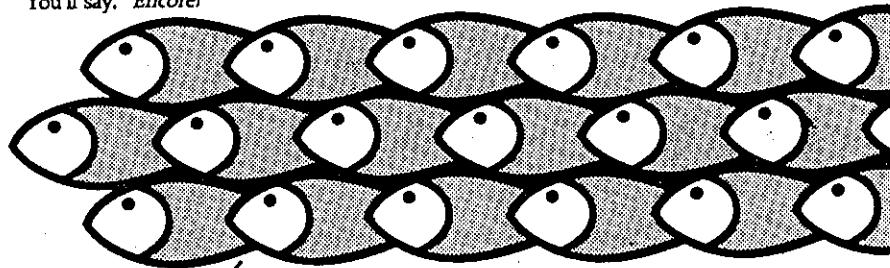
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PARADISE, FROM PAGE 13

inferno of ugly growth, growth which inconveniently gives work and life to people who might not immediately be thought of as *our kind* by many of the inhabitants of Naples proper.

But then meccas, by definition, do not have the luxury of limiting their appeal. So much for Mecca.

Naples and Mandalay

With Mandalay, Naples shares an end-of-the-road image, one which has actual roots in historical reality. The town lies, literally, at the western tip of the Tamiami Trail, a two-lane horror relatively unchanged since 1926-28, when it was built by Barron G. Collier, the streetcar advertising mogul to whom Collier County — indeed all of southwestern Florida — owes more than a touch of the hat.

To further its beyond-the-pale reputation, before the building of the Trail, Naples was reachable only by boat, which was just fine by the town's founding fathers: General John "Cerro Gordo" Williams, who fought against Mexico; Walter N. Haldeman, owner of the Louisville Courier-Journal (before the Bingham); and his editor, "Marse" Henry Watterson. These men fit the West Coast pattern of north-central wealth transplanted to an area of the country more accessible to personal exploitation, a pattern seemingly started by Hamilton Disston, a saw manufacturer from Pennsylvania who bought four million acres of what is now the southwestern section of Florida from the state in 1880 for 25 cents an acre and later sold it off in lucrative chunks.

Unlike Disston, however, Naples' founders did not encourage development — welcoming only such flossy winter visitors as Rose Cleveland, the sister of the President, keeping the town a place whose first jail was called "the PawPaw Patch," and generally doing things *their way*. Barron Collier did have the grace to allow Seaboard Airlines to build a railway line into Naples in 1926. (Ten years later he had the tracks torn up.) And he did put up the money for building the Trail. Through his lieutenant, D. Graham Copeland, he conducted its construction much like a major military campaign. A city had to be built on the site of the small village of Everglades; a deep-water port was created out of the Allen's River. In the best military camp tradition, they needed ice, so they built an ice house; they needed a bank, so they opened a bank.

So much for Mandalay.

Naples and Calcutta

With Calcutta, another one of Naples' latitudinal cousins, the little town shares

certain characteristics of climate.

Characteristics such as a humidity to rival any black hole's.

"What they couldn't do with a little fresh ocean air," I remember one East Coast friend saying as she fanned herself on the veranda of the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club one recent Sunday afternoon.

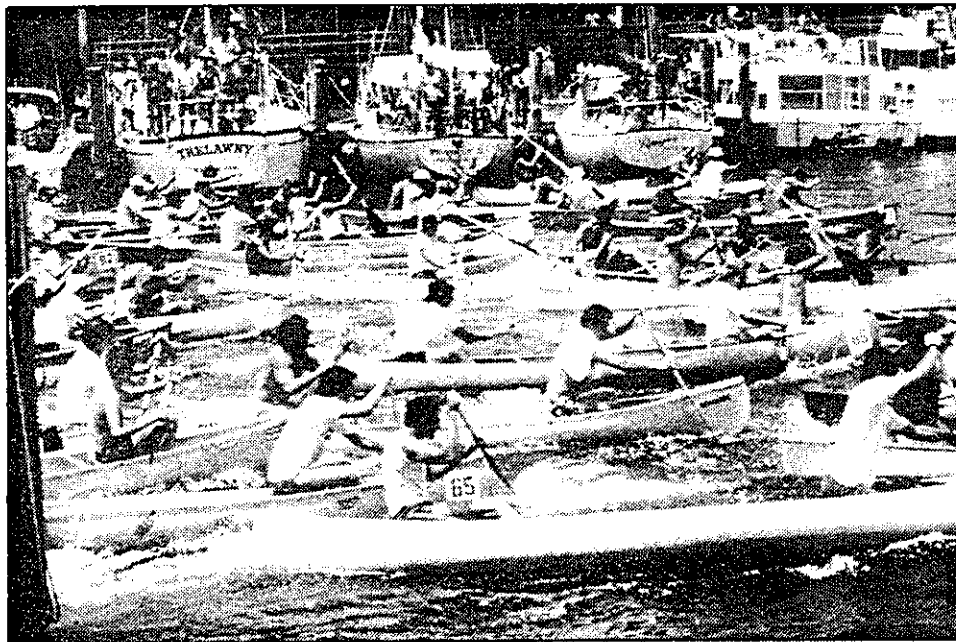
She said this *sotto voce*, obeying a life-saving instinct that told her not to speak too forcefully about any possible superiority of the Atlantic over the Gulf. Certainly not at the Hotel and Golf Club. After all, the Hotel, built in 1889 and so calculatedly refined that any remark unaccompanied by a gracious smile seems completely wrong-spirited, is considered a civic treasure in Naples. And the Gulf, in Naples, is God's bounty. The Gulf gives fish to one of the little town's most important industries. It gives thousands of

bulldoze-and-build codes.

Should we speak of other gifts brought by the Gulf? Its periodic red tide, when the water turns a sick maroon from a proliferation of red, one-celled plantlike animals? Or its many other marine creatures, so many more than on our coast, creatures which crawl over your toes just as you are walking into the brackish water?

Or should we let it drop at the mention of the skittish Gulf breezes, which come and go at devilish whim, leaving the population at the mercy of the Everglades? (Never, in Naples, underestimate the proximity of the Everglades. As recently as the summer of 1958, writes Mike Smith in "A Way of Life," a black bear wandered down Fifth Avenue. A few weeks later, a crocodile — not an alligator — followed the same path.)

When the breezes die down, from the



The Great Dock Canoe Race is an annual event in which both skilled and amateur canoeists take to the waters of Naples Bay.

wealthy visitors the opportunity to boat and ski and sail and surf in opaque waters two and three and four shades of blue.

The Gulf also gives Naples its renowned city beach, a thin strip of immaculate white sand so free of commercial enterprise and yet so full of the harmony of well-groomed blond families at play that it could illustrate a classic 1950s American resort post card. When walking along the water, anywhere near the 1,000-foot Naples city pier, it is easy to see how zoning which permits public parking the length of the beach and provides wooden access bridges from pavement to sand has exploited nature far more tenderly than our

Everglades come the bugs, in the manner of a disaster movie. "No-see-ums" *bibionidae* and "love" bugs *ceratopogonidae* and hordes of mosquitoes and dragonflies make no-man's lands out of the lovely lawns and turn the 31 private and 25 public golf courses within the 2,000 square miles of Collier County into killing fields of neck-slapping agony.

So like Calcutta. And so unmentionable.

Naples and the Sahara

Finally, there is Naples' other latitudinal relative, the great Saharan desert.

Not that Naples is a dry town, or Collier a dry county. The cocktail hour is still very much observed here, as are the martini lunch and Bloody Marys after morning golf. Many Neopolitans, in fact *go out* for cocktails to "the club," or to places such as the Piccadilly Pub or St. George and the Dragon, the 40-year-old beef-and-potatoes standard-bearer for many of the town's most successful restaurants. There, almost any night, you can enter an unnatural Anglophilic gloom and see widows wearing diamond clip earrings and curl 'n spray permanents, working their way purposefully toward the olive at the bottom of their glass.

No, Naples is not a dry town, but once the sun goes down, it is a very quiet town still into the stillness of the center of the Sahara. Recreation may be a highlight of most Naples' tourist brochures — the golf, the tennis, the fishing and swimming and boating — but nightlife? Dancing? There was, five years ago, a discotheque in the Holiday Inn, people might remember, or they'll proudly point out the two new Mobil-starred hotels — the Registry Resort and The Ritz — as vague destinations for the after-dark crowd. But night life, they will add with a skeptical look in their eyes, is not a valid reason to come to Naples.

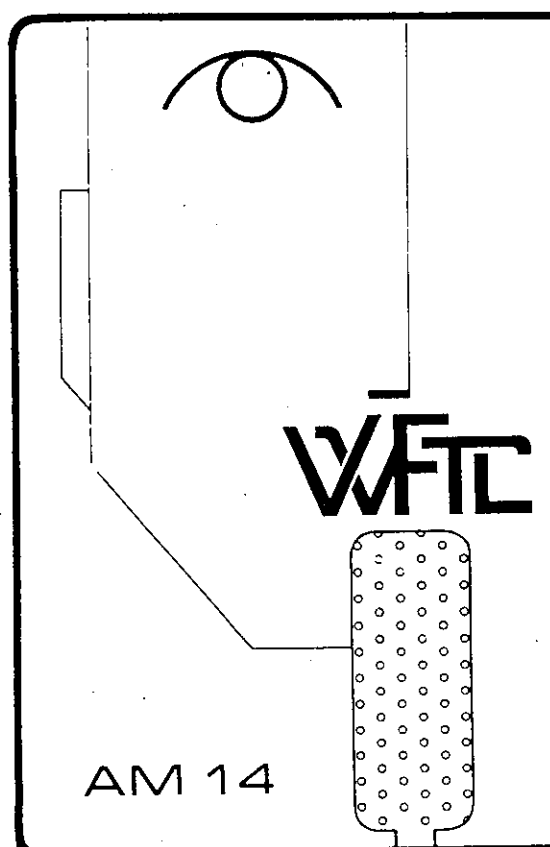
Which is exactly the point. The reason to come to Naples revolves around other more restrictive pleasures, pleasures reserved for those people for whom the phrase "conservative family values" speaks volumes. In this sense, Naples may be the perfect weekend retreat for those who want to re-experience a more manageable time, some period in their lives less freighted with vulgarity and acronymed diseases and world-class rudeness and crime. To this end — careful family values, a few days unchallenged by errant lifestyles and foreign languages and political viewpoints anywhere left of Jeanne Kirkpatrick's — Naples soothes, salves the savage breasts.

And also comes up with its own telltale brand of irony.

Last year, on a rainy Saturday afternoon during a visit to an aunt, a visitor was exploring the elegant mini-arcades and shoppes along Fifth Avenue. Resting as a decorative touch on an aged nest of tables in the front window of an antique store was "Bless This Food, The Anita Bryant Family Cookbook," a book so indicative of the Naples way of life and its civic meaning that I went inside to see if it were on sale.

"Oh, I couldn't sell *that*," the manager said, surprised at the thought. "That's my own personal copy. I can't tell you how many people ask me where they can buy it, though."

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