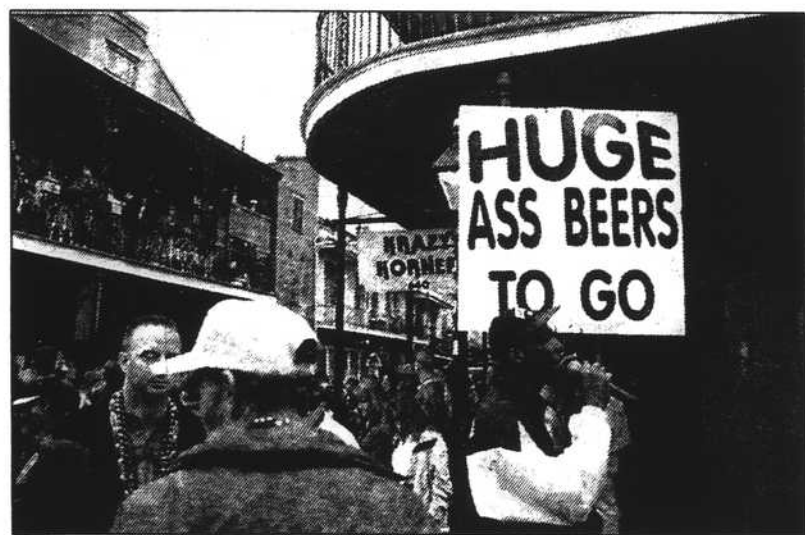


FAT

(Tuesday) **city**

Carnal carnival not for the weak



Photos by Matthew Waite
(Clockwise from top)

AFTER DOWNING half of a bottle of vodka, these men had to temporarily halt their quest to reach Bourbon Street — a mere 10 feet from their destination. Both men were too drunk to say their names audibly.

THE RELIGIOUS-AT-HEART were omnipresent on New Orleans' French Quarter. Their huge signs waving over the drunken crowd crammed onto Bourbon Street were easy to see — and hard to get away from.

GETTING A GOOD VANTAGE POINT at any of the three daily parades was an exercise in creativity.

AN ALCOHOL VENDOR shouts for customers to partake of his wares, which are readily available for carryout.

By **MATTHEW WAITE**
Senior Reporter

NEW ORLEANS — Maybe 34 hours of driving for a 48-hour party seems absurd. Crazy, even.

But it was Mardi Gras, the annual pre-Lent bash that pits the sins of the flesh against the sands of time. Get your sinning in now, altar boy, because you have to give it all up at midnight, on the very first moments of Ash Wednesday.

Why did I go?

Because it was there.

I had to go. The moment my roommate and fellow lord of the open road, Adam Lincicum, said "Let's go to Mardi Gras," there was no way I couldn't go.

It was a challenge. A dare. A quest.

I wanted to be the first kid on my block to get a woman to take off her shirt for beads (For the record: I never did. There were too many people who had similar ideas. I could just sit back and let them do the work).

I wanted to sludge through a gravy mix of urine, dirt, puke and alcohol so I could stand with 100,000 of my closest friends in a five-block area trying to get women to take off their clothes and NOT get slapped, kicked, hit or generally discouraged from such unsightly behavior.

And I wanted to get abysmally drunk in a city whose city officials, according to the Tulane University humor magazine BrouHaHa, mask a high murder rate for a week by calling random violence "Carnival activities."

What I saw at Mardi Gras was the biggest clustering of college students, junkies, whores, beggars, pimps and every other assorted piece of trash this side of spring break.

And yeah, it was fun.

There are few opportunities in life to go to a place that is 10 times more wild than you can ever dream. I thought 20,000 people on Daytona Beach was crazy — that side show was a chess tournament compared to this.

Women pulled up their shirts and dropped their pants (front and back) to get beads. Beads, I said. And hordes of camera-toting men went crazy.

Funny thing about sexuality — when the women got naked, everyone had fun. When the men got naked, every other man looked away, women just laughed to themselves and the cops arrested them for indecent exposure.

Guess which gender is the more beautiful breed?

Mardi Gras is not for everybody, but if you ever think about going, go. Don't him and haw, just go. Get in your car and go.