



Where The Boys Are

Glendon Swarthout

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Glendon Swarthout one snowy spring took off with a bunch of his English honors students from Michigan State University as they motored south from the winters' chill to the beaches of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, to soak up some sun, sand, suds, and sex. What he found there during a week of "research" became the basis of one of the funniest college novels of all time. But let's leave it to the narrator, Merritt, who describes herself as five feet nine in heels, weighing in at 136 lbs. "My statistics are 37-28-38. I wear an eight and a half B shoe. I may not be feminine but I am damn ample. We all are. It is ridiculous nowadays for girls to be seductive. Companies go on about advertising creams and mists and gossamer underthings when what we should really in the market for is stuff like electric razors and Charles Atlas courses and jock straps, etc." Merritt further describes what her book is about. "Why do college kids come to Florida? Physically to get a tan. Also, they are pooped. Many have mono. Psychologically, to get away. And besides, what else is there to do except go home (for spring break) and further foul up the parent-child relationship? Biologically, they come to Florida to check the talent. You've seen those movie travelogues of the beaches on the Pribilof Islands where the seals tool in once a year to pair off and reproduce. The beach at Lauderdale has a similiar function. Not that reproduction occurs, of course, when when you attract thousand of kids to one place there is apt to be a smattering of sexual activity."

Where The Boys Are was much more than a novel, it became a national phenomenon! And a NY Times bestseller which was well-reviewed in almost every national publication, who then sent their reporters down to south Florida the next spring break to cover this annual college pilgrimage and beach bash they'd somehow overlooked. MGM quickly snapped up the film rights and turned it into the biggest-grossing, low-budget film in their history of that fabled studio. And the college kid riots there in 1961 really set off the media stampede. The title Where The Boys Are moved into the national lexicon; Connie Francis' theme song became her biggest-selling record ever; and the novel and film became the granddaddy of all the week-long MTV Live Spring Breaks to follow. Countless college memories were made from this classic. Just try and see if you can read through any chapter without laughing. A Book of the Month Club main selection.

Reviews --

"This brilliantly funny book is not recommended to lovers of Florida, parents of college-age daughters, devotees of conservative prose style and Yale men. But virtually everyone else will enjoy it. Do you recall Margaret Mead's famous anthropological study, "Coming of Age in Samoa?" Well, this is Coming of Age in Florida -- with complex initiation rites, ceremonial costumes, nocturnal festivals, fertility dances and all. The important difference is that Florida is far funnier than Samoa. The moral of the book is best summed up by the slogan which was once displayed by a Florida real estate dealer: Get Lots While You Are Young!" Gilbert Highet, Book of the Month Club News.

"Swarthout's mastery of the contemporary college argot is complete, and he apparently knows what students think and feel. This quite possibly will be the funniest new book by an American this year. In fact, Swarthout may be the long sought new American major humorist. Like most major humorists he has a sense of social satire." Kansas City Star

"A comical and exuberantly exaggerated investigation of a subject most parents prefer not to think about." Time Magazine

"A perceptive comic novel...both good comedy and first-rate social anthropology. Merritt, the Midwestern

co-ed narrator, is funny and appealing." Saturday Review

"The girl narrator of Swarthout's story is a sensitive and knowing, if highly unstrung, young woman, and this story is a striking one." Newsweek Magazin

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Ethel Springer:

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