



July 4, 1934: A day of liberation for these women whose shoulder-baring attire subverted Miami's strict bathing suit laws.

decent exposure

IN A TOWN THIS HOT, BATHING SUIT LAWS WERE MEANT TO BE BROKEN.

BY AIMEE DINGWELL

Nowhere is the old adage “less is more” truer than here in Miami Beach, at least when it comes to beach attire. We love our barely there bikinis, Brazilian cuts, tangas, and men sporting Speedos.

Whether on the runway for Swim Week or on the beach, Miami has long been the place to flaunt. But how we have changed. In this photo from July 4, 1934, female beachgoers mock a Miami Beach sign requiring full bathing suits. Back then, baring your assets (i.e., your shoulders) could get you a free ride in a police cruiser.

With the help of daring trendsetters like these bathing beauties, the introduction of the bikini in 1946 by French automobile engineer Louis Réard, and our very own pioneering pinup model and photographer Bunny Yeager, our laws have evolved. Today it'll take a power run down the beach *au naturel* to violate the state's indecent exposure statute (section 800.03, to be exact), while covering up will earn you the outcast moniker.

Yeager, who is credited with launching the careers of hundreds of models with her natural lighting and nearly nude style, often improvised scraps of fabric for bikinis in her shoots, pushing the limits of social norms and fashion. “I was always fearful about showing a new design—at that time, the police would arrest women who showed too much—but I was never cited for indecent exposure,” Yeager explains. Her unforgettable images of Ursula Andress as Bond Girl Honey Rider, and Bettie Page rollicking on Miami's beaches, proved some rules were meant to be broken. **OD**