



**Mike  
Royko**

# Dallas, Dallas, Bah! Bah! Bah!

**WHILE SMIRKING**, an acquaintance from Texas handed me a public opinion survey showing what Americans think are the best and the worst big cities.

"Now what do you think?" he said, pointing out that Dallas topped the list of the best. And Chicago was listed fourth on the worst list.

I told him that all it proved was that most of the people surveyed had never been to either city.

Shaking his head, he said, "Why can't you admit that you were wrong about Dallas?"

Never. As I wrote during the Republican convention, Dallas is nothing more than endless clusters of faceless shopping centers and gray-glass office buildings connected by expressways, populated by short men in tall cowboy hats.

"**THEN HOW DO YOU** explain the positive feelings that people have about it?" he asked.

That was easy. As the survey story pointed out, most people identify Dallas with its football team, the Cowboys. And, more important, with the Cowboys' nubile cheerleaders.

As every football fan knows, for years the Dallas cheerleaders have jiggled their bosoms, shimmied their hips and bounced their bottoms more enthusiastically than any other football girlie show.

If the survey results had been more specific, it would probably have shown that the most pro-Dallas response came from lascivious men in small towns who indulge in unspeakable fantasies while watching Sunday football on TV.

In other words, the survey is simply a reflection of the frustrated libidos of rubes.

That, plus the invention of the air conditioner, which has done more to change American lifestyles than anything except maybe the pill.

"**WHAT HAS THE** air conditioner got to do with it?"

Everything. As the survey showed, most of the cities looked upon most favorably are in warm climates. Most of the cities getting a negative response are in cold climates.

There used to be a time when few sane people wanted to live in Dallas or most Sun Belt cities and states. Snakes, lizards, unbearable heat. It was more sensible to endure a bit of snow each winter than to have gila monsters and foot-long cockroaches marching through your living room, and to be able to fry an egg on your forehead.

Then came the air conditioner, making it possible for people to leap from one cube of cool air to another, and survive in places that previously had been unfit for anything that didn't slither on its belly.

It's the air conditioner that did it, turning us into a nation of sun worshipers and leading us down the road to surfing, hang gliding, dune bugging and other signs of moral decay.

"**I THOUGHT YOU** said it was the Dallas cheerleaders."

It's all related. How can the Chicago Bears cheerleaders be as provocative as those in the Sun Belt when their thighs are turning blue from the cold?

"Are you saying that it's simply the difference in climate that puts Detroit at the top of the worst-city list?"

The climate is a factor, as well as the fact that most car dealers have lousy service departments, and people identify their wheezing cars with Detroit.

"Ridiculous. What about New York, which is right behind Detroit in unpopularity? Surely that's not because of climate."

Television ruined New York's reputation. Before TV, we learned about New York from the movies. We were taught that New York was where you went to become a success, to live the glamorous life. New York used to be Fred Astaire dancing in the park, Joe DiMaggio gliding across the outfield, King Kong climbing the Empire State Building. Couples in dinner jackets and gowns ending a night on the town when the milk was being delivered.

Now, because of negative TV news shows, New York is thought of as the place to go to be shoved in front of a subway train or tossed off a roof. And that is a bum rap. At least 90 percent of New Yorkers have never been shoved in front of a subway train. At least, not more than once.

"Well, this just shows that you're out of step with the rest of the population," the Texan said. "They know that Dallas is the city of the future."

Maybe. But if any of those cheerleaders ever develop varicose veins, you can all turn out the lights and leave.