



Strictly Business

An up-close look at some local strippers and what's involved in the business.



The woman sits at the bar of a popular local restaurant, waiting. She is tall, young, with striking features and mysterious dark eyes. She seems reserved and dignified as she sits wrapped in a trenchcoat, sipping mineral water.

A large party enters the restaurant: businessmen and their wives. The young woman at the bar singles one man out, watching him intently as the party is seated and begins perusing their menus. Finally she rises, smooths her coat and approaches the party.

"How are you?" she asks the man she has been watching. "It's been a long time." The man shifts uncomfortably; his wife eyes the young woman, then looks at her husband.

"Who are these people? You said you'd meet me here alone," says the woman in the coat. "I dressed just the way you told me to," she continues as her fingers begin undoing the buttons of her trenchcoat. The man's expression is blank as he tries to tell the young woman that the lady at his elbow is his wife.

Suddenly the young woman opens the trenchcoat, exposing her near-nude body dressed in nothing but a tiny G-string. She pulls a card from the G-string and tosses it on the table. "I won't be needing this anymore!" She buttons her coat as she storms out of the

restaurant.

The man's wife picks up the card — her husband's business card with today's date, the name of the restaurant and 8:00 written on it in her husband's handwriting. Across the table two men begin to snicker.

The two men thought it would be a great joke to play on the

She sees dancing and acting as much the same thing. The goal of stripping is communication with the audience. "The syrupy sexuality is required to really be successful," she says. "Not only is the eye contact important, but the flirting — knowing how to flirt and smile, even when you don't want to smile. It's got to

same light as prostitution? Often, according to Jeanette, because it is mixed up with prostitution. Some business owners throughout the country expect, even demand, that their dancers satisfy their clients sexually. Some dancers come from a background of practicing prostitution.

The idea of the stripper usually conjures images of seedy nightclubs, drooling men, desperate women and sex for sale. And yet it is a long-standing institution in our society. It is an accepted tradition for a group of men to hire a stripper when they throw a party for a friend who is getting married, understanding its entertainment value.

man and his wife. Once they'd decided on the scenario, all they had to do was call Entertainment Hotline, a Eugene business that specializes in just that — entertainment. Through Entertainment Hotline you can secure telegrams and exotic dancers.

T.C., the actress in the trenchcoat, is the owner and manager of Entertainment Hotline. With a background in both acting and dancing, she enjoys the occasional opportunity to do this sort of skit. But usually she dances.

T.C. is a stripper.

She has been taking her clothes off professionally for about five years. Her interest began when she, at the age of 12, took a belly-dancing class. She took acting classes through school, and her interest in dancing grew over the years.

look genuine, not forced."

Like many exotic dancers, she started out both in small clubs and free-lancing. Her early experiences were often negative, but out of them grew a sense of self-reliance that finally led to the birth of Entertainment Hotline.

Protection for the dancers is one area that she had always found lacking. "Usually you get attacked by your protection" — the men who escort the dancers in order to protect them from unsavory audiences. "They don't even think about watching your clothes. They don't think about protecting you from getting sexually molested. They may even try to sexually molest you after the party."

Jeanette, who acts as business manager of Entertainment Hotline, has the dual role of escort. When a party is booked, she informs them that it is a misdemeanor for both the client and the dancer if touching is involved during the dance. She then goes with the dancer where she uses a large dose of psychology — and once in awhile some physical force — to keep the party under control.

"We create an atmosphere of what I call the Princess Syndrome," Jeanette says. "The dancer becomes a princess, and it sort of creates a 'forbidden fruit' appeal. It also gives the escort more power to set the rules and keep the party going as we want it to go."

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Why, then, does society persist in viewing stripping in the

T.C. believes that erotic dancing can and should be an art form and should be appreciated on that level. She has become a crusader in this field where women traditionally have been scorned and exploited. She is proud of her dancing.

By running Entertainment Hotline, she hopes to legitimize stripping in the eyes of the community and in the eyes of the dancers themselves. She thinks that female management shows more respect for the dancers, and that "it gives us as a group of women more power to upgrade the experience. If this type of business is going to be an entertainment that women will be involved in, I'd rather see it upgraded like this."

Some of the dancers have a hard time recognizing their occupation as a "real job," Jeanette says. She often has to counsel them to help them accept themselves and respect themselves as a legitimate part of society.

Entertainment Hotline has set up a structured pay scale for the dancers that did not exist when T.C. and Jeanette took the business over. It is in the process of obtaining licensing and is even seeking a group insurance policy for its employees. It has begun advertising both in print and over local radio stations. Slowly, it is overcoming negative preconceptions and becoming reputable.

Jeanette recounts a recent incident where there was trouble leaving a party after a nude dance. She called 911. "We got a 20-police escort, and I really feel good about that because we have been so within the law that we were able to get a police escort. They arrived in their riot helmets, and they were on our side. Oh, their eyes opened a little when they saw that female stripper, but they really didn't break step."

Both women believe that there Thursday, November 13, 1986

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