

Hooker says her trade has moved to Telegraph

By Bill Casper
staff writer

The woman takes a seat in a Redford Township lounge and orders a beer. She has just taken off a long, white, woolen scarf and a brown leather jacket, draping both on the bar stool.

She sits speechless and sips her beer. On the second round a male customer sitting next to her offers to buy her drink.

"Since you bought me a beer, I'm Jane," she says, breaking her silence.

The customer introduces himself, and they engage in small talk that eventually will lead to negotiation of a business proposition.

BUSINESS FOR the woman, pleasure for the man.

In this case, the preliminary discussion resulted in an interview with a prostitute conducted by a reporter.

She allowed the interview after assurances that her identity (Jane is a fictitious name) and her base of operation would remain confidential.

Jane is one of several prostitutes working Telegraph. She talked about her work and life with unabashed frankness.

Her straight, long, dark hair falls over slender shoulders. She looks older than her 30 years, with a face worn hard by 10 years of providing sexual services and being the object of occasional physical abuse.

But she makes good money, much more than she did in her former job as a cocktail waitress and much more than she grew up with.

"My PARENTS were divorced when I was a young girl," Jane said. "My older sisters lived with my mother on her welfare checks. Money was tight, and I wore hand-me-downs from my sisters, which bothered them more than me. Actually, I didn't mind at all.

"I got married right out of high school and had two children, a boy and a girl, now aged 10 and 11," she said. "But my husband didn't care for us, and we soon got divorced. I have custody of the children. I love my kids, and I wouldn't give them up for anything.

"I live with my sister, who watches my children. The kids don't know what I do for a living. I tell them I work as a waitress in a bar. I'll tell them what I really do when I think they can understand it, and I hope they'll accept it.

"My sister, who lives on welfare, doesn't like what I do, but she accepts it because of the money I bring into the household," said Jane. "I do it strictly for the money. Although there are times, like now (during the interview) when I wonder why I'm here doing this, for the most part I have no regrets about getting into prostitution, and I'm not ashamed of what I am or what I do.

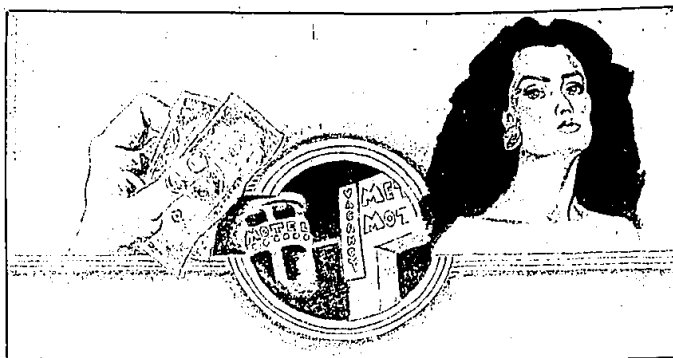
"I DON'T hurt anyone, although I have been beaten up on occasion by my customers because I refused to do what they asked of me. That's just part of the risk, but I do have some scruples,

and there are some things I won't do for any amount of money.

"I've never contacted any form of venereal disease because my personal physician has instructed me on what to look for. I also receive regular physical checkups to make sure I keep myself clean so I don't pass on any diseases," Jane said.

She said she started "pulling tricks" occasionally while she worked as a waitress/go-go dancer to make a few extra dollars.

During that period, Jane said she met a man she planned to marry, but he was killed during an armed robbery. Shortly thereafter, she met a man who became her pimp and was intro-



MARVIN TEEPLES/graphics

Over a drink in a lounge of a motel, a prostitute tells how the trade has recently shifted to suburban locales.

duced to the world of prostitution on a full-time basis. She has been in that world 10 years now.

"The ONLY thing I would do differently if I could start over would be to avoid any involvement with a pimp," Jane said. "He took all the money I made and gave me just enough to buy new clothes to look pretty to get him more money.

"All I had to show was a closet full of clothes. I left him after two years and struck out on my own. I've worked alone ever since, and I've been able to save some money. I've made as much as \$1,500 in one night, but the average nightly net is around \$600," she said.

Much of her profits used to go toward a \$500-a-day drug habit, which she claims to have kicked.

At different times in the past, but I quit both cold turkey, and I'm straight now," she said. "I don't touch either drug now because I know from experience that I'm a weak person when it comes to drugs, and I easily get hooked."

Aside from the risk of assault, the other primary risk all prostitutes share is arrest and conviction.

In Detroit, where Jane solicited before police crackdowns on bars in red light districts, accosting and soliciting charges often are reduced to disorderly conduct or loitering.

THE PENALTY on conviction of an accosting and soliciting charge generally was a \$100 fine, Jane said. She said she has three or four convictions on such reduced charges and has been fined, but never spent a day in jail.

"Going to jail is something I want to avoid," she said. "I've got an A and B charge in Redford, and I'm paying a lawyer \$300 in the hope he can get the charge reduced. I was arrested by a Redford undercover cop after he picked me up as a hitchhiker on Telegraph.

"Originally, I was hitchhiking for a ride home, but after he picked me up I decided to make a few bucks on the way home, and I solicited him. I have no problem with the bust. It was a good arrest because I solicited him, and the police treated me with respect, unlike Detroit cops.

"But it did teach me a lesson not to combine soliciting with hitchhiking," she said. "The cops here are mad about us coming into Redford and soliciting in the open along Telegraph. They have the Detroit cops to thank because they closed the red light establishments. And busting us in Redford or anywhere else won't stop us because we'll just move somewhere else."

For Jane, an aging prostitute by today's standards, competition poses another threat to her current livelihood.

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