

# Roger's Angel dances for go-go dream



The Sun-Times and the Better Government Assn. ran a Near North Side bar, the Mirage, for four months to investigate corruption and fraud in the tavern business. This is the 21st article of a continuing series.

By Pamela Zekman  
and Zay N. Smith

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Angel, a B-girl with dark brown hair, sat in a booth at the Mirage and talked about selling sex in North Side go-go joints.

"The girls live like animals," she said. "And all they want is a chance to live like human beings."

Angel wanted something more out of life. She thought she saw a way with the Mirage.

The Mirage — a tavern operated for four months by The Sun Times and the Better Government Assn. at 731 N. Wells — met Angel while it was tracking down Norm and Rose Bersh, operators of the Bowery, 1504 N. Wells, a go-go joint that sells watered-down drinks in public and sex in private rooms.

The system is called "heavy mixing" and it is what keeps the vice squad busy.

Angel was hanging around in a dark, dingy hallway at the Berwyn Theatrical Agency, 1109 W. Bryn Mawr, a business the Bershes say they operate, in part, as a conduit for prostitutes.

Angel was wearing slacks and a navy-blue blouse. She fidgeted with a filter cigaret. She scratched absent-mindedly at a small, illegible tattoo on her upper right arm. She was with her husband, Roger, a sometime security guard with slick black hair and a mustache.

Both warned the Mirage to stay away from the Bershes and heavy mixing.

"This place won't do you any good," she said. "You want pretty girls. We used to have a lot of pretty girls here, but they've . . . changed."

Was it that bad working for Rose Bersh?

"A lot of us girls, especially the married ones, don't want heavy mixing," she said. "We just want light mixing, you know? But Rose says you gotta keep going in that back room. That's why I gave notice. I refuse to do that kind of stuff."

Angel wasn't asking much. All she wanted was light mixing — some go-go dancing, some mingling, maybe some hugging but no more. Yet it wasn't easy finding such work.

"There's almost no place in town for it," she said.

Angel was talking to Jeff Allen, who played the role of Mirage owner, and Sun-Times reporter Zay N. Smith — Norty the bartender. They told her that the Mirage, come to think of it, might want to learn more about light mixing. Would she and her husband like to visit?

"You name the time," Angel said.

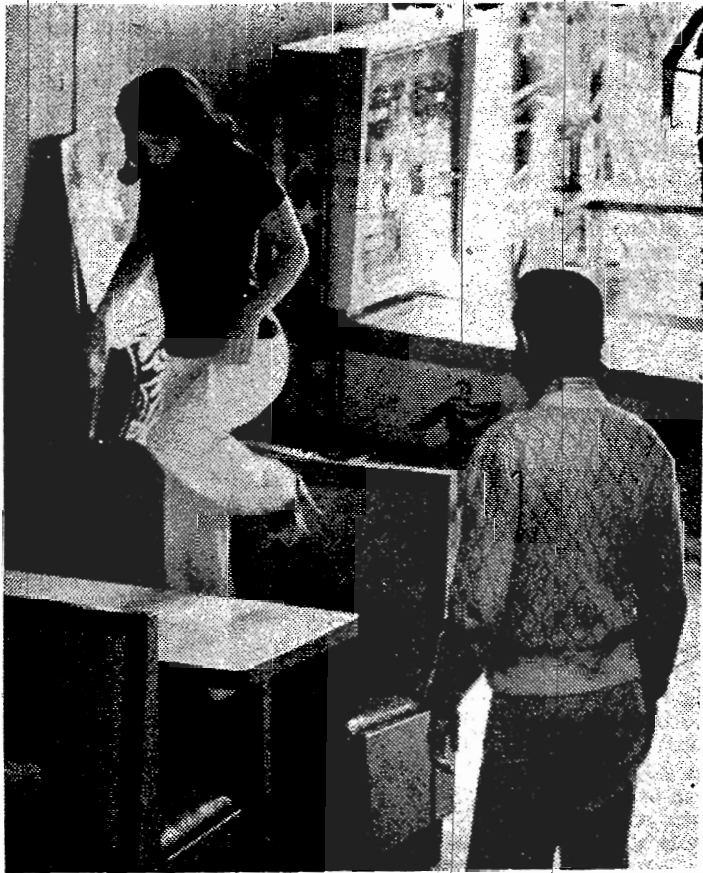
Angel and Roger arrived at the Mirage shortly after 3 p.m. Sept. 29. It was more than a social call. Angel clearly saw this as her chance to escape to light mixing.

"This is the place I've dreamed about," she said. "I'm sure we could make it work."

The Mirage warned Angel that it couldn't afford to develop a light-mixing operation for some time — if ever. The Mirage didn't want to raise false hopes. But there was no stopping her.

"Hell, this place is almost perfect just the way it is," she said.

Angel joined Roger in a booth to sample the Mirage's offer of free hot dogs and beer. One of the Mirage's "undercover" photographers went to work in the hidden loft at the back of the tavern. The lights were then turned up, as usual, to make the photographer's work eas-



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## 'Look, they got my song'

THE MIRAGE represented a dream opportunity for Angel, a go-go dancer looking for a place where that's all she was expected to do for the customers. All the tavern needed, Angel said, were three dancers, a cocktail waitress, a bouncer and maybe some Elvis on the jukebox. But the Mirage jukebox did have "Undercover Angel." "Hey, honey, look, they got my song," she said to her husband, Roger, and, as he watched (above), climbed atop a table to show the Mirage what a fine dancer she was.

ier. But someone's hand slipped on the rheostat switch and the place was suddenly as bright as a television studio.

"What the hell is that?" Angel asked, shielding her eyes.

"Uh, the repairman is working on the lights," Jeff Allen said.

Angel studied the lights for a moment. "You know what?" she said. "I'll bet there used to be a stage up there behind the bar. Look how some of those lights are pointed."

Angel sat back in the booth and talked with Jeff Allen and Norty the bartender. She talked, at first, of what heavy mixing was like at the Bowery, with Rose Bersh as boss.

"That may be one of the worst in the bunch," she said. "But there are a lot of places like that. Money and sex, that's all Rose thinks about. Real greedy, you know? Money, money, money."

Are there many girls who don't like heavy mixing?

"A lot, honey," she said. "The girls live like animals. And all they want is a chance to live like human beings. That's why we're so glad we ran into you. When you said you might be interested in light mixing, it was like an answer to my prayers."

Angel and Roger got up to study the layout. The first problem was finding an area suitable for a go-go dancer's stage. Roger walked up to the front of the tavern and saw a solution right away.

"Hey, I think I've found your stage," he said. "All you have to do is extend it, like so, into this window area, get all those damn plants out of there and paint the window over black. That's so nobody can see in for free. You gotta leave a few inches of glass clear at

the top of the door, though because that's the law."

Is this topless go-go dancing we're talking about?

"You don't want topless dancing," Angel said. "Once you have topless or bottomless, you have trouble gettin' the men to keep their hands off. And the hands-off way is the only way to do it. That way a girl's old man don't get angry."

"It's embarrassing," Roger said. "Some girl picks up something on the job and then her old man has to go to the doctor and ex-

**'This place could be a gold mine. . . . Once the word got around that we were straight, we'd have loads of the right kind of customers.'**

plain why he's suddenly got syphilis. Jesus."

Angel walked over to the jukebox. The jukebox, she said, is the crucial element. A go-go dancer needs certain tunes to keep her moving at her best.

"Hey, honey, look, they got my song" she said. "They got 'Undercover Angel'."

It was time for Angel to go for broke with a quick audition. She said she could do her dancing on one of the booth tables. There are many places, she said, where the go-go dancers do it on the tables.

Norty put a quarter in the jukebox and pressed the buttons for "Undercover Angel." Angel climbed onto one of the tables. It was



not as steady as she thought it would be. But she wasn't about to quit now. The Mirage's few afternoon tipplers looked on as if they saw go-go dancers in street clothes jumping up on tables every day. Nothing ever fazes a tippler.

Angel was a pro. She went through her go-go routine with a flair even as the table teetered beneath her. She danced with a bored and distant expression on her face, as almost all go-go dancers do.

Angel climbed down from the table. She was still thinking about the jukebox.

"One problem," she said. "You got a prejudiced jukebox. No Elvis."

Elvis Presley was important to Angel and Roger. He was, in fact, the light of their lives.

"I was a security guard for his last concert in Chicago," Roger said. "I never left his side. He was wonderful. He gave me a \$400 tip when he left — that's a tip, mind you, not my pay."

"I was kinda hopin' he'd give me a Cadillac like he did that guy in New York. He did that, he really did. Gave a guy in New York who did a good job of guarding him a gold Cadillac just like his. But Elvis is still my idol."

Roger said he had always wanted to have his hair styled like Elvis's. But security guards can't get away with that.

"My wife and I went to his funeral in Memphis," Roger said. "We went to the funeral and went in his house. Only his friends got in the house. But I had proof I was a friend of his and we could get in. My wife, she started shaking when we passed the body. She stood there shaking. She worshiped him, too."

It was mentioned, tactlessly, that Elvis had

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# They urge Mirage: try 'light mixing'

Continued from preceding page

become a little bit tubby toward the end. "He wasn't fat," Roger said. "He wore a bulletproof vest and that's why he looked that way. He had lots of husbands after him."

What about the reports that Elvis was popping pills?

"He was no dope addict," Roger said. "I'll slug anyone who says he was a dope addict. I already have."

The Mirage promised it would add some Elvis to its jukebox when it got the chance. It also asked Angel to write down the staples of a go-go dancer's repertoire for future jukebox orders:

- "The Budweiser Theme"
- "Theme from SWAT" — Rhythm Heritage
- "Car Wash" — Rose Royce
- "Rock 'n' Me" — Steve Miller Band
- "Don't Be Cruel" — Elvis Presley
- "Baretta's Theme" — Sammy Davis Jr.
- "Get Down Tonight" — KC and the Sunshine Band
- "Devil Woman" — Cliff Richard

Angel then got down to business. She said the Mirage would need three girls for dancing, and light mixing, a cocktail waitress and a bouncer. The dancers would cost about \$35 a night plus tips, the waitress about \$150 a week plus tips and the bouncer about \$200 a week.

"This place could be a gold mine," Angel said. "It's separated from all those ripoff joints in Old Town, and once the word got around that we were straight, we'd have loads of the right kind of customers."

"Just a matter of promotion," Roger added. "We could get conventioners in here — and that's only the beginning. You know what we could do in November?"

What?



'Toys for Tots . . . every customer has to bring in a toy before the girls serve him.'

"Toys for Tots," Roger said. "We could tie in with that. Every customer has to bring in a toy before the girls would serve him. We could work it that way."

Angel and Roger would return several times to coax the Mirage toward light mixing. It was, they said, a matter of some urgency. Roger was out of work. Angel refused to do any heavy mixing. They were facing eviction from their apartment.

"It's gonna look awful cold out on those streets," Angel said.

The Mirage said it couldn't possibly swing light mixing. That had no effect.

Once Angel brought in one of her friends, Paula, a rather sullen go-go dancer who announced right off that she wouldn't mix with "soul people." Angel gave Paula a menacing nudge. Angel didn't want Paula's attitude to wreck this whole sweet scheme.

There were other friends. Margaret, a former Wac medic turned go-go dancer, negotiated by telephone. She said she couldn't visit because she had pulled a muscle while go-go dancing the night before.

The Mirage, while it couldn't go in for light mixing, hired Roger for an evening as bouncer. A band called Tin Pan Alley would play at the Mirage now and then. A bouncer was necessary for the packed house that usually occurred.



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ANGEL AND HER husband, Roger, visited the Mirage on several occasions attempting to persuade the tavern to try "light mixing" — in which the customers are encouraged to look at, but not touch, the go-go dancers. Angel would dance and Roger would be a bouncer. "I'm sure we could make it work," Angel told Sun-Times reporter Zay N. Smith (left) and Jeff Allen, who played the role as Mirage owner.

"I like to use a slapjack when I'm bouncing," Roger said.

"Oh, c'mon, honey, you don't need a slapjack," Angel said.

"No, I mean I got it just in case a guy pulls a knife or something," Roger said. "You gotta be careful to keep the wrong element out of here."

The Mirage asked Roger to leave the slapjack at home. He said that was OK.

"I know kung fu," he said.

Roger's evening as bouncer, for which he was paid \$25 and a few free beers, went uneventfully. The Mirage was grateful for that.

Angel, meantime, never gave up hope that the Mirage might try light mixing. She kept selling and selling.

"I know we could make it work," she said. "This place, you people, it's a dream come true."

There was no helping it. Angel could never be told that her dream was only a mirage.

**COMING WEDNESDAY:  
Holy Ghost Lady, others  
drift in, glide out**

# Thompson: Probe more than revenue

By Michael Flannery and Pamela Zekman

Citing the findings of a Sun-Times Metro-Poll, Gov. Thompson Monday renewed his demand that a proposed legislative commission investigate city licensing and inspection procedures in Chicago.

Thompson said the telephone survey, which found that large numbers of Chicagoans believe corruption is widespread and that nothing will be done to end it, reflects a dangerous "corrosion of the moral fiber of the community."

Interviewed by telephone in his Springfield office, the governor said:

"As The Sun-Times' series points out, people go from corrupting officials (with payoffs), to cheating customers and then into other vice — like prostitution and gambling."

In a continuing series of articles that began Jan. 8, the newspaper has detailed the experiences of the Mirage, a Near North Side tavern it operated secretly for four months with the Better Government Assn.

The proprietors of the Mirage were told by operators of other small businesses and by business advisers that payoffs, cheating on taxes and illegal deals on such items as liquor, vending machines and garbage pickups were routine. It also was learned that commercial sex could be used to boost profits immensely.

Thompson said that, in light of those findings, "I am a little surprised that (General Assembly Democrats) want to limit the pro-

posed investigation to the Department of Revenue."

Thompson, Senate President David C. Shapiro (R-Amboy) and House Minority Leader George H. Ryan (R-Kankakee) have urged that the resolution which would create the investigating commission be rewritten. They want the commission's mandate to include a review of the "serious problems in licensing and inspection procedures in the City of Chicago." They also demand that it contain an equal number of Republicans and Democrats.

"This is an election year," said Thompson, who with the GOP legislative leaders had committed himself to supporting the resolution as originally drafted. But on Friday, the Republicans issued their new demands.

"The Democrats should do everything possible to assure Republicans that this (investigation) will not be a witch hunt of the Department of Revenue," the governor said. "My fears would be assuaged if they agree to these two amendments."

Results of the survey, published in Sunday's Sun-Times, found that 76 per cent of Chicagoans feel corruption is a widespread, serious problem. Nearly half (49 per cent) feel high officials are involved in corruption and 48 per cent believe nothing will be done to end it.

Mayor Bilandic declined to comment on the MetroPoll.

"I haven't had a chance to study that poll or the manner in which it was taken," the mayor said.

Asked if he would be surprised to learn that

most Chicagoans were convinced that official corruption is widespread, Bilandic said:

"It would all depend on the form of the questions and the areas of the questions."

The mayor, who was interrogated in a brief hallway encounter with reporters as he left City Hall, could not be reached for elaboration.

County Board President George W. Dunne, chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party, said of the MetroPoll findings:

"I think it is appalling that such a vast number of our people feel that this is the case. That kind of cynicism can be very injurious to our democracy."

Dunne, who said he would not create the "bureaucracy" of a new anti-corruption office to monitor county employees, told a reporter

that he would personally deal with citizens wishing to complain of official misconduct by county employees.

Dunne asked that his personal office telephone (443-6404) and his office address (118 N. Clark, Chicago, Ill., 60602) be printed.

"I will communicate with the citizen, get the name of the employe involved, the dates involved and all the necessary information. My office will check it out and then we will prefer charges against the employe, if that is warranted," Dunne said.

Dunne said that in 1977 there were three cases of alleged misconduct that his office referred to State's Atty. Bernard Carey for action. But Carey ruled, "for one reason or another," that charges not be filed, Dunne said. Carey could not be reached for comment.

## Pan Am seeks global excursion fare

NEW YORK (UPI) — What was described as the first round-the-world excursion fare offered by an airline was announced by Pan American World Airways Monday.

The "Round the World in 80 Days" fare is named after Jules Verne's popular novel of nearly a century ago.

The journey must be completed within 80 days and is restricted to certain flights. Seats will be available on a standby basis, but the discounts from normal globe-girdling fares will run up to 45 per cent.

The economy-class fare will be \$999. A first-

class ticket will cost \$1,599. For a reserved seat, the excursion fare will be \$200 higher in economy class and \$300 higher in first class with unlimited stopover privileges. That's still 35 per cent below normal fares.

The fares will go in effect March 10, subject to federal government approval, Pan Am said.

Several routes will be offered with starting points from either the U.S. Atlantic or Pacific coasts. The excursion fares will be good only on Pan Am planes and backtracking will not be permitted.