

Massage parlors remain as popular as ever

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been established, Talese reports. Chapel Hill is not particularly known for its massage parlors, but it has three of them. Two are on bus routes, and one is located downtown. Another is in Hillsborough, about 11 miles north of Chapel Hill. The local parlors are trying to tone down their image. The neon signs have disappeared from two of them.

University massage, located on Franklin Street near the town's bus station, looks like any other store on that block. The outward appearance gives no indication of what's inside.

When I entered the parlor recently, my eyes adjusted slowly to the darkness. A voice from upstairs told me to come up to the second floor.

A door stood in front of me at the top of the stairway. A partition with slits in it was just enough to tease my imagination.

Soon three women appeared wearing long gowns that displayed their bodies. One explained the prices and payment procedures and told me to choose my masseuse.

I studied the women, trying to hide my nervousness. Two were about 5 feet 5 inches tall, and the third barely reached 5 feet. All were brunettes and chubby. I chose the one who explained the prices.

She walked to a large desk sitting along the wall. I peered into the lobby, which resembled a dentist's office. It was tastefully decorated with paneling and carpet. A color television set was tuned to a soap opera while soft music played. Magazines lay on the coffee table in front of the sofa. No pictures of nudes.

The girl took my driver's license and \$35 for the massage. She then led me downstairs into a small room with wall-to-wall mirrors and a table with a mattress on it.

"Get comfortable, and I'll be right back," she said.

"What does 'get comfortable' mean?" I asked.

"Naked!" she shot back.

I swallowed hard and looked around. A sink and paper-towel holder were in one corner. A coat rack and a chair sat across the room. A nightstand with baby oil, powder, sheets and towels stood next to the table. I felt a sudden paranoia that someone was watching me from behind one of the mirrors.

I took off my shirt, pants and shoes. But I stopped at the waistband of my underwear. That was as far as I could go.

My masseuse reappeared and asked why I was still wearing my underwear. I mumbled something about living in the mountains where parlors didn't exist and about being nervous. She smiled, apparently thinking she could persuade me to remove my underwear.

I lay on the table on my stomach watching her strip. The dim light made her look more sensual than when I chose her.

I closed my eyes as she approached me. Her hands touched my shoulders and the baby oil warmed as she rubbed it into my skin. She patiently worked toward my buttocks, actually giving me a relaxing massage.

When she reached my underwear, she stopped. I could hear her squirting more baby oil into her hand. She started again near my ankles, working toward my buttocks.

When she reached my thighs, she told me to roll over. She continued to massage me as before, from my shoulders to my waist, and then from my ankles to my thighs. She placed her hand on my groin and asked me again if I wanted to remove my underwear. Reluctantly, I refused.

She resumed her massage but only near my groin. She pushed the waist-

band down slightly and occasionally reached under it.

"It would be much easier if you took off your underwear."

"I think I'd better go. I don't think I'm quite ready for this."

She smiled and handed me a washcloth. I wiped as much of the baby oil off as I could.

After I dressed, she walked me to the door, kissed my cheek and promised me the full treatment next time.

She opened the door, and I peered out to see if anyone was watching. I darted out and then walked casually as if nothing unusual had happened.

Esquire Health Club, located where Highway 86 crosses Interstate 85 in Hillsborough, fits the massage parlor stereotype. A neon sign which can be seen from the interstate highway declares "All-Girl Staff." The parlor has been converted from a service station, but the inside is carpeted and has modern furniture and paneling.

Massages at both University Massage and Esquire Health Club vary in price from \$24 to \$60 and last for about 30 minutes. The Boulevard Bookstore and Massage Parlor, on the Chapel Hill-Durham Boulevard, imposes a time limit matching the massage's price. For example, a 20-minute massage costs considerably less than a one-hour massage. For a one-hour massage, the customer can also massage his masseuse and take a shower.

The most frequent patrons at University Massage and the Boulevard Bookstore and Massage Parlor are middle-class, middle-aged businessmen who come in during their lunch hours and after work, the masseuses say. University Massage serves some students, but usually on weekends when the students have been partying. Esquire Health Club, though, has a large truck-driver clientele. The masseuses there declined to give any more information about their customers.

Talese, who went to adult establishments in many different cities, observes that most customers are doing well at their jobs and have no family problems. They generally want sexual variety but not romance.

Sexual variety in massage parlors usually means masturbation of the patron by the masseuse using her breasts or hands. It is almost always included with a massage in any of the three local parlors, but breast relief costs more. The masseuse manipulates the customer's genitalia with baby oil or body lotion.

Some of the masseuses admit they accept requests for sexual favors, such as fellatio or sexual intercourse. But these services, cost extra, and depend on the masseuse. Fellatio, a crime against nature in North Carolina law, costs about \$50. Intercourse, considered by law prostitution unless it is performed by a married couple, can cost \$100. Photographs of the masseuses are sometimes allowed, although only for the customer's private use; they cost about \$10 per picture.

Why do women become masseuses? Money is the biggest attraction for a woman to become a prostitute or a masseuse, says Dr. Anthony Jones, assistant professor of sociology at UNC-CH. But

he says the idea that only poor, uneducated women become prostitutes is a myth.

"Now middle-class housewives moonlight during the day as prostitutes, not because they really need the money, but because they enjoy it."

But money is probably the major reason for the Chapel Hill masseuses. "I earned enough from Sunday to Wednesday to pay next month's bills," one says. Another says she earns at least \$200 a day.

Masseuses get a percentage of the massage price, but none would disclose the percentage. They keep tips from customers, about \$15 to \$20, but the largest part of their earnings come from sexual favors rendered.

In his book, *Thy Neighbor's Wife*, Talese observes that World War II was sexually liberating for Americans, especially women. Because so many men were sent overseas, he writes, women entered the work force and realized that they could survive in a man's world:

"While they wrote letters to men they loved, they made love to men they didn't, and ... developed a tolerance and understanding that would one day contribute to their permissiveness as parents...."

Talese says that the war, along with the 1953 Kinsey Report, which showed that Americans were more active sexually than they appeared, led to the more relaxed attitude toward sex in the 1970s.

The Chapel Hill masseuses say they come from average middle-class families. One says she had a friend who was a masseuse and talked her into trying it. All three say they had had intercourse before becoming masseuses, and one claimed to have lost her virginity at age 11.

They say that their attitudes toward sex were forced to change when they began working as masseuses. One says she has been involved in domination and sadism-masochism massages. Another says a customer gave her \$100 to dress him in women's clothes:

"I got him a dress, panty hose, high heels and a wig and helped him put them on. Then he pranced around the room the whole 30 minutes while I told him what a pretty girl he was. I didn't even come close to giving him a regular massage."

Some masseuses do have standards. One says that although she grants most requests, she stops at intercourse.

Sexual relief is one of the morality issues surrounding massage parlors. Tye Hunter, Chapel Hill police attorney, says that any act not considered a crime against nature is permissible. He defines crimes against nature as oral sex and the insertion of fingers into the anus.

"I don't believe the state talks about what exactly a massage is or what exactly a massage isn't," Hunter says. "Manipulation of the penis does not amount to a crime against nature, though."

Ralph Strickland, legal adviser for the Durham Police Department, disagrees: "There is nothing in the statutes that specifically prohibits manipulation of the penis. I would, however, interpret masturbation by a masseuse as prostitution, because the hand is part of the body. North Carolina law defines prostitution, in simple terms, as selling

one's body for money."

Specifically, North Carolina law defines prostitution as "the offering or receiving of the body for sexual intercourse for hire, and ... without hire." The law also prohibits assignment, that is, making an appointment with a prostitute.

North Carolina does not have any law specifically regulating massage parlors. The state has only one statute that affects parlors, but it also pertains to all adult establishments. General Statute 14-202.11, passed in 1977 and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, states:

"No building ... that contains any adult establishment shall contain any other kind of adult establishment...."

Examples of violations could include an adult bookstore and an adult movie theater — or an adult bookstore and a massage parlor — in the same building.

The Boulevard Bookstore and Massage Parlor apparently avoids that law. It sells sex magazines and movies in its lobby. But it also has magazines, such as *Road & Track*, that would be found at almost any newsstand. Chapel Hill Police Chief Herman Stone says mixing sex and non-sex magazines is a loophole in the law:

"A bookstore must have a preponder-

ance of sex books before it is an adult bookstore. Even though the bookstore sells more sex books than non-sex books, it is legal as long as the bookstore's stock has more non-sex books than sex books."

Massage parlors in North Carolina are regulated by cities and counties. Jack Safron of the N.C. Attorney General's office points out. "Massage parlors are not the sort of thing the state really involves itself in, because there is no constitutional question involved," he says.

Cities such as Charlotte and Fayetteville have ordinances requiring parlors to be licensed. Some require applicants to provide written recommendations showing proof of good moral character.

Usually the applicants' backgrounds are investigated. If the applicant has any convictions for sexual crimes, the license is refused. Some localities also require the YMCA and exercise clubs to follow the same procedures.

Areas without massage parlor ordinances follow North Carolina prostitution laws. Chapel Hill, which has no ordinances regulating the parlors, requires that an owner apply for a privilege license just as the owner of any other business in Chapel Hill would. The application asks for such information as "complete exact name under which the

business is being operated" and "nature of business."

Local law enforcement agencies sometimes conduct impromptu parlor inspections. Uniformed officers usually check for health code violations; prostitution investigations are almost always done by detectives.

Strickland, legal adviser for the Durham Police Department, says detectives from neighboring jurisdictions conduct the investigations because local detectives are easily recognized by parlor owners and masseuses.

He says that to prove prostitution, the detectives have to solicit, or ask for sex, which is against North Carolina law and also entrapment.

But, there is no entrapment involved here," Strickland says. "Entrapment occurs when the thought of a crime is placed into the mind of the masseuse by the police officer. Most masseuses take sexual actions for granted" when a request is made.

Strickland says detectives working undercover assume aliases and ask masseuses for sexual favors. If the masseuses agree, the parlor is closed, and the masseuses are arrested for prostitution.

Investigating massage parlors is a low priority of many police departments, unless a citizen files a complaint.

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