

Jack Ruby's Tawdry Strip Joint

NYHT-12/1/64

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DALLAS.

A strip joint is a strip joint, but Jack Ruby's "night club" in the heart of downtown Dallas is not much of a strip joint.

It rhymes with clip joint when the young man at the top of the stairs asks for the two-dollar cover. But not even the Carousel Club in an exception to the Texas law which calls for bring-your-own-bottle parties; the waitresses, in slacks, with hair piled high, would have to push a lot of beer, at a modest 60 cents a bottle, to support a continuous (to 2 a. m.) floor show.

They are not queuing up in the street outside 1312 1/2 Commerce St. to see this show

Jack Ruby was so proud of, even though bellhops carry pockets full of Ruby's two-

color business card, which promises "girls; girls, girls;"

There are three girls, girls, girls in the show. The marquee downstairs advertises Tammi True. The R is missing, and so is Tammi, who wouldn't have to be a new Ann Corio to win top billing in this melancholy troupe.

The tables are tiny, the big room dark. Three little runways protrude from the stage, between the ringside tables. The early crowd Friday night numbered 24 and their average age was about the same. The three in tuxedos, who had brought their own pint, were sailors.

The first stripper, a young, unsmiling blonde, came on in a black cocktail dress that made her look like an overdressed teenager. She avoided the runways. The second blonde had no chin, but her extroverted sense of the ob-

scene won her the most leers. The third shook like a bowlful of jelly.

A continuous show with only three strippers calls for continuity, and the emcee tried. A passing-fair ventriloquist, he tried with card tricks, with a 400-pound heckler planted in the audience, with tired gags:

EMCEE: "You don't know mathematics."

DUMMY: "You don't know rabbits."

It just laid there, and evidently it was laying there before Jack Ruby became famous by murdering the man who may have murdered the President. The only thing new, said the lady who handed paper towels to patrons on their way to the rest rooms ("My only pay is your gratuities," she had lettered on a shirt cardboard in the dirty men's room),

was the emcee, and he had been there about a month.

"They" had closed the place "on their own," she said, for "about" three days. She didn't remember which three days.

In an attempt to meet the competition of Abe Weinstein's Colony Club, a few doors away, the Carousel holds a giveaway. Among the prizes were two bottles of cheap champagne, a "year's supply" of those new English razor blades, a large stuffed animal and a long-playing record entitled "How to Strip for Your Husband."

The fleshy stripper spun a crude roulette wheel at the back of the stage, under a short of coat of arms: three fleurs de lis on a purple-pink field, topped by a gold coronet. A youth who said the last two digits of his ticket stub were 04 (nobody checked it)-chose a bottle of champagne. They spun the wheel again, awarded the other bottle of champagne and put the rest of the prizes away.

There is a bar at the end of the room, but customers are discouraged from sitting at it. A mature blonde sat there a while, without drink-

ing. Then, emanating a sickly-sweet aroma as she swept across the room, she joined a middle-aged man at his table and asked where he was from. She didn't stay long.

Near the towel lady's station was a table, bearing a large array of cups and saucers and a small coffee pot. In at least one "club" in at least one other large Texas city, the liquor law is circumvented in coffee cups. Jack Ruby did not run an espresso house, and he knew a lot of cops.

Back in 1845 it was easy to become a big man in Dallas. Four years earlier it was a log cabin, built on the bank of the Trinity River by one John Neely Bryan. But things and people grow fast in Texas; by 1845 it was a village, and a sharpie from Philadelphia got himself elected its vice-president. His name was George Miffin Dalls.

Now it's the big D. But if the entrepreneur of a tawdry fleshpot that would be third-rate by Baltimore standards, could make it, it's still easy to become a big man in Dallas.