

Police ‘pants’ nudie bar

By Laura Smith

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At about 10 p.m. on Saturday, March 10, business was booming at the First Amendment Gentlemen’s Club on Hwy 99 north of Chico. The club’s manager, Stephan Dana Clark, was expecting a bachelor party at the strip bar that night and had received a request for special party favors from party-goers—marijuana, a full bar and “women who would do more than dance.”

He got a lot more than he bargained for. After he’d allegedly ushered the bachelor party into a back room stocked with alcohol and given them a small amount of pot, the party, as it were, was over.

Or so Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey tells the story. In fact, he says, the “bachelors” were undercover sheriff’s deputies who in turn alerted a team of more than three dozen police officers, deputy district attorneys and sheriff’s deputies waiting outside that the bust they’d been planning for almost a full year was ready to begin.

The First Amendment Club has long been a thorn in the side of the county. Ramsey said his office received a tip last year that the club, which is licensed only to serve juice, was a hotbed of prostitution and drug dealing. His office, along with the Sheriff’s Department, has been investigating the club for almost a full year.

That night, Clark, 52, the club’s assistant manager and doorman, was arrested for selling/furnishing marijuana and possessing a firearm (Clark is a convicted felon, a status that makes it illegal for him to own a gun). His girlfriend, Bridgett Lynn McCabe, 36, was arrested for felony possession of a firearm; Crispin Sanchez, 29, was arrested for felony possession of explosives; and Caren Ariel Naiman, 21, was arrested for possession of cocaine.

While the officers searched the bar, a sheriff’s SWAT team—dressed in full SWAT regalia—surrounded a doublewide mobile home (where Clark lived) behind the club and broke down the door.

Club owner George Mull, a Sacramento attorney who so far has frustrated official attempts to shut down his operation, said the county was over-zealous in its investigation of the club. He pointed out that police didn’t find any marijuana other than “seed and ash” in Clark’s mobile home and that the “explosives” Sanchez was arrested for were nothing more than five pounds of firecrackers.

He also complained that the police were issued a search warrant on Thursday but chose to wait until Saturday night at a peak business time to raid the club.

However, Ramsey said it took that long to organize all the teams participating in the raid. He added that the team seized “quite a bit” of evidence at the club which suggested that prostitution was allowed there, and “other illegal activities.”

He declined to say just how the investigation was conducted, how much it cost, how many officers were involved or how often they had to visit the club to collect evidence, other than that they went there “intermittently” to observe the activities.

“We had to dedicate a significant amount of time to this investigation,” Ramsey said. “These are serious charges, and we think there will be additional arrests.”



BIG BUST?

George Mull, owner of the First Amendment Club, is seen here when the strip club first opened in 1998.

PHOTO BY SARA SIPES

More busts of First Amendment employees

By Laura Smith

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Sheriff's deputies arrested two more people April 11 in connection with last month's drugs and weapons bust out at the First Amendment Gentlemen's Club. This time, the arrests were for felony child endangerment and drug possession.

By all accounts, the arrests were just the beginning of what the Sheriff's Department has termed an "ongoing investigation."

Sheriff's Lt. Jerry Smith said that it appears that Daylyn Presley, a former First Amendment Gentlemen's Club employee, was operating a prostitution ring under the cover of an adult escort service called Vanessa Andrews Studios. Presley wasn't arrested, but items seized at last month's bust at the First Amendment Club led police to his Patricia Drive home, which was searched April 11, Smith said.

Rachel Gonzalez, a 27-year-old former dancer at the club, was arrested at her Magnolia Drive home during the sweep. The Sheriff's Department speculated that she might have worked for Vanessa Andrews Studios, but she wasn't charged with any crime specific to the escort service. Instead, she was charged with felony child endangerment, as three children—ages 6 to 12—were found in the home, which police said contained drugs.

Antonio Gonzalez, 53, was also arrested at the Magnolia Drive home on felony charges of possession of a controlled substance and child endangerment. He was also booked for violating his parole.

Sheriff's deputies also served search warrants April 11 on four other Chico homes in relation to the First Amendment Club bust, Smith said.

"We got a lot, I mean a lot, of stuff," Smith said. "Records, papers, photographs and videos. There was a lot to get."

For First Amendment Club owner George Mull, the latest arrests are just the most recent in a long line of headaches. The club, he said, has been the subject of harassment since almost the day it opened. Mull, a Sacramento attorney, is in the process of selling the club and partially blames his own absentee ownership for some of the club's internal problems. Mull said he's been to the club only three times in the past 12 months—and then only to show it to prospective buyers.

"It really needs someone who can be there every day making sure everyone is doing what they're supposed to be doing," Mull said. "I just wasn't able to do that."

Although he threatened a lawsuit against the county just after last month's bust at the club—in which four employees were arrested on weapons and drug possession charges—he said April 15 that he's since dropped those plans.

"I just want the new owners to be able to open without all that hanging over their heads," he said. "I just want it all to be over."

Are Strip Clubs Dancing Around the Law?

April 23, 2001

By SUSAN CARPENTER

[The Los Angeles Times](#)

When Alicia Cadena strolls onto the stage of a club near LAX, wearing her thigh-high vinyl go-go boots and neon-green hot pants, she expects to make bank. Any self-respecting exotic dancer would after a five-minute shimmy, swivel and strip routine that leaves no questions about her ample anatomy.

For young women like Cadena, who make their money peeling away their G-strings and teasing off their tops, stripping is a job--a job as real as waitressing and one with some parallel compensation issues.

Strippers--like waitresses--are considered employees under federal law, meaning they're owed an hourly wage and expected to pay taxes on their earnings from tips. Most exotic dancers don't get to keep much of the tip money that club patrons give them, though. That despite a new California law that took effect Jan. 1, which says dancers are entitled to keep 100% of cash tips from customers.

Many clubs continue to take as much as half of dancers' gratuities and do not pay them an hourly wage. That has made exotic dance clubs a hotbed for labor disputes in recent years.

It's a high-stakes game for everyone involved. The adult entertainment industry is a multibillion-dollar-a-year business involving about 3,000 exotic dance clubs and tens of thousands of dancers nationally. Several thousands of those dancers are in California.

Nationwide, the courts have ruled in dozens of lawsuits and continue to handle cases filed by dancers claiming unfair employment practices. In California, the state Labor Commission has handled about 100 complaints from dancers in the last few years.

"I have witnessed other girls not even making \$40 for one night's shift," said Cadena, 32, who has been dancing seven years. "That's not even minimum wage."

Cadena usually ends her work shift with \$400 or more in cash--bills she's collected from the stage floor at the end of her strip routines and retrieved from her string bikini during private dances. Many dancers are not as financially successful. After paying stage fees and tipping club staff, they may leave with next to nothing.

"This is an industry that is going to have to be brought into compliance kicking and dragging," said Miles Locker, chief counsel for the state Labor Commission, the agency charged with enforcing [AB 2509](#), the new law.

The new law amends Section 350 of the Labor Code, inserting new language regarding dancers' tips. The amendment reads: "Any amounts paid directly by a patron to a dancer . . . shall be deemed a gratuity."

Supporting the change were dancers' lobbying groups and state agencies that wanted to make clubs accountable for the mostly cash income the clubs were taking in, according to Locker. "[These clubs] are used to making lots of money off the dancers, and they don't want that situation to change."

In fact, two dance clubs in San Diego contend the new law is unconstitutional and filed suit against the Labor Commission in February. The suit claims that the law treats the exotic dance club industry differently than other industries and that it interferes with the contracts clubs have with their dancers.

"[AB 2509] is just a way of trying to steal money from the club," said George Mull, counsel for CB & DM Entertainment Inc. and Jolar Cinema in San Diego, the two clubs that filed the suit.

Most clubs set fees for the services their dancers provide--such as a lap dance in which the dancer straddles the customer and moves provocatively for the length of one song. The customer pays the dancer, and most clubs then take a 50% cut--their fair share, they say, for providing the venue.

"It's ridiculous to look at this as a tip," said Mull. "Most men that have gone to a club, if they asked a girl to come over and do . . . table dances and at the end said, 'Here's \$7,' she'd say, 'No. The stated price is \$20.' It's not a tip. You can't just change the name of something and have it be different than what it is."

Whether that money is a tip or a fee is at the heart of the issue in California. A larger issue nationally is whether the dancers should be classified as employees.

The majority of dance clubs, in California and nationwide, consider their dancers to be independent contractors or tenants, not employees. As such, they do not pay their dancers by the hour or provide other employee benefits, such as workers' compensation or disability. Many clubs even charge them to perform.

A lawsuit filed by dancers says that Deja Vu, a national chain of exotic clubs based in Lansing, Mich., charges a stage fee of \$50 to \$100 just to come to work, fines them for being late, chewing gum on stage or failing to smile during performances. In addition, the suit says the clubs require dancers to tip a minimum of \$10 to each waitress, bartender, deejay and parking attendant, to purchase a \$10 "ladies drink" during each shift, and takes a 40% cut of the money dancers earn from lap dances.

"As soon as you walked in, you were in the negative," said Cadena, who worked for [Deja Vu](#) in North Hollywood in 1998 but now works at the [Century Lounge](#) near LAX,

George Mull: He's not your typical attorney

By Mollie Bloudoff-Indelicato

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1415 L St. is a tall building, towering above downtown Sacramento. George Mull walks into a large conference room on the 10th floor, at home in the world of power lunches and consultation meetings. The lawyer sits in a chair ergonomically fitted to ensure good posture, across from floor-to-ceiling windows that look out onto rows of palm trees and the white dome of the Capitol building.

True to his surroundings, the 49-year-old is wearing a suit and tie, quite a contrast to the starched gray uniform he wore at West Point's military academy, the Polos he threw on as an undergrad at the University of California, Los Angeles, or the regulation tie he donned each afternoon as a security guard for Playboy.

The Sacramento native is not your typical attorney-at-law, though he says he began his career in an acutely traditional way — at an internship with Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher in Century City, one of the biggest law firms in California at the time. But the types of cases he's handled since have been anything but orthodox.

Well-known in the area for representing Timothy Kruppe, the previous owner of a Lodi sex store and proprietor of a Lockeford bikini bar, Mull's latest client — a pot dispensary in Galt — is still a far cry from your average divorce filing.

Mull pulls out his medicinal marijuana card and holds it at half an arm's length. It was prescribed to him for back pain and sleeplessness. His name is misspelled, "Goerge Mull." He chuckles, finding the error funny.

"(Mull) has a very good sense of humor, but at the same time he's very much onpoint and very well-versed in what he's talking about," says Amir Daliri, co-founder of California Cannabis Association, an organization dedicated to developing a regulatory framework for the medical marijuana industry.

That sense of humor is uncharacteristic in law. Mull said there are no funny lawyers, only funny people who have made serious career mistakes, and then laughs — loudly.

But his venture into the profession was no error.

"Drilled into me from a very early age was a sense of justice and a desire to help those that society overlooked," Mull says.

Law runs deep in the veins of the Mull clan. With three generations practicing before him, Mull was raised within the discipline, forced to submit facts and state his case in family arguments. Mull officially joined the trade after graduating from McGeorge School of Law in 1987. And though getting a degree helped train him for the rigors of the legal world, what he learned outside the lecture hall was just as valuable an education.

West Point: 'If it can be seen, it can be hit'

Back when his salt-andpepper hair — a recent development, he says — was all one color, his driver's license pegged him at 17, and his idea of a career didn't include the hefty volumes of law, Mull moved to New York to attend the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

West Point demanded dedication and fostered a sense of discipline that didn't adhere to a 9-to-5 schedule. The military academy was a way of life.

"There's very little privacy, and it's amazing that people check (how) you fold your underwear," he says.

The repercussions of an improperly folded pair of briefs were demerits. Get enough of those, and face the consequences, the most common of which was an "area tour." These tours forced troublemakers to walk back and forth in a central location with their rifles — *for hours*

"I happened to walk more than almost anybody," Mull says.

Mull left West Point after only a year, but it wasn't the dedication or discipline that drove him away. Mull says he saw the whole framework of the program as inherently callous.

"(The system was) based on a lot of people being very mean to other people," he says.

Yet the military academy gave him an adage he still remembers, and uses, to this day: "If it can be seen, it can be hit. If it can be hit, it can be killed," he says. "Sometimes that's useful in litigation, figuring something out and understanding it, you can succeed."

Playboy: Actually reading the articles

Still not old enough to drink legally, Mull returned to California and enrolled at UCLA. That was 1981, a year of Hollywood mourning. In 1980 Playboy Bunny Dorothy Stratten was murdered by her ex-husband, and Hugh Hefner's house was still in shock.

At the same time, another calamity struck — Mull's tuition was due, and his bank account was empty. So he managed to finagle one of the most sought-after jobs in Hollywood, working security at the Playboy Mansion.

"It was the dream job," he said. "It paid for school, insurance."

And it didn't hurt that he got to hang out with gorgeous girls, either.

Day to day duties included manning the guard station at the entrance of the headquarters at 8560 Sunset Boulevard, accompanying Playmates to lunch or dinner and surveillance during mansion parties.

Though Mull only knew Hefner from a distance, he says he befriended quite a few of the Playmates, briefly dating Barbara Edwards, who was the 1984 Playmate of the Year.

And even now, Mull still reads Playboy — for the articles, of course.

"Sometimes I get tips for First Amendment law that talks about legal issues," he says.

After failing to get into UCLA's prestigious film program, Mull left the area to finish his undergraduate education at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Yet despite having to say goodbye to Playboy, Mull's Hollywood schooling wasn't over.

The 'Happy Days': 'Ayyyyy!'

Mull credits his roles in the Hollywood scene with his ability to work a courtroom and sway a judge and jury.

"I wouldn't want to be on the other side of him," Daliri says. "He is very logical, very wellspoken, extremely versed in what it is he's talking about."

On the "Happy Days" set Mull was producer Jim Dunne's right-hand man, doing everything from reviewing scripts to reading lines with Ron Howard, who played Richie Cunningham. At the same time he took acting classes and performed stand up comedy.

Experience in stagecraft was perfect training for a career in law.

"Most of improv is just learning to listen and have courage and be willing to speak out and speak your truth," he says. " ... Pay attention to the other person and react off of what the other person is doing."

George Mull exits the office building that houses his practice and strolls through the adjacent grounds. The path meanders, but Mull walks with a purpose.

He points out different landmarks, most significant only to him: the intricate molding on a building, a cornerstone, a coffee shop. Each has a story almost as varied as his own, and he relates their tales in detail, laughing over past escapades. Because Mull has no end of stories, and the vast majority are, for a lawyer, uncharacteristically funny.