

THE YORK DISPATCH

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HOME EDITION

35 CENTS

Give a Christmas, Give a Hanukkah. Goal: \$30,000. Given today: \$1549. Given to date: \$13,545.51

Dark side to sex business

Sources say 'political figures' have been videotaped getting sexual favors in York County

STAFF REPORT

For better than two decades, massage parlors, escort services and prostitution have flourished in York County.

You find them in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book, and in the classified advertisements in the Dispatch/Sunday News.

But what York countians may not know is that there

may be far more to the businesses than just the occasional criminal cases they spark — the recent indictments of those running Platinum Escorts in Hellam Township, or of the women accused of running a chain of six central Pennsylvania massage parlors, including one in York.

Records from those cases, and interviews by the Dispatch/Sunday News with

dozens of people connected to the cases, reveal the kinds of elements that suggest there's a darker side to those businesses than just sex for sale.

Separate interviews with those familiar with the parlor operations in York County, and those involved in law enforcement's investigations turned up striking similarities in their descriptions of secret video cameras taping public of-

ficials receiving sexual favors. According to these sources, the videos were intended to gain influence over what one source described as "political figures" by threatening disclosure.

Captured on tape: You get a judge on (video) tape, is it going to help you? You're damn right it's going to help you," said this same source, a former investigator connected to a massage parlor investiga-

tion in the county.

The source declined to identify which political figures were video taped.

He said investigators believe in the case of Larry Keeney, a silent partner was involved in his parlor businesses in York Township and Wrightsville, and that money from Keeney's operations was siphoned to organized crime

See MESSAGE A6

Close to half-way mark now

By JAMES D. SNEEDON Dispatch/Sunday News

Two one dollar donations were given to the Give-a-Christmas, Give-a-Hanukkah fund this weekend.

"One had only this note: 'Let's get that candle up!'" The other came from Jennifer Melhorn of York with the message "I hope the people who need help get enough money."

"We've had a lot of requests this year for help and are currently wrapping toys, shopping for clothes and getting ready for food deliveries.

Those two dollars, joined with \$1,547 in other donations, pushed the fund close to the half-way mark with only 10 days until Christmas.

There are people in York County who have unusual needs this holiday season. They're people who have fallen through the cracks and have precious little resources to meet their needs.

"We'll see that 100 percent of what you give goes to charitable needs. Any administrative costs will be absorbed by the Dispatch/Sunday News. Every penny you contribute will go toward helping others.

How to give: Here's how the Christmas, Hanukkah fund works:

If you would like to contribute, you decide what your gift will be. There is no bottom line. Multiple gifts of a dollar and five dollars quickly add up to larger totals.

Send contributions to: Give-a-Christmas, Give-a-Hanukkah Fund

The York Dispatch 205 N. George St. York, Pa. 17401.

You may include a short note wishing someone a Merry Christmas or Happy Hanukkah, or a memorial, or just simply a wish for something

See HALF-WAY A4

What do you want for Christmas?



JASON PLOTKIN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Nary Long of York carries her 12-year-old son, Bona, who has Muscular Dystrophy, from his wheelchair to sit on Santa's lap during the Make-A-Wish Foundation party yesterday at Wishehaven Hall.

SEASON OF WISHES

Make-A-Wish holds party for kids with life-threatening illnesses

By JOHN BUGBEE Dispatch/Sunday News

In this season of wishes, 10-year-old Anna Shaw's wish to Santa isn't just for herself. She said a Beanie Baby or a stuffed animal might be nice to find under the tree on Christmas morning.

"Peace on Earth, and that people find cures for CF, and other diseases, and cancer," Anna said.

Since birth, Anna has had cystic fibrosis. She and more than 30 other children and their families were joined by volunteers with the Make-A-Wish Foundation of York for the foundation's Christmas Party, held yesterday at Wishehaven Hall in Springsbury Township.

'They're allowed to wish for anything.'

Diane Baublitz, local Make-A-Wish executive director

The foundation makes wishes come true for children who have life-threatening illnesses.

"They're allowed to wish for anything," said Diane Baublitz, executive director of the foundation's York, Adams and Franklin counties' chapters.

An Aspen wish: A fifth-grade student at North Hills Elementary School, Anna's wish was a dream come true when the foundation helped her and her family travel to Aspen,

Colo. two years ago to visit her hero, Marty Stauffer, creator and producer of "Wild America," the PBS documentary nature series.

"I like animals a whole lot," she said as she colored one of Santa's reindeer in a coloring book.

After visiting with Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus, every youngster got gift bags filled with coloring books, crayons, candy toys, as well as the video "Annabell's Wish."

Seven-year-old Russell Dubbs, of Seven Valleys, was so excited he could hardly stand still as he waited in line to sit on Santa's lap.

He hopes Santa brings him a Slammer Car and an electronic virtual pet.

Two years ago Russell was diagnosed with

See MAKE-A-WISH A4

Stalking organic farmers

After ignoring industry, feds will now set rules

By MARIAN BURROS The New York Times

WASHINGTON — After years of ignoring the organic food industry, the Department of Agriculture will perform an about-face today and announce a sweeping set of proposed regulations that would govern all organically grown food from the farm to the consumer.

If organic food once meant shriveled produce with brown spots sold in a tiny store with sawdust strewn on a wooden floor and potted ferns hanging from the rafters, today it is a mainstream multi-billion-dollar segment of the American food supply.

The proposed rules would for the first time define exactly which products, whether raw or processed, may be labeled organic food. They also set standards for the production and handling of organically grown crops and organically raised meat and poultry — for example prohibiting the use of antibiotics in animals, except to treat illness.

Organic food popular: The regulations come at a time of soaring popularity for organic food, with products increasingly available in conventional supermarkets and sales increasing more than 20 percent each year since 1990.

Last year, the sales of organic food reached \$3.5 billion, driven by the baby-boom generation, the same people who began raising questions about the safety of chemical pesticides and their impact on the environment in the 1970s.

"A decade ago organic agriculture was laughed out of USDA," said Margaret Mellon, director of agriculture and biotechnology for the Union of Concerned Scientists, a research and lobbying group based in Washington.

"There are few things that have happened in this decade that are more important than the emergence of a robust sector of organic agriculture, because we want an environment that isn't doused season after season with chemi-

See ORGANIC A4

Seat belt bill a 'nanny law'?

Lawmaker wants to make it a primary offense to not wear a belt in the car

By MICHAEL RACE Harrisburg Bureau

Some local lawmakers say a proposal to strengthen the state's seat belt regulations seems like an unnecessary "nanny law" that substitutes government control for personal responsibility.

Rep. Robert Godshall, R-Montgomery, announced last week that he will sponsor a bill that would allow a police officer to cite a motorist solely for not wearing a seat belt. Under existing law, a person can be cited for failure to wear a seat belt only after being pulled over for another vehicle violation.

He's seen first-hand how seat belts can help.

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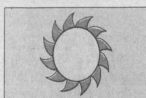
In other words, the change would make failure to wear a seat belt a "primary offense," instead of its current designation as a "secondary offense." Police currently can cite a driver solely for a seat belt violation only when the unbelted passenger is under four years of age.

Under the bill, a motorist caught without a seat belt on could be fined \$25. The driver also could be fined if a front-seat passenger fails to buckle

See SEAT BELT A4

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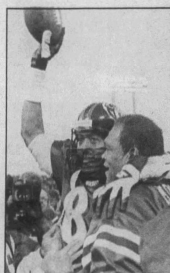
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SPORTS

Final day at Memorial Stadium

Ravens beat Oilers, 21-19, on emotional last home game

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Rain didn't make drought go away

York ranks second in rainfall deficit

By LESLIE GRAY STREETER Dispatch/Sunday News

As a drought watch continues in much of the state, York County has the dubious distinction of ranking second in rainfall deficit, according to the director of the county's Emergency Management Agency.

EMA director Bob Straw said that as of Nov. 30, the county's rainfall was a total of 29.7 inches for this year — a deficit of 9.22 inches, or 25.8 percent less than average.

The lack of rainfall is second only to Columbia County, which has a 26.4 percent deficit, he said.

And, although it has rained several of the previous weekends, the drought watch has

See DROUGHT A4

Drought terms:

York and Adams counties are among 29 counties around the state under a drought watch; 17 other counties are under drought warnings.

Here's an explanation of what the terms mean, according to Bob Straw, director of York County's emergency management agency.

A drought watch means consumers are asked to voluntarily reduce consumption by at least 5 percent.

A drought warning asks consumers to voluntarily cut consumption by 10 to 15 percent.

A drought emergency declared by the governor imposes mandatory restrictions.

# MASSAGES, MEN AND MONEY

## Most difficult racket to crack is the massage parlor

For the vice squad cop, it's a matter of staying within the law, not blowing one's cover

By JOHN BUGBEE

*Dispatch/Sunday News*  
 "Of all prostitution investigations, the most difficult is massage parlors," said former Pennsylvania State Trooper Robert Kessler.

Before he became head of the York County drug task force, Kessler was a state police vice investigator, often working undercover.

He estimates he's arrested thousands of prostitutes during two decades of police work. Kessler said undercover investigators must work within the parameters of the law to avoid any appearance of entrapment while at the same time looking to purchase sex without arousing the suspected prostitute's suspicions.

"It's sort of an acting game. You act like you're a john," Kessler said.

Entrapment occurs when an undercover police officer convinces a person to commit a crime they ordinarily would

avoid. When a suspected prostitute agrees to have sex for money, any sex, it's against the law.

**Definition is clouded:** But in 1977, when Kessler and fellow trooper Phil Grew went before Judge Joseph Erb in a case involving two massage parlor attendants charged with prostitution, the definition of illegal sex became less certain.

The women were arrested when they agreed to masturbate undercover investigators as part of the massage offered at the Executive II on North George Street in North York. (Charges were brought again this summer by Attorney General Mike Fisher against the operator of Executive II; the case is pending.)

During a pre-trial hearing, Erb, who is a chain of six magistrates, agreed with defense attorney Harold Fitzkee's argument that the state's prostitution law did not define masturbation in ex-

change for money as an illegal sexual activity; that only intercourse for money was illegal.

The case against the two women was dismissed.

In the aftermath vice investigators in York County would have to live with what was called the Erb ruling.

"It created a roadblock for us in terms of what sexual activity was illegal and which wasn't," Kessler said.

**The 'Catch-22':** York County Sheriff and former York City Police Chief William Hise said the Erb ruling created "a Catch-22" for undercover officers. They could no longer make arrests for prostitution in massage parlor investigations as long as attendants only offered masturbation, not actual intercourse.

Officers trying to pass themselves off as johns wanting intercourse became suspect if they declined to be masturbat-

ed first. "It used to get where they (the attendants) didn't trust you," Hise said.

Faced with the limitations of the Erb ruling, police turned to concentrating their resources on the growing number of drug-related crimes through the 1980s. Massage parlors were pretty much left alone.

"It wasn't one of our top priority crimes," Hise said. Hise said to discourage customers, his department started assigning patrols to the neighborhoods where parlors operated.

"Just having a marked police car was a deterrent," Hise said. And while the Erb ruling appeared to be an insurmountable obstacle to getting charges of prostitution strong enough to hold up in court, local law enforcement was handed a break which led to raids against the parlors in April 1986.

The break came with the convictions of parlor operators

and attendants in Erie and Allentown who were charged with prostitution for offering massages.

Judges in Erie and Lehigh County Courts rejected the argument that masturbation couldn't be defined as an illegal sexual activity.

**Vulnerable ruling:** The rulings gave York County law enforcement officials the opening they needed to go after the parlors, confident the Erb ruling might finally be vulnerable.

In April 1986, police raided and shut down the six parlors operating in York City and the two operating in the county.

"We believe the (Erb) ruling is not presently the law in the commonwealth," York Mayor William Althaus said after the raids. "And we believe the courts of York County will agree."

Newly elected in 1986, York County District Attorney Stanley Rebert assigned assistant

district attorney John Thompson Jr. to prosecute a test case — one of the women arrested in the parlor raids.

"Stan asked me to do this specifically because of the Erb ruling — to challenge the Erb ruling to establish a record to go to the superior court if we were not successful locally," Thompson said.

In a jury trial the woman was acquitted, but not before York County Judge John Miller had refused to dismiss the case. Judge Miller's decision directly challenged the original Erb ruling when he ruled masturbation for money was an act of prostitution.

Thus the year that had begun with parlor operators in York County certain they were not breaking the law finally ended in November with a state superior court ruling that masturbation was illegal in a case involving a Lehigh County massage parlor.

## Massage parlors: Convenient fronts to sell illegal sex

Just below the surface of the discreet ads and quiet storefronts lurks a booming business

By JOHN BUGBEE

*Dispatch/Sunday News*

For the uninitiated, massage parlors are probably no more than their advertisements suggest — businesses offering a serene oasis of escape from the stresses of everyday life.

Discreet ads typically placed in the Yellow Pages, newspapers, and other publications offer alluring services such as massages, whirlpools, saunas, tanning beds, privacy, confidentiality.

But it's the pampering not mentioned in the ads that's getting the attention of law enforcement officials, who say massage parlors as well as escort services, can be convenient fronts for the real and very lucrative business of selling illegal sex to a willing clientele.

### ■ MESSAGE

## Men, massages and money

Continued from Page A1

interests in New Jersey. Rogovin committed suicide in a Lackawanna County hotel room last January.

An inquiry made by the Dispatch with New Jersey's justice crime bureau and the Division of Criminal Justice turned up no known connection between York County and criminal elements in that state.

A former York City parlor operator who asked not to be identified said in 1986 when his and other parlors were closed in a series of police raids at least one parlor may have used a hidden video camera to record influential people having sex.

### Used for dirt on people

He also said the secret taping was done to compromise influential people, including government officials. "He said the implied threat was, 'If you don't do what we want we'll give these tapes to your wife, your church, your civic organization. We'll ruin you forever.'"

The same source acknowledged he had no personal knowledge of a camera being used and he admitted he could not remember the name of the parlor that allegedly had the camera.

Nonetheless, the information he volunteered without prompting during a lengthy interview was essentially the same as the scheme described by the former law enforcement official and various female employees of the massage parlors and escort services.

According to court records video tapes of women and customers were seized in 1995 when state police raided Larry Keeney's three massage parlors, Majestic III in York Township. Fascinations, in Wrightsville and Impressions in Harrisburg.

Whether state police or the attorney general's office viewed the tapes, or where they are today remains a mystery.

David Ness, owner of Platinum Escorts who was arraigned in York County Common Pleas Court Friday, has admitted that he and silent

partners Dick Parks had attempted single porn video, but nothing came of it.

Former employees of Platinum Escorts, however, described how a video surveillance camera was inside a smoke alarm and was used to take videos of the women and unsuspecting customers.

Greg Kovalchick, another player in the "bachelor party" business claims that homemade videos were purchased from Ness' office. Ness denies the allegation.

### Ensuring public officials

With available technology and expertise, ensuring public officials receiving sexual favors would be feasible, according to a former investigator with the now-defunct Pennsylvania Crime Commission.

"It's quite doable," said the investigator. "If the targeted public official has an inclination or a weakness, or a habit that can be exploited, the kind of man you're talking about here would have trouble compromising those officials."

Allegations of drug use, extortion, money laundering and alleged payoffs to elected officials and people in law enforcement all suggest there may be more behind-the-scenes players in those sex businesses — perhaps even organized crime.

But organized crime in the parlors and escort services, if it does exist in York County, is well hidden. According to Charles Rogovin of Temple University's faculty and former vice-chairman of the state crime commission, organized crime interests such as motorcycle and Asian gangs have had a lengthy history of involvement in massage parlors and escort services in several Pennsylvania cities including Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

However, Rogovin was less certain about organized crime being a player in York County's parlors and escort businesses. And while he had no knowledge of law enforcement intelligence on organized crime in York County, Rogovin didn't dismiss it.

### Haven for organized crime

He said in addition to drugs, racketeering, gambling and loan sharking, parlors are a "traditional haven" for organized crime interests because they represent a low risk of getting either the public's or law enforcement's attention. He said using video cameras to ensnare and compromise public officials, while easy enough to do, would entail a calculated risk for those doing the surveillance. "Remember, you've got one shot at disclosure. Once the holder makes the disclosure, the cat's out of the bag and no one can dissipate," Rogovin said.

Compared to the intense scrutiny being given today by law enforcement, the parlors and escort businesses were scarcely noted at the time.

"It wasn't one of our top priority crimes," York County Sheriff and former York City Police Chief William Hise said.

By 1986, eight massage parlors were in business in and around York. The parlors went from an obscure enterprise attracting little notice, to one churning up controversy, public outcry and a law enforcement offensive to shut them down or force operators to clean up their act.

But parlor operators insisted they had the law on their side thanks to a 1977 court ruling. In that ruling, York County Common Pleas Judge Joseph Erb gave parlor employees

some leeway to have sexual contact with customers in exchange for money without fear of arrest for prostitution.

In a case involving two Executive II employees represented by former York County District Attorney Harold Fitzkee, Erb ruled paying for masturbation was not a crime under the state's prostitution law because no sexual intercourse had occurred. The cases against the two women were dismissed.

"It was a good ruling," Fitzkee said during a recent interview. Erb ruled that had state lawmakers wanted to, they could have made masturbation-for-pay an act of prostitution against state law.

"They did not," Erb wrote in his 1977 ruling. "And however abhorrent such activity may be

to the court, it is beyond our authority to do so."

Relying on what they assumed was the legal protection provided by the Erb ruling, parlor operators began touting so-called "hand-release" to potential customers willing to ask — as the Rev. John Crawford discovered.

The former minister of Order United Methodist Church at 301 W. Philadelphia St. in York became one of several activists who campaigned against the parlors in 1986.

"I just thought they were legitimate businesses," Crawford said — until he started looking into the massage parlor business after New Horizons, operated by Larry Keeney, who killed himself in a Scranston-area hotel last January, opened in 1986 at 149 W. Newberry St. near Crawford's church.

To bolster his argument to convince church leaders and city officials that parlors were undesirable businesses, Crawford said he telephoned more than a dozen in the York area and various parts of the state without identifying himself to learn about their services and charges.

When pressed to describe what a customer got for the prices quoted, Crawford said operators would acknowledge masturbation could be included. Pushed further, Crawford said, operators would tell him that although sexual intercourse wasn't allowed, what female attendants did on their own with their customers was a "wait a minute," Crawford said.

"I opened my eyes and said, 'wait a minute,'" Crawford said. Charges were dropped.

Booth was also charged in 1986 with counts each of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault and indecent assault, and two counts of corruption of a minor for molesting pre-teen girls.

Booth pleaded guilty this Jan. 13 to two counts each of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, indecent assault and corruption. He received 5 years probation, and was ordered to attend Alcoholics Anonymous and a sex offenders group.

### Back in business

It isn't unusual for police and prosecutors to make headlines, but those dealing in prostitution take their hits and sometimes are quickly back in business. Johns are seldom charged and the women are frequently used by police in undercover operations to make drug buys and be informants.

A check of court records reveal there is no record for any prostitute who was arrested or was subpoenaed by the state grand jury in the Keeney case. Some may have cooperated willingly with the investigation. But others, sources say, did not. And state police and other law enforcement officers have used the prostitutes in various ways by holding the charges over their heads.

One woman, according to several sources, was forced to cooperate in several operations by the state police under the threat they would have her children taken away. She refused to talk about it.

And there were claims the women are compromised in other ways, at private parties for police officers.

Court records, where available, reveal interesting sequences, including visits made to massage parlors in September and October where acts of prostitution occurred and no arrests being made until subsequent visits in May.

Attorney Harold Fitzkee, former York County District Attorney, was blunt in his assessment of the prostitution police are getting sexually gratified for morality. "But Fitzkee has his own vested interest — he has represented a number of women arrested and charged with prostitution.

prostitution. On Thursday, Walsh and his employees were ordered to stand trial in Dauphin County Court.

### Finding out undercover cops

Because of the 1977 Erb ruling, sex-business workers found they could easily weed out undercover officers by refusing other offers from clients unless they'd first gone along with masturbation. And undercover cops couldn't.

Coupled with that has been the fact that law enforcement authorities often have other priorities.

Jeff Fry, a private investigator, formerly with the now-defunct Pennsylvania Crime Commission, points out that organized crime exploits so-called "victimless" criminal enterprises. This is because the public doesn't demand law enforcement action its time on all the "victimless" crimes — from gambling and loan sharking to prostitution and selling obscene materials, according to Fry.

Bill Hise, current county sheriff and former York City Police Chief, talked about how difficult it was to bring action against sex-for-sale operations in the county, from prostitution to illicit behavior going on inside adult video arcades.

"We put in some effort to shut them down and ran into a stone wall there," Hise said. "The money behind them came from out of state."

Hise said there weren't enough resources to follow the money trail to see if it led to organized crime.

But there are hints that there is more to the prostitution business than women and the johns who patronize them.

### Below the surface

Larry Keeney had almost no money when he opened his first massage parlor in the mid 1980s. But by the time charges of money laundering were filed against Keeney after the state attorney general's office seized Keeney's bank accounts, authorities had found myriad accounts through which \$1.4 million had flowed over a period of 19 months.

At the time of his arrest, Keeney ran massage parlors in Wrightsville, York Township and Dauphin County.

The money laundering charges later were withdrawn but the attorney general's office

has never offered an explanation why the businessman's involvement, or whether others were involved in Keeney's business is impossible to determine since those proceedings are all held in secret.

And the attorney general's office still wasn't talking about the case this week, even though Keeney is now dead and his former wife Judy Garland Keeney is serving time for her role in the massage parlor business.

### Covering up tracks

Various sources allege there are reasons why those deeper ties are never the subject of charges — that law enforcement agencies and officers are covering tracks to something deeper. And they allege that certain operations get covered up.

While just about every massage parlor or escort service in York County has made it into the headlines in the past year as a result of state police investigations and grand jury presentations, one apparently has been ignored by investigators.

Jasmine Escorts, run by David J. Booth, who owns the International Tanning Salon in the 600 block of West Market Street, has avoided the spotlight.

Booth refused to answer questions from a reporter. Booth, of 11471 Kildreia Road, Springettsbury, isn't new to York County.

According to York Dispatch files, he was arrested in a 1986 round-up of massage parlors. That operation was ignored by then first-term District Attorney Stanley Rebert. A check of county courthouse records, however, shows no file on the case — not even one saying