

Wallace

When I was an undergraduate in 1963 at Pullman, Washington at Washington State University, we would go to Moscow, Idaho, eight miles away, to drink beer at the Shakey's Pizza Parlour. The drinking age in Washington was twenty-one, but in Idaho, it was twenty. There was always the hope that we would pick up girls from Washington State University, but those hook-ups seldom materialized, so when last call came, we were faced with the long trip back to school.

On one Saturday night, one of our numbers suggested we could drive up to Wallace, Idaho, to one of the five legal brothels. We could have alternatively gone to Orofino, where brothels were legal as well, because in Idaho at that time they were a county option.

Orofino had the state mental hospital and the high school sports team was called the Orofino Maniacs.

After a two-hour ride, the five of us crammed in a Volkswagen beetle, arrived at the front door of the U and I rooms. Other brothels were named The Lux, The Jade and The Oasis.

We rang the bell and the madam at the top of the stairs looked down and said, "What do you boys want?" We said we were all over eighteen and she said, "What about that little guy?" (David Norley) And we replied, "He's the oldest one of us all!" She responded with, "Well, come on up, boys!" And I climbed the stairs to my first brothel experience.

We were ushered into a down-market living room, with two couches and a few easy chairs. Next, the girls, about six of them, came out in their evening ensembles (basically lingerie). We chatted with them and could select our evening's companion. I was ushered into her bedroom and told the price - twenty dollars, as I recall, and proceeded to shuck out of my clothes and receive a necessary hand wash in a basin of warm water (I've been told that many a lad never makes it past this initiation). I moved on to the next stage, accomplishing the task rather quickly. Then, it was back to the living room to join my compatriots.

A more experienced member of our group (the one who had directed us to Wallace) said he wanted to visit yet another brothel, The Jade, and I tagged along and waited for him to have his second "happy ending".

Then we all jumped into the Volkswagen beetle and headed through town at about 5:30am for the long ride home to Pullman. I noticed one of our "ladies" on the street, headed home carrying her metal lunch pail.

(There is a brothel museum, "The Oasis", as the trade became an illegal state felony after 1988. At the museum, they say the madams were well regarded in town, as they were generous supporters of community service groups.)