

Hazel's Own Story: 'People are so Narrow Minded...'

By ALICE BLANKFORT

I had a woman-to-woman talk with Hazel Nickola.

For 20 minutes, I sat across from the black-clad tavern operator in the semi-darkness of her raided establishment, as she spilled a tale of anger and resentment.

"I'm not responsible for my customers," she said bitterly. "I was minding my own business, why couldn't other people mind theirs?"

She leaned forward in her straight-backed chair, looking worn and tired. Then suddenly she jumped up and pointed at the door.

"I don't want to talk to you any more, do you hear!" she exclaimed. "I'm sick of it all, sick and tired! Someday I'll give you a story for the Gods.

"But get out now, get out I say."

And I got.

HAZEL'S INN, on Ocean Shore Highway besides the shimmering

Pacific, was called by the sheriff a "hangout for sex deviates." But the day I called it was not a hangout for hardly anyone. The paint was shabby and peeling. The bright red doors were securely locked.

The windows were half boarded and shielded by venetian blinds. There was no sound but the wind sweeping mournful grains of sand against the building.

On an off-chance, I knocked.

Almost instantly, a suspicious eye peered out at me from between the blind slats. Then half a face, looking very unhappy. I smiled in what I hoped was a friendly way, then waved cheerily.

The door opened just a crack.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" Hazel Nickola demanded.

I told her the truth and (surprise) she opened the door wide, I blinked in the gloom.

BEFORE ME stood a frail woman, wearing a black sequin-trimmed

dress in a real discouraged way. Around the bar, where once up to 500 persons cavorted on Saturdays and Sundays, lounged a couple of unhappy-looking customers, males.

Inside, the bar looked friendly . . . homey . . . the kind of place a man would go for a beer of an evening. What they call family-type places . . . knick-knacks over the mahogany bar . . . a couple of round tables . . . a shuffleboard table.

And yet this was the same spot which attracted hundreds of patrons from as far away as San Jose, Modesto, Sacramento . . . the same spot where cars parked outside for blocks on either side as strains of jazz, bright lights and laughter filled the air. Here, it has been reported, Hazel was raking in some \$4,000 a week. And here it was, last Sunday at 12:30 a.m., that Sheriff Earl Whitmore shouldered his way through the crowd, leaped onto the bar and shouted:

"This is a raid."

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HAZEL NICKOLA
... Out on Bail

Hazel Talks . . .

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HAZEL SHOWED ME to a table. I offered her a cigarette, and she shook her head.

"I never smoke," she said, "And I never use lipstick or rouge.

"I never even took a drink until two years ago," she added defensively.

I told Hazel I was curious to learn how she felt about recent events.

She paused, and for a long while said nothing. Then her lips became grim, and she stared straight in the eye.

"People are so narrowminded," she said. "I wasn't hurting anybody. I did a lot for the Coast. I was just about the biggest taxpayer in Sharp Park. So what do I get for it — just a lot of gossip. People talk about everybody here. But I don't care what they say. It just rolls off, like water from a duck's back."

She paused again, then quickly added:

"If I had all the money these people owe me, I could retire for life."

Hazel this week faced stiff fines, and possible revocation of her liquor license. What were her plans? Would she like to retire, to perhaps sell the place?

"You know," she replied, somewhat sadly, "it's hard for a woman to run a place like this all by herself."

COHN HEADS DRIVE

Julian D. Cohn, Pacific Manor attorney, has been named North County District Chairman for the 1956 Cancer Fund campaign.

'Sex Pervert' Charge Too Vague, Says Hazel

The state of California itself doesn't know what it means by "sexual pervert."

That's what Hazel Nickola charged this week as she fought to keep her liquor license at Hazel's Inn, the Sharp Park tavern she has operated 18 years. The state Alcoholic Beverages Control Board revoked the license early this year on grounds it had been used as a hangout for "sexual perverts." However, Hazel has continued to hold the license, pending her appeal.

The place was raided in February 1956 and 77 men, 10 women and three teen-agers were arrested, charged with vagrancy. Sheriff Earl Whitmore said most

of those arrested were San Francisco homosexuals.

This week, Mrs. Nickola said the phrase "sexual pervert" in the state laws is so vague it cannot reasonably be understood. Superior Court Judge Aylett R. Cotton granted her a temporary restraining order and set a hearing for next Monday.

Hazel contends that her clientele was doing nothing improper in her tavern.

She pointed out that, in the 18 years she has been in business, this is the first time she has been cited for violation of liquor laws.

Meanwhile, Hazel continued operating, and this week announced that facilities for dancing again would be available at her tavern.

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