

THE NATION | DISPATCH FROM OCEANSIDE, ORE.; At inn that added on, they take it off; Strippers are brought in as a last resort after a town boycotts one man's business over a third-floor expansion. Los Angeles Times February 3, 2008 Sunday

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HEADLINE: THE NATION | DISPATCH FROM OCEANSIDE, ORE.;
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Strippers are brought in as a last resort after a town boycotts one man's business over a third-floor expansion.

BYLINE: Stuart Glascock, Times Staff Writer

DATELINE: OCEANSIDE, ORE.

BODY:

One young mother from Tillamook gathers her five children and drives two scenic miles to go beachcombing at a quaint hideaway off U.S. Highway 101.

Another young Tillamook mother slips into a skimpy, form-fitting black gown and steers to the same town to dance for tips at the only exotic club on the northern Oregon coast.

They, along with strip-club patrons, visiting families, longtime residents and retirees, mix it up in this quiet community. Dependent on vacation rentals and tourists, pint-size Oceanside -- population 326 -- sustains one cafe, one coffee shop, one nude adult entertainment venue -- and feuding citizens.

For the last three years, a bitter dispute over growth and development has divided the community. Angry neighbors boycotted the inn and restaurant because it had expanded upward. The man who had bought the business and tried to make a go of it ended up nearly broke. As a last resort, he brought in strippers in December.

Now a state land-use board is investigating the matter.

State officials had better hurry; many villagers are at one another's throats.

"Boycott the Anchor" signs are plastered on dozens of Oceanside homes. Bumper stickers proclaim "You Won't See Me at the Anchor."

At the center of the storm is the Anchor Inn and Grill. Trouble ripened a few years ago after the owner added guest rooms by building a third floor that, neighbors said, obstructed views. They questioned the building permit's legality and organized a boycott against the business. The building has since changed hands, but the boycott persists.

"This is where I wanted to retire, but they destroyed this," said Slawomir "Sam" Piskorski, current owner of the Anchor.

Piskorski, a Polish immigrant, former steel worker and real estate investor, said the boycott forced him to take drastic measures. He has abandoned hope of a peaceful retirement. Now he wants to sell the place and get out. But until it sells, he said, the strippers will carry on.

Efforts at compromise -- buyouts, property trades, remodeling schemes -- have flopped.

As both sides battle, the vacation rental season draws closer.

Most people visit Oceanside to fish, charter boats or go clamming, crabbing or hiking. The beach beckons surfers, hang gliders, paragliders and kayakers. A half-mile offshore, Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuge gives rocky island sanctuary to tufted puffins, common murre, pelagic cormorants, seals and sea lions.

Stacy Patching is among those unhappy about the juxtaposition of the bucolic setting with the adult entertainment offered at the Anchor. She is the mother of five who takes her children to Oceanside Beach State Recreation Site after home-schooling them all day. Bad people hang around places with nude dancing girls, she said. She said she would never go in there, and may shun Oceanside.

"It stinks. It will never last," said one resident who has "Boycott the Anchor" signs on his house and car. He declined to talk further or give his name.

Many local residents yearn for a resolution. Staff and patrons at Roseanna's Cafe declined to discuss the Anchor, directly across the main drag. One said: "We don't have a position. We're staying out of it."

Taiese Hanthorn, manager of the Brewin' in the Wind coffee shop, doesn't see what the brouhaha is all about. "It was built legally," she said.

"People here are afraid of growth," barista Bryan McCoy said.

A customer, who asked not to be identified because "we have to live here," vigorously

defended Piskorski: "He tried to fix it up, make it nice and retire here. They pushed him into this. The boycott worked. He had very little business, and he found a way to get back at them."

Oregon extends broad protections to strip clubs because of a liberal free-expression clause in the state constitution.

One person not complaining about Piskorski's new business plan is the young mother who performs as "Skye" at the Anchor. Before the inn was transformed into a strip joint, she commuted 82 miles east to dance in a Portland club. "Out here, all the girls have a chance," she said. "The tips are good."

David VanSpeybroeck has a different perspective.

The Portland trial lawyer is president of the Oceanside Protection Society, which is behind the boycott and legal battle.

"I wanted to have a safe place with good emotional resonance for my two 9-year-old girls," VanSpeybroeck said.

He levels his anger at county planning officials: "If developers can do what they want, then Tillamook County is ripe for the picking."

Sue Butler, who is also passionate in her objection to the addition to the Anchor and to its current use, organized the boycott: "The strip club may be the death of Oceanside. I can't imagine families wanting their kids to walk by that kind of establishment."

Bob Steele owns the house directly behind the Anchor and said its third-floor addition spoiled his cherished sunset views. Tillamook County erred in granting the building permit, he said. "We would like the third story to come off," said his wife, Carleen.

VanSpeybroeck, Butler, the Steeles and other community members have contested the issuance of the third-story building permit to Oregon's Land Use Board of Appeals.

The board, composed of three lawyers appointed by the governor, heard oral arguments and took the matter under consideration in late January; it could make a decision this month. However, both parties say that if the ruling is unfavorable to them, they would probably appeal.

The Anchor is simple and clean, with wood trim and large ocean-facing windows. There is no neon or garish signage. Windows are darkened on the main, street-level strip club. Piskorski lives on the second floor. The third floor has hotel rooms.

"It's unfortunate the community drove him to this position," said Debbie Johnson, a Tillamook small-business owner and friend of Piskorski's. "He was happy and content with the restaurant and the rooms."

A regular visitor for 30 years, Char Helegesen moved to Oceanside a year ago after retiring from teaching in Seattle.

"I know Sam. I like Sam. He's a good guy," she said. But the strippers are "inappropriate for this gentle little village. A lot of kids play around here. It's not a good example for them."

People should move on, Helegesen said. "I don't believe in all the anger. My sign would say 'Boycott anger.' "

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GRAPHIC: PHOTO: OWNER: When Slawomir "Sam" Piskorski bought the Anchor, he not only inherited people's animosity toward the inn but also a boycott. "This is where I wanted to retire, but they destroyed this." Until he sells the place, he says, the strippers stay. PHOTOGRAPHER: Tim LaBarge For The Times PHOTO: OPPOSITION: Bob Steele, whose house is behind the Anchor, says the third-floor addition spoils his cherished sunset views. "We would like the third story to come off," says wife Carleen. PHOTOGRAPHER: GRAPHIC: MAP: Oceanside, Ore. CREDIT: Los Angeles Times

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