

Martini Business

by Jack Varnell

On Martini Business Nights the rules of decorum were written by Esquire or Playboy.

The red bar-side book divulges the secrets brewed with ice, libation and a sleek chrome shaker, because its all about the accoutrement, and technique. Mr Boston said that, NOT James Bond. If he was so cool he'd be driving a Cadillac, not some two seat euro trash car.

The sounds float like ghosts up the split level stairs, rumbling through the tasteful pile carpet, newly installed in the room where the golden boy heir to the throne lived. Trying desperately to sleep, holding his Teddy bear, buried in the bedclothes.

He didn't get the idea of dialects, but on those nights he heard broken Italian from the owner of a restaurant and gathering place for celebrities and men in sharkskin. "Mr. Diamond District" was there. The broken Jew, let into the "club" because of his family's jewelry business, and a nasty gambling habit. He had a place to hide the dirty money, and was not in a position to not comply. The southern drawled lawyer, a regular, and a large overbearing gentleman hiding IRS problems bigger than him.

The traveling paper supply sales man was the child's favorite. He always brought candy, or gifts from far away lands. He drank more than the rest while telling secrets about the hideaways of key government personnel in the event of a Russian bomb, learned during a stint with the CIA. The men, of course, were sworn to secrecy. No one could reveal what the "Greenbriar" was REALLY for.

They were not alone.

The concubines, wives, better halves or the little ladies, were

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dutifully there in their Max Factor best. Bimbos de la journée were there as well for the single, or nearly single men. It was their time out of the cage. Out from under the thumb. Gossip flowed freely, without the threat of breaking a nail on that pesky rotary dial.

They showed off their new frosted wigs, because Vogue said the beehives were passe. Tupperware was compared, bought, and sold by way of canapes, and they informed each other about who was having the best sale on floral jumpsuits made by the polyester designers this week . Where shall we take our cruise this year? Bermuda is getting so old.

Though they got louder as the night wore on and the tales got taller to compete with the sound of poker chips mixed with the laughter and the tinkling of glasses-each one appropriate for the libation it held.

The invisible guests got louder than the party.

In attendance were Frankie the Jersey heartthrob, Dean the golden skinned, silver tongued, import who held more whiskey than the rest and became more charming as he did. Jerry the clown made it all funny before his dedication to serving his "kids". Even Sammy with two strikes and a handicap made the club. HE was different, and well, if Frankie said it was cool Daddio, then it was.

Even then the child knew that no matter the title or potential, he would never end up like them. It was too lofty a goal for the attainment of something unwanted. Perhaps that was the real noise that kept him awake on Martini Business Nights. So as usual, he pulled the chenille covers over his head, said his prayers to Joe Namath and those heathen hippie Beatles, praying that just maybe he'd hear sounds of Mancini, Mathis, or that soulful Reverend Green. They put him at ease every time, and he and Teddy went off to a different life. Until morning.

