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Last Frontier Hangs On in Fairbanks

By JOHN HUGHES

Industrially Alaska may be a backward country but its ladies of the evening are most progressive. In Fairbanks, which is just 120 miles south of the Arctic circle, the girls enjoy a semi-legal status and a place in society which is unique.

They have gathered together on a small section of Fourth St., where they have 22 small houses opening in the rear on a well-lighted alleyway.

Frost on the Windows.

There in the evening they sit at their windows scraping the frost from the glass with razor blades. If they are at the window a gentleman may knock and gain admittance. The price is \$5 for a short stay and \$50 for the entire night.

Liquor may be purchased here for only \$1 a shot, which rivals the price in local bars. The Army, which has a large installation nearby, has marked the area out of bounds and the girls refuse admittance to GIs in uniform.

"We don't want any trouble with the Army," one girl said. "And besides we have all the business we can handle."

I spoke with several of the women. Their position in the town's society is unique. They are accepted into the homes of the best people as equals and often entertain husbands and wives at afternoon tea in the front rooms of their homes.

As a protection for themselves they have a doctor examine them once a week.

Pay Monthly Bail.

Although their trade is not strictly legal, the police leave them alone. The girls pay \$30 each month to the cops in the form of bail for disorderly conduct or some such similar charge.

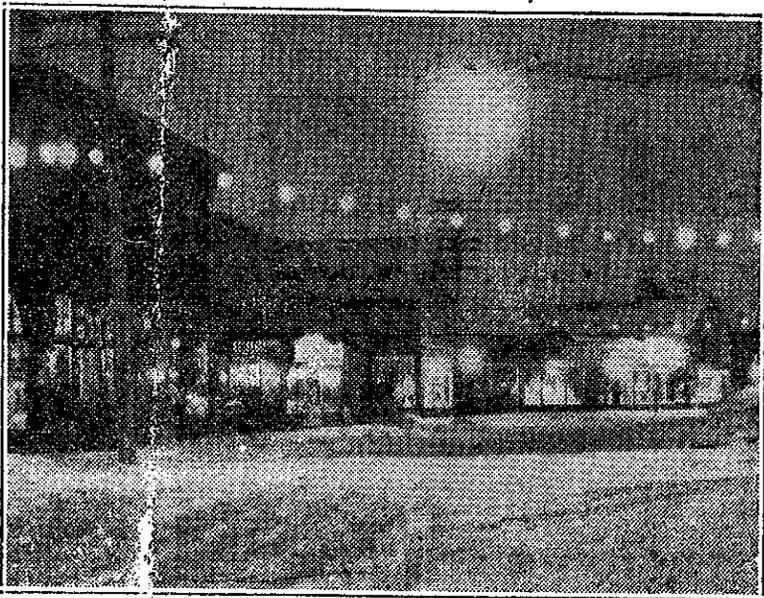
"Unless a girl fails to show up at headquarters with the 30 bucks they don't bother us," one said. "Of course the bail is forfeited every month."

They are given a receipt for their money and each month the police collector enters a different item for the bail.

Some of the girls save their earnings for trips to the "outside," which usually means the U. S., for many of them are from the States. Others "just spend it" while the rest are saving for old age.

Fairbanks itself does not have too much to offer in the way of entertainment. Most of the GIs stationed at Ladd Field and those of Task Force Frigid who are

Under the Midnight Sun



Street lights glow during the day in Fairbanks, Alaska. During Winter sun hangs close to horizon and is dimmed by atmosphere.

testing equipment claim the food and liquor prices are too high.

"It costs a whole month's pay to have a couple of drinks, something to eat and take a cab from and to camp," one infantryman declared.

A tour of the town by this reporter who recently returned from Alaska revealed that bar whiskey costs a silver dollar a drink, scotch sells for \$15 a bottle, clam chowder is 60 cents a bowl, a small portion of lettuce and tomatoes brings \$1 and so does a plain omelet, and a T-bone steak (small) costs \$3. The food prices are those at the Club Fountain Lunch, one of the cheapest eating places.

Cabbies charge \$1.50 for a mile-and-a-half trip and are liable to clip you if you don't know the price.

The chance for adventure, husbands or money drew thousands of young girls and women to Alaska during the war. Many of them are staying on despite some disappointments.

There are some 500 of these girls in Fairbanks. They have jobs as

civilian employes at the Ladd Field installation. They hold such positions as telephone operators, post exchange clerks, service base mechanics, messengers and operations dispatchers.

They live in a series of wooden barracks known as Slater Camp. Each girl has her own sleeping cubicle, but bathrooms, mess and recreation halls are community affairs.

The girls may entertain visitors in their rooms until 11 P. M. every night but Saturday, when the curfew for guests is set at 1 A. M.

In similar surroundings, 800 girls live at Anchorage. They work at the Air Forces' Elmendorf Field, which is headquarters of the Alaskan Command.

Thelma (Tex) Hopson, 26, an attractive, 5-foot-7, brown-eyed brunette from Amarillo, Tex., who is an operations dispatcher at Elmendorf, arrived there in '44 seeking adventure and found a pilot instead.

"He has been separated from

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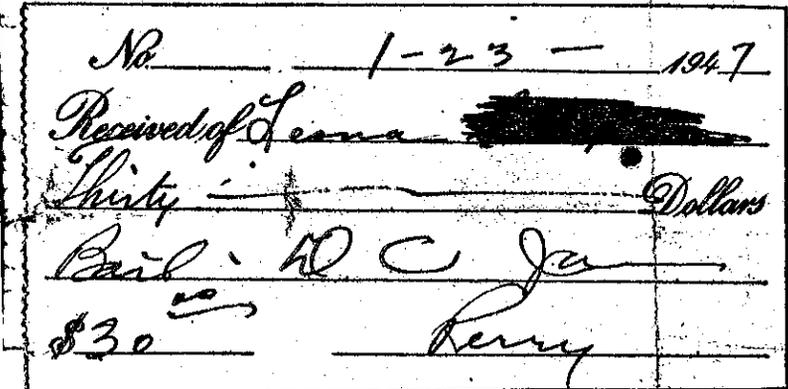
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Last Frontier Clings To Life in Fairbanks



This is a bail receipt which Fairbanks prostitutes get from police every month to avoid arrest.

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service and is attending the University of Arizona now," she declared. "We became engaged last Christmas when I visited him while on leave."

She said she will ride down the Alcan Highway in July "because I have never seen it." Also, because "he will end up seeing her fiancée."

Her advice to any girl contemplating work in Alaska—"If a girl can get used to the life it is fine here. Or if she is the type who can adapt herself to anything then she can make out up here."

Another girl, Frances Rogers of Detroit, who left last June for

home when her time was up, returned two weeks ago to sign up for another two-year stay.

"I got lonesome for the place," she said.

Attracted by Movie.

Evelyn Herrlich, a 31-year-old petite blonde of Dayton, Ohio, said she saw a movie on Alaska six years ago and "ever since wanted to see it."

"It's pretty rugged," said Evelyn, who arrived there in April of 1945. "There are lots of things to do here in the daytime but

nights are pretty dull. There's skiing, skating, fishing, hunting and lots of other things to do but what I want to do right now is swim in a big pool and go horse back riding."

Many of the girls hitch airplane rides and see a good deal of the country. Some have made week end trips to Mount McKinley National Park, one of the world's most beautiful spots, and have flown over the 20,300 feet of gigantic Mount McKinley.

The woman problem on lonely Adak in the Aleutian chain, where Task Force Williwaw is defying the 110 mile-an-hour winds, is simple.

"There are only 10 nurses and three Red Cross Ladies living here," declared Col. Joseph D Raney, commander of the force

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