

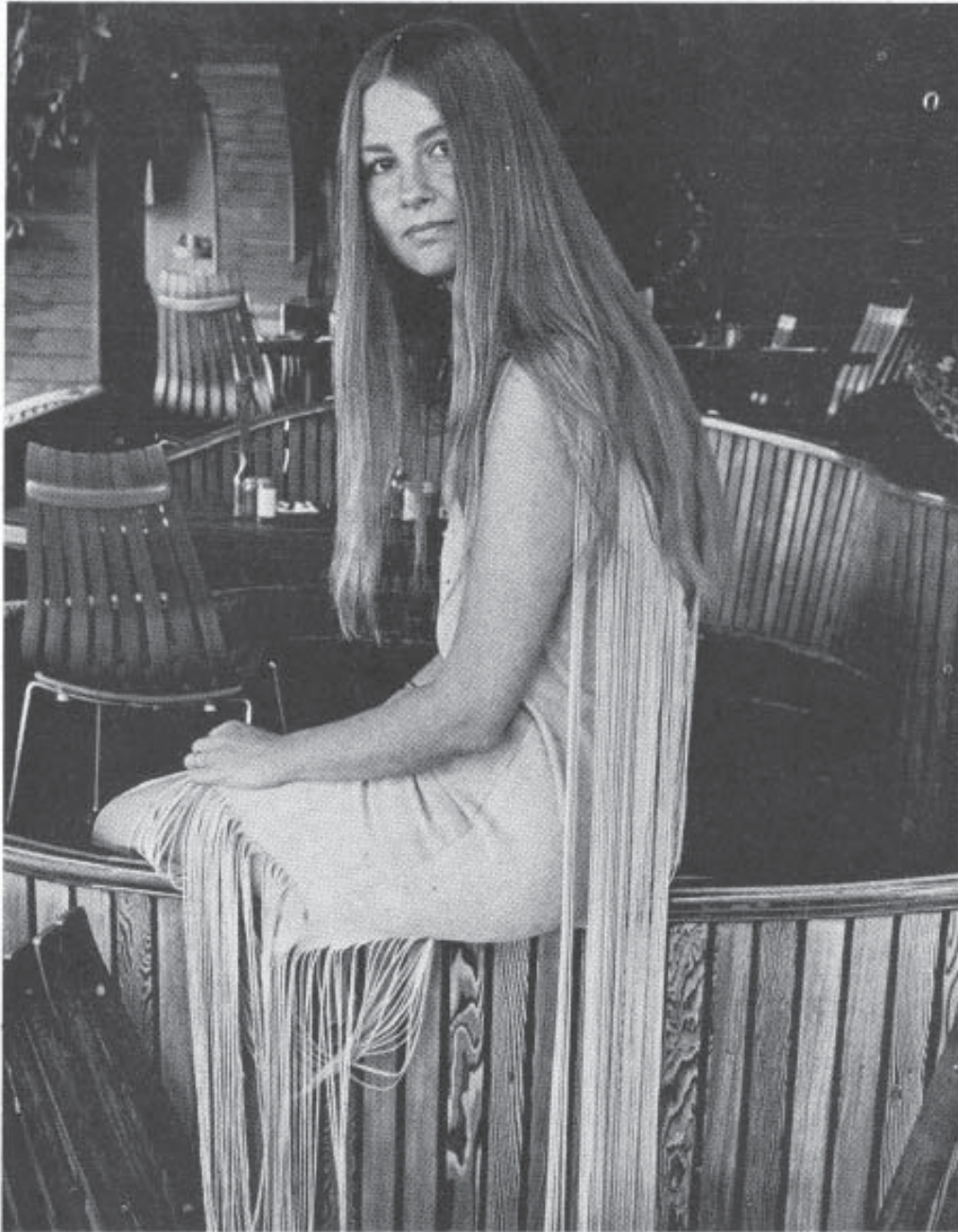
The Trident in Sausalito and Cantor's in Los Angeles. Both are eateries that transcend the stock categories of food palaces, or even hangouts. The Trident has evolved into a "freedom of expression" and Cantor's into a "tradition." They are catering reflections of two differing life styles — and the key word is Style. It's not service-with-a-smile that counts any more. It's service with Style.

## THE LADIES A LA MODE



*Laurie and Lou: I was a Playboy Bunny and really into the heavy makeup and uplift bra thing. But now . . . I've been working here for over a year and the make-up is gone except my sequin stars and I'm really into old clothes and lots of feathers. Everything I own has magic and I try to make people aware of that magic while I'm working . . . I love to turn 'em on by the way I look different every day.*





Photos by Chesley Bemish

*Janie (supposedly voted the Best Dressed by the rest of the Trident Ladies): I was always clothes conscious but over the year that I've been working here I've bought more far-out stuff and bought just a lot more in general. I really don't own any straight clothes any more. It's great to wear what you are . . . your personality. That's why people dig the Trident so much . . . 'cause they can relate to the girls since the girls look real and not like an antiseptic white milk bottle. Besides, having no dress code here makes you more than just a waitress. You become a creative head by just inventing your own outfit each time.*

by Blair Sabol

Five years ago The Trident was barely going through the motions of being a "jazz joint" with all the attendant atmosphere: lots of black leather, red rugs, cigarette smoke overcast, as well as "Bunny" rejects for waitresses—to lend a stamp of authenticity. But authentic for whom or for what became the question.

Time marched on, forgetting to take with it the "clubbing it" scene, and leaving owner Frank Werber in the throes of rapid culture changes. He ended up trading his full-time job of managing the Kingston Trio for organically tripping on "self-discovery."

Werber went from bookings to busts. And all for the better. Naturally enough, Werber took his Trident tripping along with him . . . changing its interior . . . painting the ceiling in bright organic colors . . . arching, curving wooden partitions—no right-angles—for backrests and a sense of space. . . . None of the Daygloplotchiness of 1967-vintage psychedelia that mark a sell-out organization—just natural wood-grained comfort and lots of greenery.

Oh yea . . . there's still a liquor bar but organic juices have become the highlights (higher and lighter) and the drastically modified menu includes

freshly baked and grown goodies from nearby communes' kitchens and gardens. The Trident has become healthfully re-established within the community and people recognize it as part of the hipper-restaurant solution instead of the problem.

And it is because of the Trident's more liberated approach that some thirty to forty people descend upon the restaurant daily asking for jobs . . . and more specifically, chicks. It has become *status* to be a Trident "lady." That's a Trident "lady," not "waitress." "If she's playing a part," explains house manager Lou Ganapoler, "you'll pick it right up. She has to fit



*Joyce (standing, has worked there for six months): I'm selling antiques and old clothes as a spare time deal and I really like to dress in things I've put together myself . . . handmade items. They mean so much more and I feel better working in something that is truly me. Julie (her first day on the job): I'm wearing a mini today but I already feel the need to get a little freakier. I think I'm too hard edge right now.*



*Abigail: My great thing is that I've been living in the woods in Nicasio (California) and coming to work gives me a chance to put on clothes that I just can't wear there. Like this long slinky jersey thing . . . man it's sexy . . . and like, well, basically, I've got the body to wear almost anything . . .*

in with the cosmic flow of the place. That's why we let them dress the way they are. Every girl here is known to be a beauty because she is being her real self. Wearing clothes she really sees on the streets and being just the plain person that she is. No putting on a strange uniform and acting uptight because that's the superimposed attitude stemming from the management." Frank adds a few more prerequisites: "I like them to dress the way they would if they were at home turning in with their cats. It's more comfortable and freer for them to operate. However the chicks must really dig themselves first and not be afraid of

how to show it." He means in spirit as well as the more obvious physical features, like bralessness and thrifty antique chiffon "transparencies" so often used to slam home the *liberated* message.

Frank and Lou keep an unusual employee file—a Polaroid album full of all their past and present girls, categorized according to "beginners," "permanent," "cashiers" and "hostesses," not to mention their four-star ratings. And believe it or not the only numerology recorded besides age—which averages to about 22—was that of Social Security and not of measurements. Very few back references are

asked of the girls, although the most prevalent "previous job held" was "grooving." Lou admits, "We are so into our girls giving forth that certain energy and spirit that we tell our people, 'Look, our service is lousy but our karma is high and vital.'"

In the same way that Frank and Lou are free-spirited parental figures to the high-minded Trident Team, so are Mr. and Mrs. Cantor and son Albert to their capable crew of fifty or so lovable females. And while the Trident ladies are "growing organically" and *self-realizing*—using their Trident stints as a prelude to their "heavier acts in the future" (there's a ten-to





*Frank Werber*



*Mr. Cantor: Yeah . . . my gals are great and I treat 'em pretty good . . . I guess. But as for me . . . I don't make half the living really from them as I do from my pickles.*





*Bessie: It took us a long time for the unions to provide us with our uniforms . . . and as long as they are providing them, why not wear them? I find no complaints about them . . . well . . . maybe they could be a different color every week but other than that they are comfortable, neat and respectable and isn't that how everyone should look?*



*Margie: I can't be bothered with dirtying up my own clothes. Besides I'm proud of my profession and like the customers to recognize me instantly. My only criticism is that maybe the uniform could be a drop longer . . . and that's not because of the Midi either. I would just feel better.*

twenty-percent monthly turnover) — the Cantor's pros have made waiting on tables a full-time profession, a way of life.

For some it's been a twenty-five-year routine, which is half the age of Cantor's itself. Their union provides them with their blue and white uniforms complete with the plastic embossed name badges. And for the Cantor's team, their starched-Sanforized-shirtwaists suit them just fine.

"It's hard work here," explains one "and I can't be bothered with dirtying up my own clothes. Besides, I'm proud of my profession and like the customers to recognize me instantly. Not blend in with the crowd." Now there is a case in point where by wearing a uniform you can become an instant eye catcher. Not only do these ladies

of the Cantor's crew know how to serve and wait on tables with all the quick reflex action of a high speed sprinter (not a sandal or bare foot in the house, it's Dr. Scholl's all the way) but a "Cantorite" can deliver poignant flashes of character with every order. A blatant pun here, whispered zinger there. She's an actual person filled with dry humor and pickled pride. She's vulnerable to her split clientele and can fluctuate between the language barriers from a hip rap to a Yiddish complaint. She may be caustic and undercutting but somehow it's all a part of the Cantor's delicatessen movie. And that's a continuous twenty-four hour feature since Cantor's is open all night. The Cantor's crew (mostly cross-wearing Protestants, though it *is* a Jewish deli) la-

bors hand with six day, eight hour shifts splintered with a single day's breather. The Trident's hours are a more relaxed six-hour day, three times a week.

But however you might view these two flavors of waitresses a la mode you have to admit that all of them perform more than just a food-bearing function. They help to create the atmosphere and in some cases they alone make the atmosphere by transmitting that certain feeling—forget the food. And though they may be differently packaged and may handle vastly different taste buds all of them have one common bond—they always seem to accent their service with a gourmet seasoning called soul. 🍴





*Francella: I've been here 19 years and I feel absolutely at home in my uniform . . . it's functional and clean. As far as the young breed in waitresses, well, we all know that they would never last here. It's damn hard work. Another thing too . . . what's the difference what you wear? It's the job that counts and that is all I care about . . . doing a good job by my customers 'cause I love 'em all.*