

CLERMONT
LOUNGE

FREE PARKING

DEBAUCHERY LIVES ON

By: Asby Franklin

"... this structure survived the Great Depression, World War Two, the birth of free love and the hippies that came with it, drugs and junkies. One of its many incarnations was rumored to have survived a stint with Al Capone using it to host a racketeering operation..."

Even though I wasn't born until 1983, I have lived to see and experience many interesting things and events. I can not for the life of me imagine what life was like here in Atlanta back in 1924. Back then I don't think my grandmother was even old enough to have started fucking yet. Nonetheless, that is the year the Bonaventure Arms Apartments first open at 789 Ponce De Leon Avenue.

This structure survived the Great Depression, World War Two, the birth

of free love and the hippies that came with it, drugs and junkies. One of its many incarnations was rumored to have survived a stint with Al Capone using it to host a racketeering operation. This was before he moved out of state. This devious, infamous, and down right dirty establishment, and I use those words in the most endearing way possible, was known to you and I as The Clermont Hotel.

Yes my friends, I said "WAS". The city of Atlanta has finally one its war and successfully closed the Hotel. On December 9th 2009, a city health inspector deemed it unlivable. The thirty eight long term residents and everyone else had until December 31st to relocate. It is now rumored the property has been fore-closed on, and sadly the doors won't reopen anytime soon. If they do it probably won't be under the popular moniker, The Clermont Hotel. I just hope the building itself and the lounge within its basement don't fall victim to corporate urban renewal.

. . . Across the Atlantic Ocean, the stars aligned and World War Two had begun. Adolf Hitler had conquered Poland. In response The United Kingdom and France had declared war against Germany. These were the events of the world as the seven story monster on Ponce De Leon was being renovated/mutated

into the Clermont Hotel. In 1940 when the doors first opened for business, the target demographic was white middle class travelers. Until recently the down trodden "HO"tel was home to slum dogs, security guards, and honest white collar businessmen. Even though it would have been nice, I am sad to say the Clermont didn't have an hourly rate.

"... in 1965 the Clermont Lounge opened its doors for business. It was Atlanta's first strip club and still holds the record for being the longest continually-operating adult entertainment establishment, despite the cities attempts to close our unholy sanctuary! "

The point of this article isn't to serve as a eulogy for the hotel, or to reminisce its glory days. Even though I am extremely interested on how it survived just about everything the imagination could conjure. I have to ask. How bedbugs accomplished what junkies, hippies, slum dogs, and Al Capone couldn't?

Our focus is on the belly of this mighty beast. What lives within the darkest depths of it bowels . . . If you know the answer, don't



shout it out! Our focus is on what goes on in the basement. Which has gone through more changes and different businesses than the apartments/hotel above, in 1924 it was home to an unnamed café. Over the years its tenants changed and it became home to several notable establishments, such as the "Anchorage Club", the "Gypsy Club" and a brief stint as the "Atlanta Playboy Club", which was quickly shut down because of its unlicensed attempt to profit off of Hugh Hefner's empire; if you're brain dead I'm talking about Playboy Magazine. Finally in 1965 the Clermont Lounge opened its doors for business. It was Atlanta's first strip club and still holds the record for being the longest continually-operating adult entertainment establishment. Despite the city's attempts to close our unholy sanctuary!

My first visit . . . Honestly I can only recall flashes of memories. I was wasted. It was a long time ago and Yes, I was underage. In defense of this fine establishment, I had my older brother's I.D. and we look almost identical. It was a weekend night, or at least I think it was because there was a cover charge. I remember pulling into the parking lot with my buddies, we were already half cocked. The Eddie mural from Iron Maiden's Killers album instantly caught my attention. I knew my friends and I had made the right decision to venture into one Atlanta's top 10 attractions (about.com). Anyways, we entered the club and it was packed to the walls with tattooed hipsters, old school bikers, young women, and the occasional businessmen. When you enter, the only stage is located directly to the right. It is surrounded by a circular bar. There were no open seats, so my friends and I grabbed a table. I don't remember what we drank, how much we drank, or anything else.

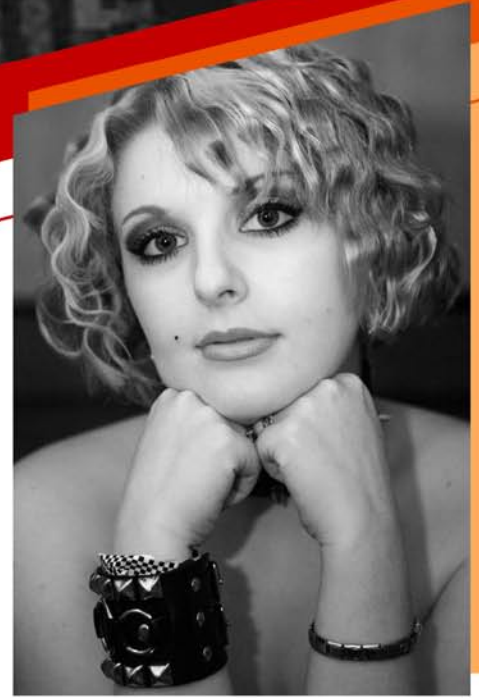
The next morning when I woke up on my friend's floor, I reeked of stale vomit and my

head was pounding. Slowly, I attempted to piece together the random and sometimes disturbing images from the night before. All I could remember were images of women who should not have been taking their clothes off. At the very least they shouldn't have been getting paid to do so! There was one memory which was more disturbing than all of the others put together, it was an overweight woman by the name of Blondie, who I witnessed crushing beer cans in between her breasts. Even though I couldn't remember most of it, I had fully experienced and survived a night at the one oddity that defies the laws of the universe, and those of the adult entertainment world. I had been to the Clermont Lounge!

Over the years as I slightly matured I came to understand the value of the Clermont Lounge. I worked my way through college as a server. Even though I'm a Rock-N-Roller, I managed to work at several prestigious restaurants in the Atlanta area. Whenever a patron needed a suggestion for him and his friends to have a good time, I would slightly smirk and ask, "Have you ever heard of the Clermont Lounge?" If the answer was no, I doomed them and their business deals by giving them directions to my now beloved Clermont; the place that tortured and haunted my mind for years.

I always mentioned it to tourists and friends as well. Always saying, "You've gotta go at least once!" On a rare occasion, a patron would return or a friend would call me, and say "Thanks man, we had a blast!" Even though I now loved the place and sent everyone and their mother there, I myself have not dared to go back. Fun Idea: maybe for my next visit I'll convince my grand mother to go.

Recently I found myself to have a night free of any obligations. No business to conduct, no kids to bother me, and no writing deadlines to meet. Sadly, I also found my funds to be limited. Yet I wanted to have a good time. I hopped into my piece of shit



pickup truck and aimlessly drove around the city looking for a good cheap time. Don't get me wrong, there are bars where I get hook-ups and friends I could've hung out with. On this particular night I fancied something different, refreshing. Whether it was the synchronicity of the universe, a debt of Karma, or plain old good luck? I once again found myself at the devilishly tainted, back alley thrill of place, known to all us as the Clermont Lounge.

I pulled into the parking lot and was quickly sadden to see my Eddie mural had become a victim to time. For the record whoever decided to paint over the mural, it was a very bad decision! Anyways, I quickly made my way inside. Even on a Monday there weren't any seats available around the stage. I ordered a crown and ginger from the bartender and lurked in the shadows. Watching the strippers from a distance until a stool opened up. From across the room I watched a reasonably attractive lady fool around with the juke box. Next thing you know she was on stage dancing. With dollars in hand my eyes eagerly followed her as she twirled about, strutting her stuff. I kind of hoped to see her hit her head on the low ceiling. Don't give me shit, I was out looking for entertainment and the thought of a stripper heading her head and falling to the ground . . . it would've been entertaining! I could see the confidence in her eyes as she moved, and that made her powerful. The dollars began to flow more freely. After her set, she circled the entire bar and thanked everybody. Wow! Confidence, manners, quality entertainment, and cheap drinks, I found Heaven or hell!

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I sat patiently waiting for the next girl to take the stage and I asked myself, "What have I gotten myself into?" Just then the bartender who was possibly the cutest girl in the place, made a round behind the bar snatching the empty beer cans from in front of the patrons. Passionately she tore the tabs off the cans. Her actions intrigued the hell out of me. "Excuse me miss", I shouted from across the bar. She smiled back and I continued, "I'll take a Yuengling when you get a moment!"

"... In conclusion the Clermont, for better or for worse is going to blow your mind, whether it'll haunt you until the day you die, trap you within its loving embrace like a black widow, or just become an odd form of entertainment. I still stand by my original thoughts; everyone should go there at least once."

Once I finished my beer I ordered another one. When the bartender went for my unsuspecting empty, I stopped her. "What are you doing?" I asked. I listened as she explained to me, "I collect these for charity. Each one is worth a minute of life support for a child who is waiting for an organ transplant." I couldn't

believe my ears as her words penetrated my heart. I didn't know what to think or how to feel. All that came to mind was . . . "SCORE!"

Throughout the night I enjoyed several more beers, please don't tell my probation officer! I watched all the girls dance with a special fire in their eyes that transformed them into Goddesses. One girl had that special fire on her tits. Yes ladies and gentlemen, she lit her breasts on fire. Fuckin sexy if you ask me! Each time one of the ladies finished their set, they made a round through the bar. Thanking each and every corrupted soul in the joint.

Honestly I'd like to see this happen at more strip clubs. For the record it did loosen my wallet.

In conclusion the Clermont, for better or for worse is going to blow your mind, whether it'll haunt you until the day you die, trap you

within its loving embrace like a black widow, or just become an odd form of entertainment. I still stand by my original thoughts; everyone should go there at least once! Now that the hotel is closed and the property is rumored to be in foreclosure. I'd go there tonight if I were you. The lounge's days could be numbered. Everyone needs to experience Atlanta's first strip club before it possibly disappears.

To those few souls who can be called regulars, I admire you for your bravery. To that sweet bartender, I'm saving my beer/soda can tabs just for you. To the rest of Atlanta, if you're looking for a unique fun filled experience that won't break the bank. I highly recommend the Clermont Lounge. Shit! Where else in the universe can good and evil be found so perfectly balanced, full fledged debauchery, and your can helpsave the lives of dying children. Who knows who you could run into? Marilyn Manson, Kid Rock, and John Stewart have all been there. Maybe you'll run into your mother, or get the upper hand by catching your probation officer there. Not too mention they do Karaoke on Tuesdays at 10:30PM and DJ Romeo Cologne does disco funk Saturdays at 11:30pm. For more information feel free to check out www.clermont-lounge.net . . . Now be gone with you!

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