

Madam – Millionaire – Mother

by Allan Fox, November 2005

'Don't forget, you get no freebies in a brothel' Mary-Anne Kenworthy declares with her trademark smile when you log onto her website *Langtrees.com.au*. Funny what you think about, I thought, as I sat in Langtrees Perth one afternoon, waiting to meet Mary-Anne.

Just 48 hours earlier I had visited Langtrees 181 Kalgoorlie where, with 12 other people, I joined Fanny our tour guide and ventured into every one of the themed rooms in the Historic Bordello. We heard the stories of prostitution in the goldfields of Western Australia, bounced on the bed together in the Afghan Boudoir, rang the bell in the Sports Locker, wondered just



how many people you can get in the spa in the Roman Orgy room and participated in a demonstration of the latest battery operated sex toys – for boys and girls. Now I was going to meet Mary-Anne Kenworthy who may be the most powerful woman in the sex industry today?

She arrived, exchanging a few words with Madam Leigh as she crossed the room, dressed casually and looking very relaxed, she smiled as we shook hands. I almost expected

her to say those words again.

On Langtrees 181, Kalgoorlie

The idea of opening a Historic Bordello or Sex Museum came to Mary-Anne when she visited Holland and was surprised to see how many people would pay to have a peek inside a world that they would never otherwise know. Perhaps it is a reflection of the voyeur that lives inside all of us?

The original tin shed brothel was demolished and Langtrees 181 was built at a reported cost of \$2 million. 'History needed to be recorded' Mary-Anne said simply. 'I enjoy making folk lore as much as anyone but you need to keep a record for reality and for the future. Robyn Hood was after all a bloody thief, who has just been glamorised over the years'.

Transforming this idea into reality had not been a simple task and had taken several years to achieve. The council had refused building permission on two prior applications and eventually Langtrees 181 was approved for construction under the council guidelines for a motel.

Since 181 opened in 2000 over 65,000 visitors have taken the tour, including one Kalgoorlie resident who visited 19 times in the first year. Recognising that locals will bring along friends in town, Mary-Anne has a policy whereby they pay once only and receive free entry on subsequent visits.

Whilst Mary-Anne is pleased with tis number of tourists and she gets great feedback from everyone, but she would like to do better. She wants to take it to the next level and employ young actors to act as guides. However it remains illegal to advertise for staff, irrespective of the job they perform in a brothel, because of the Prostitution Act 2000.

On the Early Years

Mary-Anne never worked in Kalgoorlie herself. She became a working girl at 26 in New Zealand and two years later travelled to Perth where she bought an escort agency.

With a desire to expand her business interests she purchased the Kalgoorlie brothel in 1988. True to form nothing was as easy as it should have been however working through a series of trusts Mary-Anne succeeded in purchasing Langtrees Kalgoorlie with a girl friend who she eventually bought out. 'We bought Kalgoorlie on the never-never with a year to pay it off' Mary-Anne said as she laughed fondly at the memory.

On the Sex Industry

'People get pre-conceived ideas about the sex industry and it's not what they thought' comments Mary-Anne, moving onto a subject that she is obviously passionate about. There are 'good and bad in every industry' and the sex industry is no different.



This is not an industry that everyone should be in, for example Mary-Anne believes that younger girls, say those under 25, should not start work in the sex industry before they have good work experience elsewhere. Her rationale is very simple, if they have no other experiences they will not appreciate the money and they will have nothing to show for their efforts at the end of the day. It's hard to go back to packing shelves if you expect to earn \$300 a day.

Asked if drugs are a problem, of course they are she replies, but no more and no less than anywhere else, says Mary-Anne. Mental disorder is probably more common. In the wider public 1 in 5 may suffer whereas in the Sex Industry this increases to something more like 1 in 2. A girl that suffers from mild bi-polar disorder may not be able to work from 9 to 5 in the real world but she can support herself and not be a bludger in the sex business.

On Sex Education

'I am passionate about sex education' says Mary-Anne 'we're born for pleasure and we don't understand how our bodies work. We don't get the best pleasure out of our bodies'.

'We're born for pleasure and we don't understand how our bodies work'

'If our bodies, hearts, minds and souls are all working together there's certainly no time for war and it's a cheap alternative'.

Mary-Anne is outspoken. She resigned from her Rotary club 18 months ago because she felt that she was 'becoming slightly embarrassing for my club'. She remains a Friend of Rotary and regularly speaks publicly on the subject with two scheduled events in the following days. The first at a prominent Perth University, discussing the Sex Industry and the second addressing the Country Women's League where she will discuss Sex Education.

Starting with the proposition that 'men want to please women, but they don't know how to, and women don't know how to tell them' I'm sure that Mary-Anne will both educate and entertain, in her own inimitable style.

On Her Business

Mary-Anne has a dynamic business, professionally run, with a recognised organisational structure of general managers looking after various business units, and clear reporting structures.

Madam Leigh oversees Langtrees of Perth, Madam Sharon controls Langtrees 181 and Langtrees of Midland is leased to Madams Astrid and Maxime. Langtrees of Darwin is being discussed as a future opportunity.

An adventurous playground for adults

LP's, short for Ladies Playground is a recent venture. LP's is 'owned by woman, designed by woman, for the pleasure of woman' I am told by Mary-Anne. An adventurous playground for adults states the web site.

Next year [2006] Mary-Anne is looking forward to another series of her TV Show 'Talkin Sex'. She has received interest from New Zealand, Canada and the UK and investors have taken a 30% share already. Meanwhile she is looking for a financial working partner interested in taking a 10% share and handling the business end of the program. Any more than 40% would mean that Mary-Anne would not be in charge and that would not be acceptable.

Websites also play a large part in her business world, currently owning and operating three of them. 'I'm good at planning a website but I'm not interested once I've got them running'. The problem of course is that they don't run themselves. 'Websites are great but they are big work'.

Asked if Mary-Anne would ever sell her businesses she replies that 'If somebody offered me the right price for Langtrees of Perth I would sell it, I wouldn't sell Langtrees 181.' The problem is that 'people with that kind of money don't want to run brothels. The chances of making a sale are 100 to 1 and then if I don't like them I probably wouldn't sell it to them'.

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On Her Career

Mary-Anne has had her share of notoriety over the years.

In 2001 she was voted Sex Worker of the Year in a UK survey, which Mary-Anne prefers to call her Sex Worker of the World Award. The UK is on the other side of the world after all. She has also been voted into the Hall of Fame at the Australian Adult Industry Awards.

In 2002 Mary-Anne bought Australian politician Barry Hasse at a charity auction for \$1000, to work as a maid for a day at Langtrees 181. 'He got more publicity that day than he ever has in his political career' but he was a 'good type of guy'.



The Madam and the Company, is a warts and all documentary about Mary-Anne. 'I've never, ever, seen it' she replies when I ask what she thought about it. 'People that know me well think that it's embarrassing and unfair for me (sic) and people that don't know me enjoy it'.

Langtrees Perth made world news when she closed the doors during a visit by the US Navy. 'If I was making hamburgers and I'd run out of buns, I wouldn't give you a burger with a stale bun without telling you', she is reputed to have said. 'It was 5 o'clock in the morning and I was a little bit pissed when I said it' she confesses. 'They wore us out, so we closed the doors and went home to get some sleep and opened up again the next day'.

On her Private Life

Asked if she kept her private life out of the spotlight Mary-Anne laughs and asks 'What private life? 'I don't really have a private life'. When you're Mary-Anne Kenworthy everyone knows what you do, there are no secrets.

So for the record, boyfriend, married twice, 4 children, youngest being a 17 year old daughter who brings friends home for advice, 3 grown up children who are self sufficient, a tough mum that admits to having embarrassed her children because of her openness about sex and a puppy that piddles on the carpet.

*A boyfriend and
a puppy that
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carpet*

Mary-Anne's son married last year and she recalled with amusement how much she enjoyed sitting with both of her ex-husbands at the reception. But that's the kind of girl she is.

On The future

'I am going to start enjoying myself more', Mary-Anne declares.

'I would like to travel for 3 to 6 months each year but not as a tourist'. India and Chile are mentioned as possible destinations and places where she would like to work, physically and mentally, but not as a business, just to help those who need assistance from the outside world.

And then of course there is the Mediterranean cruise, which Mary-Anne has vowed to take one day. 'I'm definitely going to have a Mediterranean cruise one day and I'll fill it full of toy boys'.

'I just love men in uniforms' she declares 'I probably will do that cruise one day, but I'll turn it into an orgy'.

This seemed like a good note to conclude my meeting with Mary-Anne Kenworthy, the most powerful woman in the sex industry today.

