

Making The Rounds at the Carousel Lounge

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Stella Boes, of the Carousel Lounge, speaks.

"June of this year will be 15 years. . . . When I first came here I started at the Kettle on 183, then the Kettle on Rundberg, from there us waitresses went to Denny's on Burnet. I was part-time at Carousel and part-time at Denny's too for a while. When I came to the community, I was, of course, a divorcee. When I want to make fast money, I go into a club. I waitress. . . . somehow I landed at the Carousel. My girlfriend, no, it was my sister-in-law, I stayed with her for two weeks. All I heard was 'Carousel, Carousel.'

"The first night I moved here from Carlsbad, New Mexico, -- it was a short marriage -- she took me to the Carousel. First night. . . . Before I knew it, I got to know the regulars. I'm just like one of them. I'm a very friendly person, but I'm not a drinker. I serve drinks, you know. It's not that I haven't had -- it's just a nice ice tea -- at weddings, a little toast, or New Year's Eve.

"I'm a dancer, you better believe it. Did you see me dancing? I always dance at the Carousel. My boss knows everything I do. I don't keep nothing from her. You know why I'm there so long? I'm a people person. I will never quit the Carousel, OK? I'm down to Thursdays and I work every first Sunday because the Mad Cowboys are back together once a month, so I work the floor. Nicki Mebane is my boss. I have never worked for a better boss in my whole life.

"I came from Canada, OK? I was married to a Texan. We started off in Ohio. Him being a Texan . . . so we came to Houston. We divorced in Ohio. I brought the children to Lee County, they wanted to be by grandparents and I couldn't take them to Canada because he would get me for kidnapping, he had visiting rights and I wouldn't do that anyhow. . . . My boys ended up meeting two nice girls in Giddings . . . and my one daughter's here. I'm a grandma four times. But you know what I'm going to tell you? When I first started the Carousel I was 39-question-mark. I've had a birthday there every year. I already got it booked for June the sixth 'cause I get Ted Roddy to play, and he's very popular. There's a story to that too. I can't get all the musicians to play. I love them all and they love me.

"My daughter lives five minutes away from me. People want to know my age. And you know why I've never -- I don't tell them? I'm not ashamed. I tell them at the Carousel or wherever the ages of my children and they start figuring. You know what? I said this to a man at TSO -- where I get my eyeglasses -- I told him the ages of my children and he was starting to figure, wanted to know my age, and I said I was a teenage war bride, I was just kidding. He said 'What war?' And I said 'Desert Storm.' I'll tell you my daughter is 44. . . .

"Ted (Roddy)'s even going to be one of my pallbearers. You know who I'm going to have? I'm going to have celebrities. I'm going to have two disc jockeys -- Bob Cole, Sammy Allred -- they're from KVET . . . my choir director -- I sing in a church choir can you believe it? . . . and the sheriff from Giddings, and a deputy sheriff, which is my

daughter-in-law's uncle, I'm gonna have him and Ted Roddy. Six of them. . . . I want to be like my dad, have everything all set and when I go, all they would have to do is just bring my -- I don't want my children to have to go. . . . I just want to make it easy for my children. They're going to go through a lot. . . .

"I'm going to have a large party in memory of me at the Carousel. I guess Ted will -- it's going to be food, I want people to eat, drink, dance, rejoice, remember me, how happy I was, that's all I want, how kind I was -- you know, do good works unto others -- remember me for that, for being a happy person. But in the meantime I'm living. . . .

"Last year I walked for 25 years for March of Dimes. I brought the most money in. . . . I brought \$2,030. My goal was a thousand and a friend who comes to the Carousel gave me a thousand. He said, 'Stella,' I said, 'My goal is a thousand,' and he said, 'I'll match it.' . . . He wanted to be anonymous, but I got the March of Dimes to write a letter to me to thank him -- that's the least -- and then I gave my own special thank-you card. I made about 65 walks for good causes.

"If you were there Thursday when Stella walks in -- guess what I'm carrying? My American flag, my Canadian flag, my Texas flag. Not just when this September 11-- I been doing that -- I'm very patriotic. From the time I was five or more, my teacher taught us what your flag means, what your country means, be proud of where you are. I dress a lot -- they call me Miss Patriotic -- I dress a lot in red, white and blue, since September 11. . . . If I would forget my flags I'd go home and get them.

"I did a pageant in Grand Prairie and they chose me for Miss Congeniality. The only reason I entered that Miss Senior Texas Pageant was 'cause I wanted to use my talent. We wore evening gowns and we wore whatever you wore in your talent, so I wore my short miniskirt and they wrote a story about me in the Dallas paper and when I was leaving, I danced. You only had three minutes to dance, I chose a waltz. The blind man took the waltz that he played at the Carousel -- Jay Clark -- then I put on 'All Shook Up,' Elvis Presley, I left that to the end and then I chose the Texas two-step. . . and that man was from the TV station. Do you know what he said? 'Stella's leaving the building.' "

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The Carousel Lounge

1110 E. 52nd St., 452-6790

Hours: 2:30-7:30 p.m. Monday; 2:30 p.m.-midnight Tuesday-Friday; noon-1 a.m.

Saturday; 2-7 p.m. Sunday.

Caption: Stella Boes, aka Miss Patriotic, serves drinks (and dances) Thursdays at the Carousel Lounge.