

'CALL-BOY' SERVICE PROSPERS USING HIGH FINANCE, HIGH TECH

**Paul M. Rodriguez and George Archibald The Washington Times; Final Section: NATION Page: A7
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Elaborate telephone switching equipment and out-of-town check cashing and credit card processing centers make it possible for Washington's homosexual escort services to launder hundreds of thousands of dollars annually from clients.

Professional Services Inc., the dry name that appears on customers' American Express, Visa and MasterCard bills when they charge their sexual liaisons with male prostitutes, is a cover for half a dozen different call services linked in a gigantic regional sex-for-hire network, according to an investigation by The Washington Times.

The upscale Northwest Washington residence that served as a switchboard center for dispatching male prostitutes to local hotels, clients' homes and other meeting places was raided Feb. 28 by federal and local police authorities investigating interstate prostitution and credit card fraud.

The escort firm has relocated and - using a 50-line Merlin computerized call-forwarding system - is still in operation while local authorities try to track down individual call boys with information gathered from seized documents.

In want ads placed in local tabloid newspapers and Yellow Pages telephone directories, Professional Services hawks its wares under such names as **Man-to-Man, Dream Boys, Ultimate First Class, Metrodate and Jovan.**

In its own investigation of the male escort service raided in February and again May 18, The Times has obtained extensive financial records that reveal how the homosexual network handled its credit card and check cashing needs by using legitimate umbrella organizations in the **Washington area, Florida, Kentucky and West Virginia.**

Members of the law enforcement team investigating Professional Services, which includes the Secret Service and the Metropolitan Police, said a special federal grand jury is expected to hand up indictments based on violations of federal credit card statutes, mail fraud laws and banking regulations that bar illegal activities, such as prostitution.

Operators of the male escort service under investigation denied in dozens of interviews that they have broken any federal laws.

But credit card vouchers obtained by The Times reveal many instances of apparent double billing and what appear to be forged signatures.

As one law enforcement official explained, customers of such services are highly unlikely to call up credit card companies to complain that they had only one \$150 session - not two - with one of Professional Services' prostitutes.

Call boys interviewed by The Times admitted that in the course of their work as "escorts" they regularly engaged in sex for hire with male clients.

After paying "membership" fees in the \$150 range, clients paid additional amounts for so-called "referrals" billed on an hourly basis. The vouchers reflected fees ranging from \$60 to \$1,100 for individual referrals. Most charges were in the \$150 to \$225 range.

Clients and prostitutes said the amounts charged depend on the number of escorts procured (**some clients hire several for big parties**), the length of time prostitute services are used and the type of sexual service provided.

Robert Chambers, who handled Professional Services' credit card processing, is a 35-year-old funeral director whose family owns and operates the Chambers Funeral Homes throughout the Washington area.

Mr. Chambers used his family's funeral business to set up Professional Services' "sub-merchant" account with a Sovran Bank branch in Silver Spring. Credit card charges and checks were deposited in the Sovran account, while cash paid for escort services usually was deposited at other area banks, including Riggs, National Bank of Washington and First American.

These accounts were usually in the names of the escort operators - principally **Henry W. Vinson, a 28-year-old owner-dispatcher for the services, and Jimmy Mako, 27, who pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor drug charge stemming from the February police raid on the switchboard headquarters, 6004 34th Place NW.**

Sovran canceled Professional Services' account after the comptroller of Chambers Funeral Home discovered the secret sex-for-hire card processing scheme. Mr. Chambers now funnels charge slips through another licensed credit card processing company, Executive Services, in Suitland.

Part of the regional escort network is directly linked to employees at dozens of hotels in the area, those interviewed said. Besides helping to arrange "special" rooms for clients, these hotel employees also help to expedite guest requests for male and female sex.

There also are special phone banks located in each of the hotels - some public pay phones and other private lines - reserved for the homosexual network. Telephone pagers are used extensively to send call boys from one liaison to another.

Operators of the homosexual escort ring confirmed that female prostitutes were occasionally provided if clients requested such services.

Among hundreds of charge vouchers obtained by The Times were those of about a half-dozen women who availed themselves of the male escorts.

Gay clubs throughout the Washington area are used by call boys to pick up clients. Many call boys also work at these clubs - some of them "strip" joints - and typically are recruited there by the escort services.

Bars and clubs catering to a homosexual clientele include The Chesapeake House, Brass Rail, Knob Hill, The Follies, Lost and Found, Tracks, and La Cage Aux Follies.

Photo, This house, at 6004 34th Place NW in Washington, was the switchboard center for a male-prostitution ring until it was raided Feb. 28., By Gary M. Hopkins/The Washington Times