

# 'Happy' After All These Years

A newspaper editor, out in America somewhere, made a little splash the other day when he fired off a directive to his feature-writing staff: No more celebrity interviews in hotel rooms.

That's lazy journalism, the editor said.

So the next time some project-flogging actor or some book-hyping author or some self-promoting TV chef comes to town, the editor said, do the interview at a ball game. Or in a bar. Just say no to the hurried sit-down over room-service toast.

Terrific advice. I'm all for it. On most days, anyway. But not today.



Ellis Henican

Here I am, at this very moment, in Room 1427 of the Omni Berkshire Hotel, Madison Avenue and 52nd Street, sitting on the edge of Xaviera Hollander's bed, with a look of undisguised anticipation on my face.

"Where do you want me?" asks the woman known the world over as the "Happy Hooker."

Come on, is this good stuff — or what?

She is standing by the window, looking over at me.

"I gave my dress to the new Museum of Sexology," she said. "Can you imagine that? They said they wanted my old dress."

Who cares what some Midwestern newspaper editor decrees. I'm not taking the "Happy Hooker" to a Mets game. The way I figure it, we're in her natural habitat right here.

ReganBooks, which is part of HarperCollins, has just reissued Hollander's original best-seller, 30 years after it first appeared to roughly equal roars of shock and applause. The book, co-written with Robin Moore and Yvonne Dunleavy, has sold 15 million copies since. Its author spent most of those years living in Amsterdam, far from America's tightening morals and inhospitable immigration laws.

"The Happy Hooker" told the story, largely true, of a beautiful young secretary who came to New York in the late 1960s and swiftly grew tired of her

boring office job. She knew that men found her attractive, and she quickly discovered she had an entrepreneurial side.

Her high-class brothels were an instant hit, although she always had to stay one step ahead of the police.

"We were on 75th Street, 57th, 24th, always Midtown East Side," she laughs now. "I was the quickest packer in history."

Compared to those days, how does Hollander find the Giuliani-tamed New York?

"It's boring," she says. "I can't even go to a good strip joint. In Holland, everything's all right."

Her monthly sex-advice column does still run in Penthouse, keeping the Xaviera brand alive — and making her a bawdy tour guide to the fleshly pleasures for millions of young American guys.

But the woman behind all this had never spoken much about the rest of her life.

The re-publication of "The Happy Hooker" is accompanied by a far more sweeping — and yes, far more serious — memoir.

So here she is, sitting in this hotel room, talking — not about sex so much as about family. Her own. "Child No More," the new book, is the story of one intense family and the many ways their lives are intertwined, told through the eyes of a survivor.

"One-tenth of the iceberg you see is above water," she says of her life, changing poses now for the photographer. "The Happy Hooker" was two years of my life."

Her father was a Dutch Jewish intellectual and a doctor. Her mother, an ex-model, was the daughter of middle-class Germans, who upset the local Nazi thugs by dating a Jewish boy shortly before World War II. They married and moved to Indonesia.

Two months after Xaviera was born, she and her



Xaviera Hollander of "Happy Hooker" fame has a new book, "Child No More."

mother were sent to a prison camp, as the Japanese occupied the country. Her father was imprisoned in another camp.

One day, her father was summoned to treat a sick 2-year-old, not realizing the child was his own daughter. Hollander says those early memories haunt her still. To this day, the woman known as the "Happy Hooker" still sleeps with the light on, even — perhaps especially — when she is alone.

Her mother died 2½ years ago. "The book idea started," she says, "with me writing a speech for her death. She always said to me, 'Why don't you write about us. Not about sex — about us.'"

When she finally got it down, the story of mother-and-daughter was also, in part, a story of sex.

"There was a certain kind of competition for my father's affection between my mother and me," she said. "There was no incest in the family, but some of the feelings were definitely romantic."

It was really a story of connection through adversity. Life is different when it begins in a concentration camp.

"The parents become overprotective," she says. "They give to the children a strong feeling that you'll never stop being a child. They protect. This is their way to survive. But the children have a difficult time growing up."

And how did her mother react to her chosen career, the source of all those book sales and all that celebrity?

"She did not agree," Xaviera says. "And often, she was right. I would introduce her to my boyfriends and she would say, 'Be careful of that one. He will treat you badly. He will steal from you.' She taught me many things. Seeing people clearly was one of them."