

DINING WITH THE ANGELS

GHOSTBUSTER, HURRY UP and eat. You gotta go soon," warns Guardian Angel Lisa Sliwa one hot Saturday night as the pretheater rush begins on West 46th Street's Restaurant Row. At Cafe de France, the Angels' midtown headquarters, young men in T-shirts and red berets gather at a table beneath the gaze of French peasants who smile from grimy murals.

A 24-year-old named Tut—"My brother couldn't pronounce Thomas"—passes around aluminum take-out containers and chunks of French bread. Tonight's dinner is from Crepe Suzette, down the block: sliced London broil and frites, apple tarts with Sedutto vanilla ice cream. On Thursday, the Angels ate boeuf bourguignon for lunch and cassoulet for dinner. "We are eating the finest in cuisine," says Tut. "Hey, man, pass the ketchup."

In their Off Broadway debut last month, the Angels teamed up with the eighteen restaurants on the block

between Eighth and Ninth Avenues to move crack dealers off the street. Though they've had run-ins with police and an Angel has been stabbed, the restaurateurs are pleased. "My stoop was strewn with crack vials," says Joe Allen, who runs two restaurants (Orso and Joe Allen's) on the block. "People who work here were getting robbed. Now the street is like a country lane."

Some find it ironic that a group of predominantly black and Hispanic volunteers, whose average age is eighteen, are trying to make the area safer for affluent restaurantgoers. Others wonder how long the Angels will remain after the television crews have gone. But for now, at least, the Angels are eating well.

During dinner, the Angels are disarmingly polite and soft-spoken, a contrast to their macho street swagger and tough nicknames—Ace, Bull, Cowboy, Eagle, Warrior. Curtis Sliwa, the group's media-wise founder,



The pretheater rush at Cafe de France.

eats with a small group gathered around his desk. Ace, twenty, the New York City-chapter leader, points to 102 plastic cigarette lighters on the bar—trophies taken by the Angels from crack dealers they have arrested. Sliwa tunes in local news on a small black-and-white TV. Eagle, a small, wiry fellow, quickly forks slices of the London broil into his bread, unhampered by the silver-studded black leather half-gloves he is wearing.

"Until now, we had a problem feeding our people," says Lisa, Curtis's wife, who is

a fashion model and self-defense expert. "We only had donations from Popeye's Fried Chicken on 42nd Street and, at the end of the day, leftover doughnuts from Penn Station. Here, we actually get things that grow—fruit, salad. Mostly the guys would buy a bag of chips and a soda before going out on patrol. Now I'm afraid they're getting spoiled."

Each restaurant on the block takes turns providing the group with two meals a day. "It takes about 180 meals a week," says Allen, "plus endless amounts of soda."

The Cafe de France's landlord has donated the restaurant as a headquarters. A shower has been installed in one of the bathrooms, and the core group of a dozen young volunteers eat and sleep on the ancient orange leatherette banquettes.

"Bull over there is being polite," says Lisa Sliwa, pointing out Hiram Wiggins, a 280-pounder from L.A., who has piled a double scoop of ice cream into a coffee cup. "Usually he fills up one of the aluminum dishes with ice cream."

"Years ago, it was Dumpster delights," says Curtis. "Roy Rogers and Burger King used to put food on the top of the bin when they closed. Now the guys are getting food they can't even pronounce."

JANE FREIMAN

The Lady Is a Pol

IF BRITAIN'S VOTERS ARE AS whimsical as Italian ones, they may soon put their own sex star into their house of representatives. Cynthia Payne, Britain's most famous madam, is standing for the House of Commons in a July 14 London by-election under the banner of the Rainbow Alliance.

Known as "Madame Cyn," Payne, 55, was the subject of a biography, *An English Madam*, by Paul Bailey. Her early life was the basis of the film *Wish You Were Here*, and her subsequent career was depicted in *Personal Services*. She was known for attending to the needs of the elderly, handicapped, and

impecunious, whom she entertained at her sex parties ("four to five hours of good fun"). Though she spent four months as a guest of Her Majesty's Government in 1980 for "keeping a disorderly house," Payne has now achieved quasi-respectable celebrity status, appearing on TV chat shows and before the Oxford Union.

She wants to repeal the inconsistent sex laws, under which prostitution is legal but maintaining a brothel is not. Two girls living together count as a brothel and can be

sent to prison. In any case, the johns go free. Payne favors licensed houses that would be regularly checked for disease and could not employ minors. She also thinks that, on principle,

LONDON



LETTER

there ought to be more women in the Commons. "Only 20 women," she says, "and 600 male members! I don't think that's right!"

Dudley Fishburn (married, four children), the Conservative candidate, is somewhat different. "I am," he says, "as dry as dust."

RHODA KOENIG