

DIONNE SEARCEY

Playboy interview reveals naked truth on sex-toy role

I'd never really thought of myself as a feminist. I've never raged into a fit of anger when someone used the word "mankind." I hate it when people call me a woman. I'm a girl. I shave my legs. I've never considered burning my bra.

Naked breasts.
That's the first thing I saw when I walked into room 1504 at the Lincoln Hilton for my interview with Playboy.

I had spotted the ad in the Daily Nebraskan: "Playboy's photographer is here and interviewing."

If I was selected, the ad said, I would be paid a modeling fee, be interviewed by the media, be featured at an autograph session and, most importantly, would have the time of my life with the celebrity status I would gain from my appearance in Playboy. I could be one of Playboy's "Girls of the Big Eight Conference."

I'd heard that Playboy photographers can work wonders with a camera. Maybe in a Playboy photo my stomach would be firm, my eyelashes thicker. Maybe I'd end up with a tropic tan.

A friend told me that applicants were required to bring a swimsuit and not to wear bulky clothing. But Cynthia Kaye, a Playboy representative, just told me to show up at 1:15 p.m. Tuesday.

I knocked on a door that was decorated with a Playboy bunny poster. I walked in and noticed a topless girl in the next room, wearing only a swimsuit bottom.

Whoa.
My heart was beating fast. What had I gotten myself into? Were they going to make me strip? I wasn't even a homecoming candidate. I was glad I had worked out at campus rec the night before.

I ignored the activities in the other room and was handed an application. I sat next to about seven other women, all in miniskirts and wearing makeup. Not realizing that this was a dressy affair, I had worn baggy pajama pants and put my white T-shirt on backward so the holes wouldn't show.

I took a deep breath and began to fill out the application. The basics — name, age, address — were all there. I debated using a fake name, maybe "Bambi." I mean, I could never be a Supreme Court justice or Miss America if anyone found out I'd posed for Playboy. I imagined the headline in the 1999 National Enquirer: "Christian missionary scarred by playful past."

Also on the application were a few more specific questions: bust size, cup size, waist size, hip size, shoe size.

CHUCK GREEN

Johnson's magic in message

Yet another American superhero has fallen to mortal status.

A relentless media circus has unfolded before the public's eyes since Earvin "Magic" Johnson, the long-time star point guard of the National Basketball Association's Los Angeles Lakers, announced last week that he had tested positive for the human immunodeficiency virus, which causes AIDS.

In the few days since the saga began, it has touched sports fans and non-sports fans alike.

In his 12 years with the Lakers, Johnson earned all-league honors nine of those years, including last season.

But Johnson is no longer a basketball hero. He's a human being.

Never again will he thrill millions with his moves and skill on the basketball court. Now, he will attempt to enlighten millions with his safe-sex message on their television screens.

That might be his most important contribution to American society of his life.

Since first identified in 1981, HIV has killed more than 126,000 Americans, and another 1 to 1.5 million people have been infected with the virus, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

As of Sept. 30, the center had received reports of 195,718 cases of AIDS, of which 126,159 had died.

According to the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department, 240 people have been diagnosed as having AIDS in Nebraska. The department also estimates that between 2,000 and 2,500 Nebraskans are infected with HIV.

Enough is enough. It's time to make AIDS one of this country's top priorities in research spending and education.

According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors' federal budget in cities, which was released last January, the federal government allocated \$1.69 billion for AIDS research and treatment in the last fiscal year — Oct. 1990 to Sept. 1991 — which was a 7 percent increase over the previous fiscal year.

It also appropriated \$1.54 billion for "basic scientific research and prevention, education and surveillance" of those not infected with the disease.

Meanwhile, the defense budget still lingers in the hundreds-of-billions-of-dollars range.

A wing of B-2 bombers dwarfs government spending devoted to AIDS research.

As a society, we still are defending ourselves from the "threat" of an all-but-extinct Soviet Union when a deadlier enemy already is ravaging



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lives throughout the country.

And it's an enemy most Americans know dangerously little about.

While AIDS spending is increasing, it's not increasing enough to stop the spread of HIV effectively and apparently not enough to save the lives of those now diagnosed as having AIDS.

Since last week's news of Johnson's positive test, the media has deluged the public with facts about HIV and AIDS. Some of the most important ones:

- AIDS is the final stage of a viral disease that breaks down the human immune system and prevents the body from defending itself against germs. When people acquire AIDS, they become vulnerable to a variety of sicknesses and cancers, which eventually kill them.

- HIV is the virus that causes AIDS, which attacks the immune system, eventually wearing it down. It may take 10 years or more for a person infected with HIV to progress to AIDS. Johnson has tested positive for HIV, not for AIDS.

- People cannot catch HIV from donating blood. The most common way to catch the virus is through sexual intercourse.

- The development of a blood test to detect AIDS in 1985 has made it extremely unlikely to catch HIV from a blood transfusion.

- There is no cure for AIDS. There are only two drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration that treat HIV: AZT and ddI, which was approved last month. While both drugs prolong life, AIDS eventually will kill the infected patient.

- The most common protection against AIDS is the use of a condom

I didn't exactly hop into the bedroom where the photo sessions were taking place. I noticed that tossed on the bed were 30 or more pairs of silky, flowered underwear, bras and various lingerie-type items.

Gasp. I'd never measured my hips. I don't even know what unit of measurement is used for hips. And the shoe size question really threw me. I wondered whether Playboy executives really think that in a centerfold, readers notice women's feet.

The waiting room was decorated with flags from Big Eight schools. The phone rang constantly.

"No, height has nothing to do with it," Kaye told a caller.

A woman entered the room wearing spandex shorts and a tank top.

"I couldn't think of anything I could wear that wouldn't make me look like a hooker," she said. "I mean, you're used to working with raw material."

I went on to the next application question, "activities, honors and hobbies." I put down my grade point average and my scholarship awards. I figured those would look better than horseback riding and long moonlit walks along the beach.

The most important question came last. Applicants were asked whether they preferred to be photographed clothed, semi-nude or naked. I opted for fully and completely clothed.

"Next. Don't be shy," called out David Chan, the Playboy photographer.

Suddenly a zillion thoughts rushed through my head. I was totally unprepared for this interview. I'd never even read a copy of Playboy. I didn't know how I was going to compliment them on their stimulating articles and stunning layouts. I'd be clueless if they asked me which Playboy writer I'd most like to emulate.

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Maybe this Playboy bunny thing isn't for me, I thought.

The photographer directed me to a chair in the corner of the room. I guess the light was better in that part of the room, because that's where I

posed.

He told me to put my knee and hand on the chair. He pulled out a Polaroid camera and snapped two shots. That was it. My interview was over.

"Don't you want to see my résumé?" I asked as I handed him a copy of it.

"What's this?" he asked.

Only the piece of paper that I struggled to perfect, digging deep into my past for accomplishments that could earn me a place in the real world. I realized he didn't care if I was smart. He was looking for more.

"What about the topless girl I saw when I walked in?" I asked.

He informed me that I couldn't possibly have seen a topless woman.

I thanked Chan for his time and slowly walked home. I thought about all the girls who would pose nude and all the men who would ogle over their naked bodies for weeks.

Yuck.
I still don't consider myself a hardcore feminist, but now I know firsthand that women are often viewed as sex toys. And I realize the situation can be reversed.

Maybe men and women just need to treat each other with a little more respect. Everyone. All of personkind.

Searcey is a junior news-editorial journalism and French major and a Daily Nebraskan night news editor.

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