



Woman's work

Playboy publicist espouses job

"What sort of woman works for Playboy?" a headline pouts in the latest issue of that venerable institution of pre- and post-pubescent male America.

There are no firm, er... concrete, answers to the question, but on page 139 meet Oregon's contribution to the cause — 26-year-old Joanie Schwabe, University alumna, beaver-state believer and publicist for Playboy magazine.

Schwabe, who works at the company's headquarters in Chicago, was sent west on an Oregon media blitz, an assignment she admits being nervous about. The occasion was Playboy employees peeling to various stages of undress in a 14-page layout in the December issue.

Schwabe's feature photo is no more revealing than a Montgomery Ward lingerie advertisement, although it is a good deal more alluring.

"It's my Oregon upbringing I guess," says Schwabe, who admits she was concerned about the reaction of her mother, Shirley Schwabe, a Portland realtor. "I think she braced herself before she opened it. But I think she trusted my modesty."

Schwabe graduated from the University in 1978 with a degree in journalism. She was an advertising salesman for the Emerald and an Alpha Phi sorority sister when her future took a turn for the glamorous.

"Universal Studios was placing an ad in the Emerald for extras for the movie Animal House," she remembers. "As a joke, some other girls and I decided to try out for the job. They were looking for 300 people so it wasn't hard to get on."



Schwabe says her ability to work with people and her degree in journalism — not her beauty — got her a job at Playboy.



Here to allure Oregonians to the joy of Playboy reading, Joanie Schwabe, University alumna, Playboy publicist and recent model, poses in front of the Pioneer Father.

She was awarded a walk-on part and met the director, John Landis, who suggested she consider becoming a publicist. One thing led to another, and she began a career with Playboy more than four years ago.

"It was sort of a lucky stroke of fate to meet John through that," Schwabe says.

Her position includes planning publicity events and press tours, writing news releases and other aspects of media relations. It is not, she says, endless travel and hobnobbing with the famous and near-famous.

"About 98 percent of my time is spent in a windowless office on the telephone," she says.

But the other 2 percent makes up for it — she has worked with celebrities like Steve Martin, at the height of his popularity, and writers Norman Mailer and David Halberstam to promote interviews and articles.

By most accounts, she's taken the Oregon media by storm. Jonathan Nicholas, an Oregonian columnist, unraveled his plushest prose in a red-carpet salute.

On "AM Northwest," viewers called in to ask Schwabe questions on the air. "Half the calls were from women that wanted to know how to get into the magazine — 'Am I too tall, am I too short,' things like that," she says, "I expected a backlash, feminist flak, but they were mostly supportive."

The attention given Schwabe by Oregon's communication network illustrates a quieter attribute of Playboy magazine that has had a heavy hand in its success — the ability to attract mostly favorable media attention.

"I think Playboy is in the news more than any other magazine in the country," Schwabe says. "Every time you pick the newspaper up there's something in there about it."

Her message to Oregon has been that Playboy is a nice place to work and a good magazine to read. "Playboy aspires to quality," she says. "I think it is pretty well accepted across the country as a legitimate literary magazine."

Schwabe says her journalism degree and the fact that she is a "people-oriented person" qualified her for the job at Playboy.

"First of all, I don't think I'm that pretty," says Schwabe. "And even if I was, I'd just be one of the crowd — there are so many beautiful women that work

for Playboy. The question is, what else do you have to offer the company?"

Schwabe feels her position allows her to expand her expertise and become more valuable to her employers. "I work with people that are among the best at what they do," Schwabe says. "Every year I get better at what I do."

With the lay-out in the December issue, Schwabe added another dimension to her career.

"Now I know what it feels like to be photographed by Playboy," she says. "The excitement of being in a national magazine, of being made the most beautiful you can be. Playboy is a genuinely classy magazine. I think women out there want to be a part of it for that reason."

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