

<http://www.indianastatesman.com/vnews/display.v/ART/2003/02/21/3e5630b0ba574>



Former 'Playgirl' editor speaks

By Courtney Beckman Indiana Statesman February 21, 2003

Ronnie Koenig overheard her mother telling her grandmother that Ronnie was an architect. Ronnie responded by saying, "My name is in a national magazine, Mom!"

Koenig is not an architect; she is a former editor in chief of "Playgirl" magazine. She shared her views about feminism and life experiences Wednesday night in Dede I as part of Sex Awareness Month.

Part of Koenig's one-woman show was about observations she made while working for the national magazine. Her candid storytelling left many blushing and giggling throughout the hour-long session.

After graduating from Barnard College with a degree in theater, Koenig answered an ad in the New York Times seeking an editor who was "comfortable with male nudity." Because of her background in journalism, working for her high school and college newspapers, she decided to look into the job.

Even though Koenig was familiar with the duties of an editor, nothing could prepare her for the world of pornography. She had to change her attitude about naked men and become more open-minded about sex. She turned into a sex guru.

"People would talk to me about things they wouldn't even talk to their doctors or therapists about," Koenig said.

Koenig's main objective was to create "a real forum for women's entertainment," she said, but after receiving lots of fan mail from gay men, she started to question whether "Playgirl" was truly a magazine for girls. She became determined to find women who actually read the magazine. Her entire reason for taking this job had been to affect the lives of women in a positive way and remind them that "there is no reason to feel ashamed about themselves and their sexuality," she said.

Koenig feels other magazines, such as "Cosmopolitan," leave their readers feeling insecure and unattractive.

When she realized that she didn't have any friends who read the magazine she went on a mission to find the women who did. On a "business outing" to Ladies Night at a strip club, where she and fellow co-workers were scouting for potential "Playgirl" models, she actually found the women she was looking for. They were all having a great time watching the male dancers parade around in their tiny little outfits. Koenig said that although she was anything but entertained, her co-workers were really enjoying themselves - or were they? She wondered if it could be that all of these women were simply reacting the way that they thought they were supposed to. She wondered if they truly enjoyed this display of male nudity. Koenig thought to herself, "The male body is just not sexy. I'm a disgrace to the women I'm supposed to be representing."

Koenig decided that the job wasn't for her and was going to quit, but instead was promoted to editor-in-chief after the previous one quit due to sexual harassment. She felt that she was doing a great job until her boss called her into his office and informed her that she "just wasn't working out and he had to let her go."

She said that two weeks later, she was notified that the day after she was fired, she was replaced by a gay man.

Koenig decided to take this experience and share it with the world in the form of a one-woman show. Her candid, unreserved show covers what she refers to as "the craziest time of (her) life." She has very strong views about feminism and sexuality and has conveyed those ideas through forums other than "Playgirl." She has appeared on Fox News and "The O'Reilly Factor," where she defended Britney Spears' controversial performance at the MTV Music Awards.

O'Reilly was extremely tough on Koenig. He asked her, "Why should this garbage be on the newsstands?" She said, "I think that you can learn a lot about a culture by the way it entertains itself."

Koenig plans to continue performing her one-woman show to convey her feminist views and share her experiences at "Playgirl."