

# Forum

## View from the Playboy mansion

In the midst of planning his millennium parties at what is probably the second-most-famous mansion in the world, Playboy magazine founder and editor Hugh Hefner has weighed-in on one of the great scientific and legal controversies of the last century — one that is a window into understanding America's obsession with sex and money.

"All of this misinformation surrounding breast implants is bizarre," Mr. Hefner says in an interview in his magazine's first issue of 2000. "There is no scientific evidence that breast implants aren't safe. All those class action suits against the manufacturers were a real miscarriage of justice."

Of course, Mr. Hefner has a vested interest here. But certainly no more than the one he had when President Clinton, proprietor of the Playboy Mansion East, was still denying his affair with Monica Lewinsky and Mr. Hefner proclaimed, "We have a playboy in the White House who has lit a thousand points of lust."

Love him or hate him, Mr. Hefner has always had a track record for being on the cutting edge, and for

being a voice of the red-blooded American male; a reputation that continues into the new century, even though he'll be 74. Esquire recently wrote: "Look at him now. Hermetically unsealed, emerged from the gates, charting a new real world." And, about his empire, the Toronto Sun recently said, "Playboy is back as Bachelor No. 1, Architect of the '60s Sexual Revolution, Flings Open Mansion Doors to Nineties Hedonists."

So whether it's having the audacity to print a photo of a nude Marilyn Monroe as his first centerfold in 1953, being one of the first to try Viagra, or now sensing that the law seems to have become something other than the noble pursuit of justice, Mr. Hefner may have something.

He started Playboy with a personal investment of \$600 and is, as his competitors admit, "the most famous magazine editor in the history of the world." But in many ways, he's also a throwback to the great American tradition of risk-taking. If the first half of the century was about success stories of people taking everything and

putting it on the line, then sadly the end is about a culture of finding someone to blame when things go wrong.

More than 3 million women have had plastic surgery for larger breasts. The boom in the implant business coincided with the change in the practice of law. Using techniques traditionally practiced by research and development departments of corporations, plaintiffs' lawyers have made a cottage industry of targeting implants and other medical devices — as well as tobacco, guns and fast-food outlets.

What makes implants so controversial is the assertion by tort lawyers that they cause disease, something that has never been supported by science. Then there's the feminist issue that something is wrong with the idea of women wanting larger breasts to be more attractive to men. "It's like any other form of cosmetic surgery," says Mr. Hefner. "If it improves a woman's appearance, or if she feels it does, why not?"

But feminists such as Gloria Steinem (who in a previous life was a Playboy bunny) will say that's just

Mr. Hefner mouthing the party line, representing the culture he helped create.

The truth is, women's health experts admit to the psychological benefits of implants. And there's recent evidence to suggest that implants may in fact help deter breast cancer.

One could make a case that 1999 was the Year of the Implant. The year included rampant speculation that teen rocker Britney Spears had implants, the news that former Playboy Playmate Pamela Anderson Lee had hers removed (not because of illness, but because she wanted to go natural), Dow Corning announcing it will begin playing claims in implant lawsuits, and the prestigious National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine reporting that there's no link between implants and connective tissue disease.

Mr. Hefner, who confesses to plastic surgery on his neck, says implants are common among Playmates today. Almost as common as spurious lawsuits arising from the scare tactics of the trial lawyers.

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