

focus

Hopping into Aggieland

Playboy's December Playmate visited campus last week — posing, smiling, signing all the way

By GLENNA WHITLEY

Almost 2,000 men stand on chairs, craning their necks to get a glimpse.

"Where is she?" says a thin, wiry freshman, jumping up and down. "Is that her?" He points at me. I look to see who's behind me. No one there.

"No, you dummy. There she is."

A parade enters Duncan Dining Hall. Four columns of men march in. Pandemonium breaks loose. Men are shouting, smiling wildly, whooping, waving. "Over here, over here," shouts six men in unison.

At the center of the four columns is the object of all the hysteria: Playboy Magazine's December Playmate, Ashley Cox.

Tall and blonde, she strides in, her filmy black dress swirling about her calves. Her high-heeled black shoes make her official height of 5-foot-8 look like 6-foot.

She sits at a table near the center of the room. With all eyes on her, she begins to pass the ham, mixed vegetables, potatoes and salad. She smiles but glances warily around the room full of men who have obviously seen the December issue of Playboy and are recreating it in their minds.

That's enough to scare any woman. But is a Playmate just any woman? Isn't she packaged and sold as the stuff dreams are made of, a beautiful and sexy woman, full of interesting ideas about love?

"She's good-looking and all, but she's just a regular person," says Tim McCann, who sat at Cox's table at Duncan.

And after a big kiss from Cox, all Ken Donnelly, senior Corps member, had to say was, "I guess it was all right."

In College Station last week as a gimmick for a local concert, Cox introduced the rock band, signed autographs and posed for Polaroids (fully clothed) at three dollars a shot.

I borrowed the December issue of Playboy from a friend (after first accusing him of being a male chauvenist pig for buying it) and read the "data sheet" provided. And yes, I did look at the pictures.

The typical statistics are listed: 36-24-35, Scorpio, home town (Dallas), biggest turn-on and biggest turn-off.

"Biggest Joy: I like to give people things they want and watch their eyes light up. I am a bit skeptical about the data and make a note to ask who really fills it out."

After calling and following her around, I finally get an interview. Her days as a Playmate are busy. For \$200 a day, she promotes. Concerts, basketball games, banquets. She gives interviews, smiles and looks her best for pictures.

In her hotel room at the Aggieland Inn, Cox sits on the bed and tells me what she thought about dining with the Corps of Cadets.

"I loved it, but I didn't understand it (the whooping). If I was an accomplished actress I could understand it."

Cox wants to be an actress, and she has had small roles in three movies.

"I feel that being an actress is my fate. Whatever I put my mind to, I can do." She talks about losing the role of Giggling Gertie in her high school's production of "Oklahoma."

"It was humiliating." But she's ambitious and says she feels she can be as "good as, say, Diane Keaton."

I ask about posing for the centerfold.

"The first couple of days posing did bother me. But only two people (the photographer and stylist) are there. And it's nothing new to the photographer."

She stayed at the Playboy mansion in Los Angeles when she did the centerfold. "But I can't answer any personal questions about Hefner." She says they are good friends, however.

"It's not easy work at all. They want you to look so sexy, so inviting, and at the same time so innocent."

She wasn't pleased with the final layout.

For \$200 a day, she promotes. She gives interviews, smiles and looks her best for pictures.

"They took about \$5,000 worth of pictures, and they must have used the worst."

I comment that she looks different in person than in the magazine, but she just smiles and shrugs her shoulders.

Cox says 32,000 to 50,000 women try out to be Playmates. "It's really an honor to be chosen."

"But I intend on not doing any more nudes. My mother thought it was the worst thing that could happen."

The phone rings and Cox answers, "hellooooo . . ." Her accent goes from mid-west to Southern Belle.

She's wanted in the lobby. On the way down in the elevator, she says she wouldn't be a Playboy Bunny in one of the clubs.

"I don't like the costumes. And I don't feel as much of a sex symbol as a bunny. Besides, they have to put up with all these older men pinching them."

She is on stage to introduce the band for all of one minute. Then she gets down to the serious work, signing autographs and smiling for pictures.

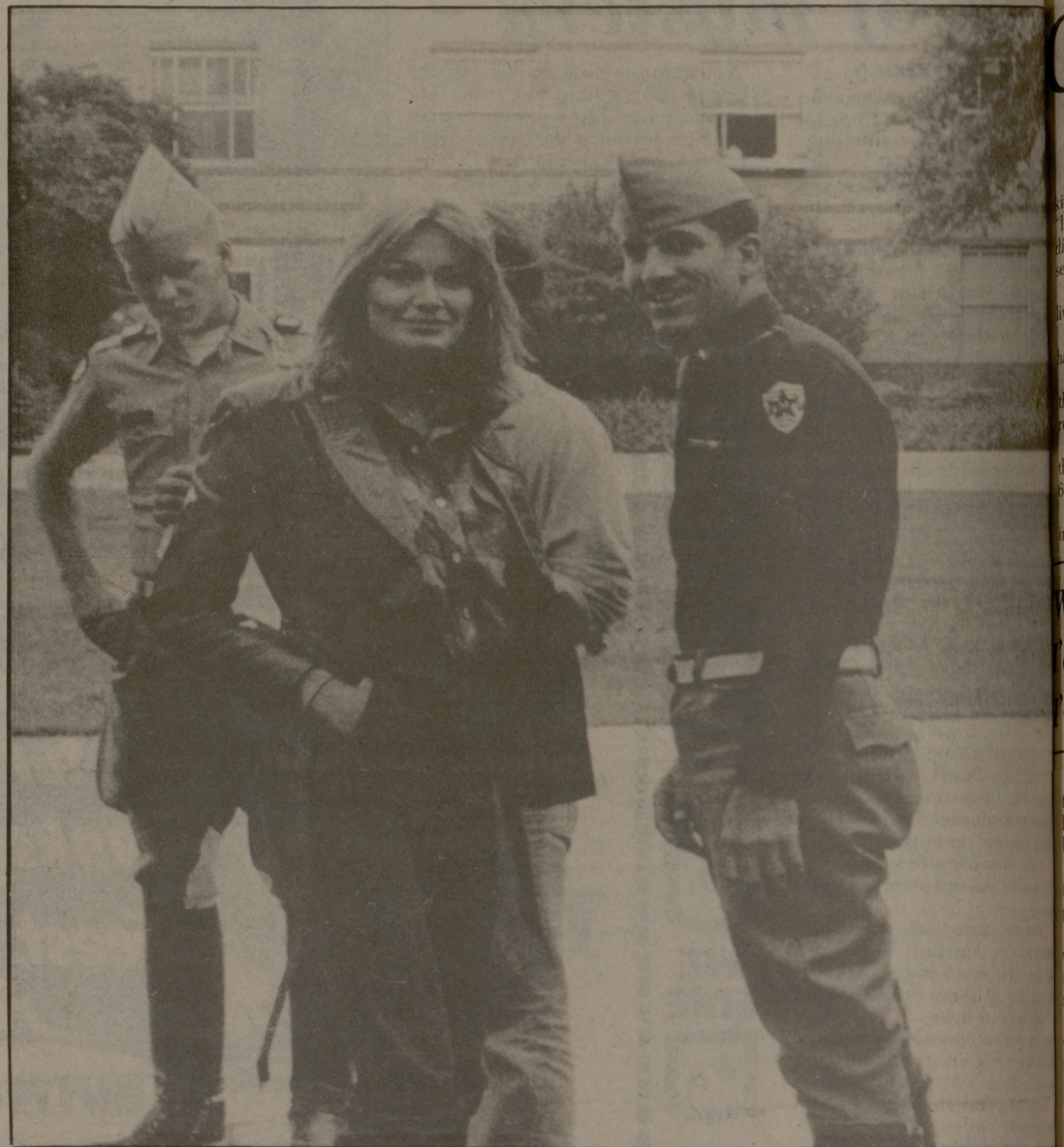
Two young men buy concert tickets, three December Playboys apiece (conveniently available at the door for 75 cents more than the regular price), and get their pictures taken with Ashley Cox. They leave, not once going into the ballroom to listen to the concert.

After more posing, Cox decides her pictures look terrible and "it must be my bangs."

"I just don't want to disappoint them," she says. So it's back up to the hotel room.

She gets out the hair dryer to zap the bangs. I shout, "WHAT DOES YOUR BOYFRIEND THINK ABOUT THE CENTERFOLD?" I feel like an idiot because she didn't hear me, so I snoop around the hotel room until she's finished.

I don't know what I expected, black garter belts and whips



Playboy's December Playmate, Ashley Cox, undergoes a Corps formality — inspection.

perhaps, but there was only a pair of boots on the bed, an empty package for 99-cent panty hose, and a suitcase in the corner with shirt sleeves sticking out.

In the bathroom, Johnson's Baby Powder and Baby Magic Lotion sit on the counter.

I have those things in my bathroom, too, but they don't seem to have the same result.

The bangs are now in her eyes with the desired sultry effect and it's back downstairs.

On the way, she meets a friend. "Oh hi, I was just straightening myself up. I was a wreck."

In the lobby, two other friends show up, girlfriends from Cox's high school at Grand Prairie, Texas.

They look shy and embarrassed. One says, "I saw your name and just couldn't believe it was you." She glances at her boyfriend who's grinning in the background.

They reminisce and Cox thanks them for coming by. She begins the picture-autograph routine again.

I ask Pam Norman, one of the classmates, what the Playmate was like in high school.

"Well she was always real shy and quiet. And really skinny." Maybe there's hope for me yet.



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