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Jennifer Shaughnessy
Illinois Wesleyan University

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CONTACT: Jennifer Shaughnessy, (309) 556-3181

Stew Salowitz, (309) 556-3206

***Playboy Magazine* Columnist Asa Baber to Speak at Illinois Wesleyan University**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. -- Asa Baber, a contributing editor and author of the monthly "Men" column in *Playboy* magazine, will speak during Illinois Wesleyan University's second annual "Gender Issues Week," which is Feb. 16-20.

Baber's speech, "Men Behaving Goodly," will be at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 19 in the Main Lounge of the Memorial Student Center at 104 E. University Ave. and is free and open to the public.

In Baber's appearances, he focuses on the need for men and women to work together to understand their roles in society. Part of the problem, he argues, is that universities have failed to catch up with the need for answers to male students' concerns on issues such as men's rights. "My vision of a university is a place where we can have ideas and debates," says Baber, "and sort out those ideas so that some kind of truth comes out of it."

Baber, who has earned degrees from Princeton, Northwestern, and a master's of fine arts in writing at the University of Iowa, was a tenured professor at the University of Hawaii and has also taught at Iowa and Northwestern. He started writing his *Playboy* column in April 1982, in which he writes about the issues that try men's souls with a combination of toughness and sensitivity that is designed to provoke and inspire.

Baber is also the author of two books, including "Naked at Gender Gap: A Man's View of the War Between the Sexes" (1992, Birch Lane Press), a collection of his *Playboy* magazine columns, and "Tranquillity Base and Other Stories" (1979, Fiction International), a group of his short stories.

In addition to Baber's talk, other events scheduled during IWU's "Gender Issues Week" include:

- ▲ All week — "Silent Witness" display in various buildings throughout campus
- ▲ Tues., Feb. 17 — Panel discussion on "Non-Traditional Roles," 7 p.m., Center for Natural Sciences room C-102
- ▲ Wed., Feb. 18 — Self-defense class, 6:30-8 p.m., Shirk Center practice gymnasium
- ▲ Fri., Feb. 20 — Movie: "When Harry Met Sally," followed by discussion, 7 p.m., Center for Natural Sciences room C-101

For further information about "Gender Issues Week," contact co-chairs Emily Cromwell or Jill Bose at (309) 556-2663 or 556-2910.

A Baber Sampler: Excerpts from 'Men'

"Sexism, in short, takes many forms, and men are victims of it today, just as women are victims of it."

"The current clichés about male sexuality are absurd...we don't see ourselves as plundering or exploiting or using. Sex and love are tightly interwoven for us. If they are totally compartmentalized for most women, who has the problem?"

"You can't buy a copy of Playboy at (most) 7-Eleven stores these days, but you can buy any number of romance novels. That says quite a bit about our culture. Among other things, it says that women's fantasies are acceptable and men's are not."

"Men have now had 25 years of sexists calling us sexist. It's today's classic double bind: He'll be accused of being a sexist by feminists who are sexist, and he will be mocked for his maleness by people who are angered by his very nature."

Make no mistake about it, Asa Baber loves women. He is crazy about them. He confides in them, laughs with them, venerates them and lusts after them. Ask him and he will tell you God created no finer creature. Baber also fights with women, chides them, howls in anger at their rhetoric and their strategies. He pens vehement diatribes against them. He counsels other men on how not to fall into their terrible female traps. And he never apologizes for maleness or the aggression inherent in it. "The aggressive male who is being roundly mocked and put down today is absolutely necessary to a successful society," he says. "It is part of the male makeup."

Another vital part is sexual energy, something Baber relishes. "The sexual energy of the normal male is the equivalent of a nuclear power plant." Yet he is very much against promiscuity. "When you start to wander, you voluntarily take an ax and split yourself into pieces," he says. That comes from one who can walk into offices and turn heads like a leading man. At 54, he easily looks 10 years younger. He is Clint Eastwood in his spaghetti western days, a craggy, solid guy with a strong jaw and steel eyes. He is in great physical shape and still wrestles with his grown sons. He can flash a smile that will stop a truck.

Yet for most of his waking hours, Baber is as serious as a surgeon, his mug a metal jacket of no-nonsense. His shoulders sag from the weight of the world. He is certain every cab will jump the curb. He not only reads between the lines, but to him all print is fine print. He believes in the grassy knoll. No mundane activity, be it a trip to the Jewel or a stroll on the lakefront, goes without a measure of fear and loathing. Says a former colleague, "He is one of the most complicated individuals you and I will ever know."

"People feel close to [Baber], they feel they know him, can talk to him in a bar. He evokes some of the most heart-rending, long, eloquent letters from men who feel they have been screwed by their wives' lawyer and are separated from their kids and are aching to be with them."

And Baber has no intention of slacking off. He enjoys "walking point," as he likes to say. He feels very young and, needless to say, more virile than ever. He continues to be a strong voice on behalf of the rights of divorced fathers, and he has been a guru and volunteer group leader in several New Warrior Training Adventures, a nationwide series of all-male weekend getaways in which participants examine questions of manhood.

- from the Chicago Tribune Magazine (June 30, 1991) by Bill Brashler

Jodi F. Solomon Speakers Bureau
325 Huntington Avenue #112
Boston, MA 02115
telephone: 617-266-3450
fax: 617-266-5660
e-mail: solomonj@ix.netcom.com