

PILLOW TALK WITH SUE

By John Smith, Reporter

There is a good chance that even those who do not regularly watch WTN's *The Sunday Night Sex Show* are familiar with Sue Johanson. The registered nurse and sex therapist has built her career by offering viewers and listeners frank and factual information about all different aspects of sex, everything from how to find the elusive "G-spot" to how to build a healthy relationship with a sexual partner. Her newest book, *Sex, Sex, and More Sex*, is a collection of questions and answers about everything sexual, thus making it an excellent resource for those seeking honest information. On September 8th, Johanson gave a wonderful and informative lecture to a packed house in the UPEI Sports Centre gym.

Sue's wealth of knowledge has allowed her to have some interesting perspectives into how perceptions of sex have changed over the last few years and how sex fits into culture, particularly in Canada. She says that in Canada, sexual education is much better now than it has been in the past; however, it is far from ideal. It seems that students in Canada are not getting education beyond the basic biology of sex. Issues such as building a healthy physical and mental relationships and misogyny are not dealt with in any great capaci-

ty. Sex education is particularly lacking for females, she feels, because, unlike males, "females get shown pictures of their anatomy, but never their genitals. So they have no idea. They don't have language for their genitals. They call it 'down there' ". She notes that the field of sex ed is huge, and that not enough people, both men and women, are willing to be truly honest about it, thus causing both genders to suffer as a result.

When asked about her thoughts on how sex is currently looked upon, she admits she feels the biggest change has occurred in the last couple of years. With the influence of the popular media, she's concerned about the message being sent by the dress habits of some women and notes that it "smacks of Britney Spears". She worries whether this is the message to be sending, and its effect on other women who don't follow the current trends and meet the media standard, who can "feel totally inadequate, asexual. . . unattractive, unappealing, uninteresting."

For such women it's worrisome about what they see happening around them in regards to the people who would be considered more "attractive" or "beautiful." They may feel they have to "settle for second best", though Sue points out that it

"really depends on self-concept and self-esteem." This can apply to both men and women. On the subject of men, she admits that they are more or less "ruled by their hormones unless they've got a good set of values that say no, wait a minute. . . that's not what I want in my life or not what I want in a relationship".

Though she doesn't feel that society is strictly repressed in regards to sexual openness and discussion, she does note that there are people, particularly mature couples, who get into problems "because they can't talk about sex at all. . . they don't have the words". Instead, they use methods of talking that "literally close the door", ending any discussion. She notes that women are more verbal than men, who can have difficulty expressing themselves, which as Johanson says "is a shame because they can; they've just never been allowed to".

In regards to the origins of healthy sexual relationships, she points out that such relations "do not originate in a bar. . . that's the pick-up scene and 'what's your sign' scene". For Sue, the key to a healthy relationship is to base it on "really knowing your partner, talking to your partner, finding out everything about your partner". Everything from their family background, the experiences they've had, what

are the things that please and bother them, their reactions to various things, and their likes and dislikes. It's also important, she notes, to discuss things such as feelings on marriage, children, and monogamy, all of which are rarely discussed before a relationship takes deep roots and commitments such as marriage are made. Knowing the whole person, mind and body, could be ideal, though Sue notes that "unfortunately hormones kick in. . . they do sometimes cloud your discrimination."

Sue's pleased that her show has achieved the popularity in Canada that it has, and that people call in for more than just answers to straight-forward questions about things such as sexual techniques. She notes that a lot of people call about relationships, and to learn the truth about various sexual myths and misinformation. The show definitely seems to have achieved its purpose. For not only Sue Johanson, but for all her viewers, listeners, and readers, as well as the community at large, that can only be a good thing.