

FEATURES

'A feminist? He wouldn't go that far...'

As Hugh Hefner's family auction off his personal effects, *Celia Walden* discusses his legacy with his daughter, Christie

When I first met Hugh Hefner 11 years ago, he was wearing his trademark bespoke black silk pyjamas. Whether the very same pair will go under the hammer tomorrow is possible but unlikely, says his daughter. "My father had so many pairs," laughs Christie Hefner, who will be there to witness some of her father's most personal possessions go up for auction this week in Los Angeles.

I met the Hef once more before he died at the age of 91 last year. It was a week before his third wedding to the then 24-year-old Playmate Crystal Harris – and once again he didn't disappoint. "A stag night?" he repeated in incredulous tones when I asked whether he was planning to have one. "Young lady, I've been having a stag night for the past 50 years."

For many, Hefner was just a pantomime figure with a harem of blondes and it's easy to forget how this

"Too many to count. It would have been like counting jelly beans in a jar, they were all the colours of the rainbow." The August night that my husband took me to one of Hefner's infamous Midsummer Night's Dream parties at the Playboy Mansion, he paired his black pyjamas with matching slippers and his signature scarlet silk smoking jacket – now on offer for a very reasonable \$3,000 (£2,350). It is being sold alongside everything from a 34-in fishnet-stockinged leg lamp that once stood on his nightstand (\$75-\$150) to a first edition of F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (\$3,000-\$4,000), a portable typewriter on which the first issues of his magazine were bashed out (\$2,000-\$4,000) and the very first 1953 issue of *Playboy* printed, featuring Marilyn Monroe on the cover (\$3,000-\$5,000).



He felt the ideal society is one that embraces sexuality as well as women's rights

whip-smart and well-read son of two teachers turned the £400 borrowed from his mother into a global business valued at £135 million just seven years ago. So busy was he building his empire, however, that Christie, now 66, "didn't see a lot of him growing up. My parents divorced when I was very young, so for years I saw him on his birthday, my birthday and Christmas."

"But then when I was in high school, we began to talk a lot more as adults, and we would have these great chats about religion, politics and the world. I've often thought that one of the most defining qualities about him was this boyish wonder," she smiles.

In the last decade of his life her father chose to celebrate his birthday

in the same way every year, she tells me. "He and all his friends would dress up in white dinner jackets, the mansion's dining room would be turned into a 'Rick's Café', and we would all watch *Casablanca*."

Christie – a former CEO of her father's company for 20 years – only found out after he had died that he wanted all his personal effects to be auctioned off, with the proceeds going to the Hugh M Hefner Foundation. But before Julien's Auctions spent 60 days clearing the Playboy Mansion, Christie took her younger brother David, 63, and two half-brothers,

Cooper, 27, and Marsten, 28, around the estate so that they could all take anything with particular meaning before it was sold off. One item with special significance for Christie was her father's copy of *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, which was first published as a short story in *Playboy*. "The inscription reads 'To Hef, who published this when almost no one else would'," she tells me. "And because I know how much he battled censorship throughout his life, that's deeply significant to me."

One of my favourite Hefner quotes is: "I want to live in a society in which people can voice unpopular opinions, because I know that, as a result of that, a society grows and matures."

As president of the foundation – which honours individuals like journalists and whistle-blowers at the First Amendment Awards, supports civil rights and funds research into sexual health and drugs – Christie will plough the proceeds into causes her father passionately believed in.



Well-read: Christie Hefner, above in 1976, and, left, with her father Hugh, the founder of the *Playboy* publishing empire

I wonder whether she ever feels grateful that her father never witnessed the way social media has ended up closing down debate and making the world, in many ways, feel smaller than ever. "We're now wrestling with the cultural imperative of learning to be respectful of differences, while not losing the power of freedom of expression," she agrees – adding that the puritanism we've seen come back with such force "is something my father was very strongly against. He believed that love, romance and sexuality were humanising forces and that society was not improved by suppressing them."

The countries that suppress them also tend to repress women, Christie points out. "And my father felt the ideal society is one that embraces sexuality as well as women's rights."

She can't quite hold back a smile when I ask whether Hef was a feminist ("I don't know if he would say that, but he would certainly say that he was a humanist who believed in equality"), but when it comes to the MeToo movement, Christie is in no doubt that "my father would have been very much on the side of the women. I know he was deeply disappointed to find out what Bill Cosby had been engaged in, because they knew each other as friends. As an opponent of oppression and abuse of power, my father would absolutely have thought



Play things: Hugh Hefner's typewriter, smoking jacket and the first copy of



Playboy, featuring Marilyn Monroe, are going under the hammer tomorrow and Saturday



MeToo was a force for good." With her tenure at *Playboy* behind her and Cooper now the chief creative officer, Christie is reluctant to talk about the future of the company her father founded almost 70 years ago. But one thing she would like to see in the magazine's pages and elsewhere "is more expressions of women's view of what is romantic and sexy. So that women wouldn't just be objects of desire, but desiring human beings."

"Right now, pretty much the only form of expression for women's erotic fantasies are romance novels, and perhaps that contributes to women's resentment that they're always the only ones being looked at," she says. "There will be poignant moments at tomorrow's auction, Christie accepts, "but mostly it'll be a celebration of my father's life." His other moving final act is being laid to rest in the crypt beside Marilyn Monroe's in LA's Westwood Village Memorial Park cemetery. "Because he never did get to meet her. 'And this way,' he'd say, 'I get to spend eternity lying beside her.'"

The auction will take place on Nov 30 and Dec 1 at Julien's Auctions, and live online at juliensauctions.com

Noel's New-Age beauty secrets

How did Britain's unluckiest sex symbol become a bronzed Adonis at 69, asks *Eleanor Steafel*

If you are not one of the 12 million people currently tuning into *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!* every night, you may be unaware of a stratospheric shift in the celebrity atmosphere. Noel Edmonds – the man whose hair hasn't moved since it was first worked into a tousled sandy mane in 1982, and who brought us such TV delights as *Mr Blobby* and *Deal or No Deal* – has, rather incongruously, become a mid-life pin-up. He may be pushing 70, but his stint in the jungle has revealed a physique most men of his age left behind at 38.



Doll or no doll: keeping his hair in shape

style Tabata, where you focus on one body part at a time, working muscles intensively. Rising before dawn, Noel works out in the dark to the sounds of electronic pulses, with a set of weights. Quite a sight to behold on a misty jungle morning when you peek out of your hammock to spy him lifting logs from the camp fire.

The diet
The meagre jungle menu will suit Noel, who apparently regularly skips dinner. When he does sit down to eat, he sticks to a largely vegetarian, low-acid diet, believing that maintaining the pH balance of your body and blood is the key to true health. Most days, breakfast is a power smoothie, followed by a light lunch and no evening meal.

This is presumably how he manages to be asleep by 10pm every night. Noel is strict about getting his beauty rest and it pays dividends – look at him, he is almost challenging you to find a wrinkle on his smoother-than-smooth face. He doesn't appear to have gone under the knife, but there isn't a centimetre of sagging skin on the man.

Noel puts his ageless looks down to the fact that he is "incredibly straight" and has "never taken drugs, ever."

"I was never into that party scene," he has said. "Even at 20, when I was one of the five DJs on Radio Luxembourg. People thought it was wild, but I never even got drunk."

The hair
With barely a hint of grey and no sign of thinning, Noel's hair takes years off him. It has its own Twitter account – @EdmondsHair – and seems to have remained exactly the same in the five decades he has spent on television.

Marjan Simmons, his former girlfriend, says his hair is his crowning glory. "I'd be ready in 10 minutes and he'd take 45 minutes," she has said. "He'd blow-dry his hair, style his beard. In my head I thought – how long is he going to be? For a man to be so meticulous about his hair and grooming I found a little odd. But that's his character."

"He'll have to do a spit-and-polish with his hair Down Under. I never once saw him unshaven – his beard was always immaculate. With no razor who knows what he'll look like?"

Oh dear, could we be about to see Noel unravel?

The cosmic energy
Noel believes, above all, that positive energy can cure anything. As he wrote in his book *Positively Happy: Cosmic Ways to Change Your Life*: "Throughout the many ups and downs, the successes and the failures in my life, there has been a consistent and all-embracing belief that a positive attitude produces results."

To help get his internal cosmicity in order, Noel lies on a £2,000 electromagnetic mat for 15 minutes a day. His EMPpad Omnium helps him tone up, but he also controversially believes it cured him of prostate cancer.

He said in 2016: "The negative forces acting on me impacted on my health. I know why I got my cancer. The definition of stress is negative energy. Thanks to electromagnetism, I'm now cancer-free."

He started using the mat after becoming concerned about the "electro smog all around us". After a time, he apparently realised that his hair was thicker, his nails stronger and his workouts easier. He must be missing it in the jungle. Perhaps he could find a suitably cosmic rock to lie on.

While you're at it, Noel, could you cosmic order a good Brexit deal for Britain? Cheers.

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