Beat: Miscellaneous

`Deep Throat` porn star Harry Reems dies at 65

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USPA News - Harry Reems, who earned just $100 to have sex with Linda Lovelace in the enormously successful 1972 hardcore pornography film "Deep Throat," died in Salt Lake City this week after a battle with cancer, his family said on Wednesday. He was 65 years old.

Reems died at around 2 p.m. local time on Tuesday at the veterans` hospital in Salt Lake City, his long-time friend Don Schenk said. His health had been deteriorating in recent years due to peripheral neuropathy and emphysema, followed by a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer in the summer of 2012. The actor rose to fame when he portrayed Dr. Young in the 1972 hardcore pornography film "Deep Throat," setting off legal controversies. In the movie, the physician discovers an unusual birth defect: Lovelace`s clitoris is located in her throat, making her vastly prefer oral sex to intercourse. The film is claimed to have grossed more than $600 million worldwide, making it the most successful pornographic movie of all time. The 62-minute film brought pornography to mainstream audiences, even though many theaters refused to show the film or were prevented from doing so by local officials. Lovelace died in April 2002 after suffering massive trauma and internal injuries in a car crash in Denver, Colorado. She later claimed to have been forced into pornography by her husband Chuck Traynor, accusing him of beating her, rape, forced prostitution, and making private pornography with her. She later denounced porn and became a spokeswoman for the anti-pornography movement. But despite "Deep Throat" being enormously successful, Reems revealed in an interview in 1976 that he was paid only $100 for his part. "I acted in a movie, `Deep Throat`, 1972, for a day, [and] was paid a minimal amount of money. One-hundred dollars," he said, responding to an interviewer`s question. The interview took place after Reems was convicted of obscenity for his part in the film and was facing up to five years in prison. The conviction was overturned on appeal after a number of celebrities came to his defense, but he remains the only American actor to have been tried under obscenity laws for taking part in a film. "I think I was being used to set an example for other actors, other directors, people connected with the production angle end of a motion picture, to not experiment with sexuality as an avenue for creativity for fear of potential jail," Reems, whose real name was Herbert Streicher, said in the 1976 interview that was published by CBC News. And while now famous for starring in the first adult film for mainstream audiences, Reems was not originally supposed to be in the film. He had been hired to handle the lighting on the set of "Deep Throat" but was asked by writer and director Gerard Damiano when the man hired to play the male star did not show up. After the success of "Deep Throat," Reems went on to star in more than 80 other adult films, including "Angel`s Revenge," "Backdoor Brides," "Club Ginger," "Devil in Miss Jones," "Talk Dirty to Me One More Time," and "Too Naughty to Say No." He left the porn industry in the mid-1980s. "Eventually Harry became an active alcoholic," Schenk said on Wednesday. "Although he was clean and sober by the time I met him, he told me the lowest point in his life came when he was homeless, because of his addictions, and had to panhandle on Sunset Blvd. in Hollywood just to survive. There he was, a one-time famous actor, now on skid row." As he tried to turn his life around he became a salesman for a time-share company, selling condos in Jamaica, before moving to Utah to become a Realtor. "In July 1989 he took his last drink, became sober, and hasn`t had a drink since," Schenk said. He later found religion and helped others recover from alcohol addiction. "A year or so after becoming sober, he had his first date with Jeannie, and he proposed marriage to her on their first date," Schenk explained. "She laughed, and told him if she was still dating him in a year, she might consider it. They eloped 4 months later, and have been totally devoted to each other for 22 years. He idolized her, and she him. It was the first marriage for each." But his health deteriorated in recent years due to peripheral neuropathy and emphysema, forcing him to retire from real estate. He was then diagnosed with pancreatic cancer during a routine test in the summer of 2012 and went through months of chemo and radiation treatments. Schenk said the former actor was hospitalized at the veterans` hospital in Salt Lake City on March 5 due to jaundice. "His liver was failing. Next his kidneys began to fail as his body started to shut down," he said. Reems slipped into a coma on Friday before he passed away on Tuesday afternoon. "Harry went from living a bizarre lifestyle, through a 180 degree almost miraculous change to find a Higher Power he called God, and become a truly nice guy who cared for others, and helped a lot of people in Park City, Utah," his friend said. Reems had no children but is survived by his wife and a brother.

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