

NAAFA Newsletter

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NEWS AND COMMENT

JACK LALANNE HEALTH SPA SUED

A NAAFA member in New York has sued the health chain, claiming that his life membership fee was accepted, but that it was refunded and he was refused admittance after members complained that he was too fat! Ira Shprintzen, who weighed more than 500 pounds prior to gastric bypass surgery, and is now down to 300, says that his chances of collecting a large award are excellent.

NURSING SCHOOL SUED BY FAT STUDENT

Sharon Russell, a 21 year old student at Regina College of Rhode Island was expelled for being "too fat". The school insisted that Ms. Russell lose 2 pounds per week until she had dropped approximately 100 pounds. Despite her straight A grades and her "cooperation" in shedding 35 pounds, the school expelled her claiming that she had violated their agreement.

Ms. Russell countered by filing suit against the school for violation of privacy, illegally denying her an education, and violation of her civil rights.

COMMENTARY

It's exciting to see that fat people are fighting back...and getting press coverage to boot! Such stories were rare just a few years ago. Most large people who faced discrimination just gave in or gave up...choosing to give in to diet desperation or give up on their hopes for a good education or a new job.

We wish these people well and hope that they meet with the same success as did Catherine McDermott in her case against the Xerox Corp.

NAAFA ATTENDED HEALTH FRAUD CONFERENCE

Held in Washington on September 11, and jointly sponsored by the FDA, the FTC, and the U.S. Postal Service, the conference was attended by three persons representing NAAFA: Dr. Paul Ernsberger, in his role as Chairman of NAAFA's Advisory Board; Neil Dachis, a Maryland attorney who is Chairman of the Legislative Committee; and Debra Bieber Ernsberger, reporting the event for the NAAFA Newsletter. (Her report will follow in an upcoming issue.) Dr. Ernsberger brought with him a paper he wrote for the purpose, detailing NAAFA's special interest in the area of weight-loss scams. Many copies of his paper were picked up by conference attendees. Some important new contacts were made at the conference; it is hoped that NAAFA will gain important allies in the fight against diet frauds.

COMMENTARY

NAAFA has come a long way to be able to sit with other organizations and government agencies that have a common interest of fighting one area of injustice and exploitation of fat people. NAAFA has long been regarded by some to be a "renegade" organization, unorthodox in advising for seventeen years that those with a larger-than-average-waistline may not always be helping themselves by going on the diet bandwagon. Some people still feel this way about NAAFA, but increasingly, NAAFA's value as an advocate of the rights of fat people is being respected. Conferences like the above help to underscore NAAFA's role in that capacity, one that we hope will expand in the months to come.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR:

PUTTING THE NEWS BACK IN NEWSLETTER...by Nancy Summer

Starting with this issue, a number of changes have been made in how the Newsletter looks, and the way it is produced, and mailed to NAAFA members. Changes have also been made in NAAFA-Gram, the tri-weekly publication that was available to certain membership classes and donors. We hope these changes will put the NEWS back in the Newsletter for all our members.

Much praise was received for the 16-20 page format Newsletters that we have produced during the last three years. Unfortunately, NAAFA has not been financially able to produce more than 3 or 4 of them a year at best. The truth is that, as good as those Newsletters were, they could not be continued with the number of members we currently have.

The NEWS part of the Newsletter was lost in the delays between issues, and even in the few weeks it took between the day the committee submitted the artwork for printing and the actual mailing date. Then, when you add on the 3 to 12 week bulk mail postal delays (some never being delivered at all!), much of the news coverage was hardly newsworthy any longer.

NAAFA-Gram was an attempt to keep members informed on a much more timely basis. Unfortunately, due to the additional cost of a tri-weekly publication mailed via first class, only those members who paid additional dues or made substantial donations could receive it.

Starting with this issue, all that has changed.

The Board of Directors felt that having a more frequent, timely Newsletter was more important than having infrequent, larger, in-depth issues. It was decided to embark on a one-year experiment of having monthly Newsletters that were two or four pages in length, and that these Newsletters would be produced much the same as NAAFA-Gram was, but available to all members and mailed via first class mail. This new format will cover news and commentary, columnists such as Chairman Fabrey, Paul Ernsberger, Ph.D., and June Bailey and will also carry internal NAAFA news. The use of bulk mail for Newsletter mailings, for the time being at least, is being discontinued.

Convention coverage, photo supplements, and any in-depth material will be covered in SPECIAL EDITIONS, that will be published from time to time, funds permitting, but these issues will never delay the basic Newsletter. (These issues will be produced by NAAFA's various committees, and not necessarily the Newsletter committee.)

NAAFA-Gram, as it has existed, has been made obsolete by these changes. However, current NAAFA-Gram recipients will not lose out. NAAFA-Gram has been changed to an "alert system" that calls for special mailings of "hot news". A recent NAAFA-Gram mailing (1/3 of a page) regarding the rerun of a Phil Donahue show on Nov. 26 was typical of the sort of mailings that NAAFA-Gram recipients will receive from time to time, but that NAAFA cannot yet afford to send to everyone.

We hope that these changes will help keep you more informed and that they will meet with your approval. Please write us; we will appreciate your comments, both pro and con, and will present them to the Board of Directors. We also still welcome letters to the Editor on other issues as well.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The office receives many requests for assistance. Few are more stirring than the one received November 21, and perhaps it represents the kind of discrimination for which NAAFA must always keep its incoming telephone line open. Mr. S.P., in the State of Washington called NAAFA for advice and moral support. Until November 15, he was a Major in the United States Army, entitled to full retirement upon reaching 20 years of service--service which included three years duty in Korea, and one in Viet Nam, after which he was awarded a Bronze star. Upon his discharge, he received a Meritorious Service Medal, well-earned in the service of his country, in the opinion of his immediate commanding officer.

After hearing the above, you might think that Mr. S.P.'s wife and four children would be happy to have their father finally retire from the service. Ordinarily, that would have been the case--if Mr. S.P. had been of average weight. But, sadly for him, Mr. S.P. is OVERWEIGHT by Army standards. He fails to meet both pinch test and weight standards, standing about 5' 7" tall and weighing about 215 pounds. Although he can run three miles in 15 minutes, and scores 281 out of a possible 300 on the Army's own fitness tests, he is a disgrace to the uniform (or so he has been told), and has been terminated after 17 1/2 years of service, too early to be eligible for ANY retirement benefits.

Mr. S.P. has decided to hire a civilian attorney, and will be using some referrals to other cases and to medical information made available by NAAFA. He is not ready to take his case to the press--so he asks that we not yet publish his name. However, the case serves to illustrate the kind of things that go on "Behind the Scenes" in NAAFA.

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MEDIA AND PUBLICITY WATCH

A recent show (11/9/85) on a TV news program in New York (Live at Five) told about a beauty contest for fat people which is apparently a publicity stunt of some kind requiring a \$250 registration fee. The object of the contest is to lose the most weight in the months ahead. However, the channel 4 staff interviewed men on the street about their preferences in women. Of the six men shown on the screen, only one said he preferred thin women; the other five said their preference was for larger women. The news staff, including Chauncy Howell, displayed a very positive attitude toward plus-sized beauty. (Contributed by Eileen M. Lefebure, NY)

The long-awaited article in FORUM magazine (12/85, p.10) has arrived. FORUM is a magazine about sexual matters published by Penthouse. The article, which mentions F.A.'s in NAAFA and their preference for the fat figure, is well-written and presents a good perspective on F.A. tastes, although it fails to mention female F.A.'s. One annoyance: The piece is carried in the "Fetish of the Month" column. Not all F.A.'s will agree that their taste constitutes a "fetish"...

A NAAFA group will be appearing on a show called Currents on Channel 13 in New York City, on 12/12 and 12/15. Articles about NAAFA and/or NAAFA people are slated for publication in Redbook and Woman's Day in the months to come, but exact dates are as yet unknown.

A recent front-page article in the NY TIMES sports pages (11/25/85) about Olympic gymnast Mary Lou Retton, written in most favorable terms, nonetheless describes her figure as "husky", at 95 pounds and 4' 9" height! Perhaps they were only praising her muscles, and we shouldn't be so touchy...

The German film Sugarbaby opened recently after getting some good reviews at the New York Film Festival. Now showing in at least one New York theater, the motion picture, in German with English subtitles, features a big, sensual, "hefty" woman named Marianne (played by actress Marianne Sagebrecht) who develops a mad crush on a good-looking Munich subway conductor much younger and smaller than she. The ensuing romance, it seems, is somewhat out of the ordinary. Viewers have said that the film is not about being fat, but is also not in any sense a put-down of Ms. Sagebrecht's abundant figure, and leaves the audience with positive feelings on the subject. This may be the first romance on the screen involving a fat woman since the film Fat Chance, seen at the NAAFA convention in New York two years ago.

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FASHION ACTIVISM NOTE

NAAFAs who wear panty hose should consider writing to Consumers Union (well-known publishers of Consumer Reports magazine). According to their 12/85 publication (p.643), they are looking for women who are willing to wear panty hose as part of a test for an upcoming report. Hopefully, full-figured women will be represented, but female NAAFAs can help assure that this happens by offering to participate in the study. Those who would like to participate, and who are willing to wear panty hose under a skirt or dress (not slacks) at least three days a week, may send their name and address to Consumers Union, Box RWS, 256 Washington St., Mount Vernon, NY 10553. They say that they will provide the hosiery, along with a brief questionnaire. The test is to run from January to April, 1986.

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COB'S CORNER...by William J. Fabrey, Chairman of the Board

Sometimes it seems as if we talk about NAAFA's **FINANCIAL PROBLEMS** too often. But we must talk about them, or we will be unable to work for the goals and purposes for which NAAFA was formed. We are now entering an exciting period in NAAFA's history, in which we are acting with greater vigor and professionalism than at any time in the past. We're beginning to get our act together! But NAAFA cannot continue to function, as it has been, on a deficit budget without harming some of the programs that could be the most productive.

I have opposed a dues increase until now--but the basic dues have remained at \$25 for many years, with many members paying much less, while all of NAAFA's expenses have been on the rise. It is time to take a realistic look at all of these expenses and at the dues structure and other income sources. We must do whatever we have to in order to balance the budget while at the same time, improve NAAFA's program and services.

I know that we ask less of our members than many other non-profit organizations do of their members. Sweeping changes are needed--greater member involvement in national activities (committees, letter-writing, etc.), for example, and also in sharing the financial burden of expanding NAAFA's activities. We need more members and more money. And that's the bottom line!

Q: A lot has been written about the effects of aerobic exercise on weight set point and in fitness in general. What is aerobic exercise and is ALL exercise aerobic?

Aerobic exercise is simply exercise that requires oxygen. Aerobic exercise forces the heart and lungs to work harder to supply extra oxygen. If an activity forces you to breathe heavily and makes your heart beat faster, then it is aerobic exercise. A faster pulse and heavier breathing tells you that your body is using more oxygen, and is working to replace it. The best example of non-aerobic exercise is weight-lifting. Muscles are working hard when lifting weights, but muscles are able to work without oxygen in order to exert force for short periods of time. In order to be aerobic (that is, oxygen-requiring) the movement of muscles must be sustained and steady. Good examples of aerobic exercise are walking, bicycling, and swimming.

Q: Why is aerobic exercise good?

The more extra work your heart and lungs are given to do, the stronger they become. When the heart and lungs have little work to do, such as during bed rest, they will become weaker. The bodies of living things do not function the same way that machines do. The more work a body is given to do, the more work it is ABLE to do. When a machine is required to perform more work, it simply wears out faster.

Q: My doctor tells me that my weight is an extra load on my heart.

That's correct. A fat person's heart, lungs, and muscles must work harder to accomplish the same movements a thin person does. This is one possible ADVANTAGE of obesity: the greater the workload on the heart and lungs, the stronger they become. When an ill-informed person tells you about "burdening your heart with extra weight", they are showing that their concept of the body is one of a machine: The more work it does, the faster it wears out. Forcing the heart to do extra work will only strengthen it. It is true that fat people, on the average, are more likely to get certain kinds of heart disease than thin people (such as angina). Interestingly, these kinds of heart disease are most closely linked to inactivity. This could mean that more fat people have these kinds of heart disease because more fat people are inactive. If so, there is no reason to believe that an active fat person is a better candidate for a coronary than an equally active thin person.

(In our next issue Dr. Ernsberger will answer questions about how to start an aerobic exercise program.)

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NAAFAdvice...by June Bailey

Dear NAAFAdvice,

I'm worried about having an odor I can't detect myself because I'm told that fat people have stronger body odors.

Signed, Am I Brainwashed?

Dear Brainwashed,

Bite your tongue--don't hold your nose! While its true that fat people have more and better places for body odors to hide, a clean body is something everyone can have and it always smells pleasant whether the person is fat or thin. I'll be happy to answer personal hygiene questions on request. Write me in care of the NAAFA office.

P.S. The SuperSIG, which is for women who are size 48 or larger, recently took a survey of its members on this subject. If you qualify for SuperSig membership, you can write them at PO Box 376, Port Washington, NY 11050 for information.

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Articles that appear in this Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the National Association to Aid Fat Americans, Inc. (NAAFA) unless specifically noted. Please contact the NAAFA office if you require information about specific NAAFA policies.

Commentaries in this Newsletter were prepared by the Editor, and/or Chairman Fabrey.
