

NAAFA NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION TO AID FAT AMERICANS, INC.

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NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE: Sheila Goodman, Ernest Harff,
Matthew Madigan, Naomi Shadowitz, Michael Simpson.

NATIONAL CONVENTION FEATURES CHINESE BUFFET, MUSICAL COMEDY

by Sheila Goodman

Look out, Broadway, here we come! The very special feature of this year's Convention is the musical, *FATLING IN THE CELLAR*, written by NAAFans Gail Gold and Dianne Rubinstein. It's a funny, clever parody of *Fiddler on the Roof*, telling the story of the Town of NAAFatefka in song and story. The musical will come after we have dined on an excellent Chinese menu consisting of a choice of soups, appetizer of spare ribs, chicken wings and egg roll, a buffet laden with pepper steak, sweet and pungent pork, chicken chow mein and fried rice, all served with tea, of course, and followed with a choice of ice creams. We have our own private dining room, comfortable and spacious and filled with terrific NAAFans and guests. Don't you want to be there with us? If you're not, we really will miss you. Send in the reservation which you've already received and prepare yourself for a grand time.

SOME SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF RIDICULE

by Kenneth Wachtel

The mass media have created the mythical image that to be fat is to be automatically ugly. Ridicule of the overweight is encouraged by every social means and directly results in discrimination. The medical profession, for example, has so taken the message to heart that it now persistently browbeats the overweight - a marked contrast to its usual stance of eliciting compassion for the "sick".

Few people understand that the discrimination against fat is partially sexual in nature. The "beautiful people" use the mass media to project their "perfection". The need to be considered "in" leads directly to ridicule of those seen as excluded from the "in group". One can reasonably question the need for such intensive actions unless they serve to mask deep seated feelings which are in opposition to society's current obsession with emaciation.

Many men do prefer fat women and many women prefer fat men. Breasts and curves are primarily the result of fat tissue, and the broad shoulders of many men are shaped by fat as well as muscle. Our society decrees that only certain portions of our anatomy shall be fatty while other parts should be bony. This form of fat distribution on an individual is rather rare and its elevation to perfection reflects the schizophrenic nature of a puritanical culture.

(Con't. on page 4)

THE FAT TEENAGER

by Matthew F. Madigan

There are unique dimensions to the problems of the fat teenager, problems most adult NAAFans can remember all too painfully. Fat teenagers are even more vulnerable to peer pressures, parental attitudes, and artificially created standards of beauty and worth than fat adults. The adult NAAFAN has the responsibility of offering love, encouragement, and positive reinforcement to the fat teenagers they come into contact with.

I have long been active in youth work on a volunteer basis. Most of the young people with whom I come into contact are thin, a few are not. My attempts to help the fat young people in my groups have usually been rejected at first. Only after a long period of time was I able to be of any assistance. I have also found that when there were two fat teenagers in the same group there ensued a fierce competition between them for the "honor" of being the token fatty of the group. The loser of this battle generally dropped out. Over the years I must confess I have been more successful in changing the attitudes of the thin young person than the fat.

These experiences have pointed up to me the need for NAAFA to address itself to the problems of the fat teenager while, of course, not neglecting the problems of fat adults. Recently a proposal was made to the Board to reactivate the Teenage NAAFA

(Con't on page 2)

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by William J. Fabrey

WHAT A MIXTURE! There are so many different kinds of people that are members of NAAFA, it is positively amazing. Unlike many organizations who draw from a relatively narrow cross-section of society for their membership, we have: housewives, sales-people, teachers, laborers, truck drivers, engineers, secretaries, whites, blacks, Spanish-Americans, an oriental or two, persons of all religious persuasions, persons of all sexual inclinations, retired people, college students, married people and single people.

Some of you have no interest in socializing, and write to us demanding that we stop being a "dating service", and get down to the job of fighting discrimination. Others feel that only the social element is of any practical value to a NAAFA member, and they refuse to lend any support or assistance to our other areas of activity (civil rights, education, charitable work, etc.). However, most of you have more than just one interest, if we are to believe the polls we have taken in the past.

So NAAFA continues to try to be all things to all people, just as it was originally set up to be. This is because no other organization is making any visible effort on behalf of fat people in this country, except in the area of "weight control", which is simply not the answer for everyone!

NAAFA NEEDS PEOPLE! The danger of being all things to all people is, of course, that in trying to do everything, we run the risk of not doing a good job in any one area. To avoid this, we need more qualified volunteers in all areas of interest to NAAFA. If you have an unusual talent that might be of value to us, we need you! All letters on this subject will be answered.

EDITH PAREDES WINS CASE

by Naomi Shadowitz

Edith Paredes, the Brooklyn NAAFAN who lost her job and was not rehired by Maimonides Medical Center because of her weight, has been rehired by the Center. Ms. Paredes, who knows four languages fluently (English, Spanish, Yiddish, and sign language for the deaf) had been a receptionist at a Community Mental Health Center for about two years.

The decision to rehire her came about following a national letter writing campaign directed at her union, Local 1199, which had refused to consider arbitration in her case. In accepting her new job she has not lost her arbitration rights with regard to back pay (which she lost during the period she was fighting for her job). This subject is currently under discussion by Ms. Paredes, her union and her employer.

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE NAMES SLATE

by Dianne Rubinstein

The NAAFA Elections Committee met on March 23, 1976 and nominated the following persons candidates to the Board of Directors. Three seats must be filled in the June election.

The nominees are: Howard Clist, Joyce Fabrey, Lisbeth Fisher, Matthew Madigan, Bernard Ruffin, Naomi Shadowitz, and Michael Simpson.

The Committee also voted to not allow any electioneering or private use of the NAAFA mailing list in this election.

Anyone who is a NAAFA member for at least one year, and is at least 21 years old, is eligible to run for a seat on the Board of Directors. If not nominated by the Nominating Committee, a member may still be on the ballot by obtaining the signatures of 25 bona fide NAAFA members on a petition requesting such nomination. The constitution does not set forth the exact wording the petition should have, but you can use wording similar to: "We the undersigned hereby petition for the nomination of (name of nominee) as a candidate in the June 1976 elections for members of the Board of Directors.

The petition must be received by Bill Fabrey (Chairperson of the Election Committee) by May 14, 1976. As the Constitution requires that the petition be made to the Recording Secretary, a copy of your signed petition should be sent to the attention of Joyce Maloney as well.

Bear in mind that signing a petition does not mean that you are voting for the individual, you vote by secret ballot. An individual can sign the petition of any number of persons whom he/she feels ought to be placed in nomination.

THE FAT TEENAGER...

Program. Research, meetings and various activities will be an integral part of the Program. If the Board accepts the Program I will be keeping you advised of it's status through this Newsletter.

As I look back over my own teenage years I can remember many incidents of pain, embarrassment and humiliation. Once I went to pick up a date and was informed by her parents that their daughter would not be allowed to go out with anyone as ugly as me. I have never forgotten that experience. What strikes me today about the incident is that I did not object, but put my tail between my legs and split. I would react very differently now.

If we can help fat teenagers to accept themselves, to be aware of their positive qualities, they will be able to deal with such situations in a more direct and self-supportive fashion. As proposed Chairperson of the National Teenage NAAFA Program I welcome your help, ideas and counsel. Please call me at 201-235-1024.

NEWS FROM OTHER CHAPTERS

by Karen W. Jones

A lot of good things have been happening with chapters around the country, and I'd like to share some of them with you. Like what? Well, how about a brand-new chapter in Los Angeles? Yes, Ray L. Simpson, a longtime NAAAFAN and co-founder of the original L. A. Chapter, is serving as Chairperson Pro Tem to get the chapter going again (it's been defunct since the departure of the Fat Underground two years ago). First step - a local meeting. West Coast members take note; you can reach Ray at 575 East California #1, Pasadena, CA 91106.

In another NAAFArea, the Connecticut Chapter is active again. No meetings had been held for several months because the Chairperson (that's me folks) was in the process of moving to New York City and new officers had to be elected. This was accomplished at the March 13 meeting in Milford. Officers elected are: Barbara Anderson, Chairperson; Ann Stock, Vice-Chairperson; Darryl R. Scott, Secretary/Treasurer. Activities in the planning stage include a May 22 open house social, newsletter, teen group, and a film. For more information write the chapter in care of P.O. Box 263, Main Office, Milford, CT. 06460.

Continuing further south, the Baltimore-Washington Chapter is still going strong - all the more since Chairperson Peggy Greensfelder was appointed to NAAFA's Board of Directors last month (see BOARD NEWS for more information). Congratulations, Peg! She travels more than 200 miles each way from her home to Board meetings - now that is real dedication! Between Peggy's efforts and those of Vice-Chairperson Bernard Ruffin, the chapter has really taken off: their holiday party last Christmas time was a BIG success, and they are looking forward to the next meeting on April 10. But maybe they have got an edge over the rest of us - Bernard is a minister! (The Rev. says God is on our side, incidentally.)

Pat Coles, Westchester Chapter Chairperson Pro Tem, has a new address: 29 Wayne Av., White Plains, NY 10606... New Jersey needs more active members - unless more people come to meetings the chapter may fold. Contact - Matt Madigan, 26 Conover Av., Nutley, NJ 07110...

If YOU are interested in starting a new chapter, or if you are looking for chapter related information, please feel free to get in touch with me at the address below:

Karen W. Jones
50-14 97th St.
Elmhurst, NY 11368

P L U S AND MINUS

by Naomi Shadowitz

Well, here are the first winners and losers of our new feature. Many of you sent in responses, for which our thanks. Hopefully this column will serve as a guide for you when you want or need a service. Naturally, if you have a different experience at a recommended company or individual, advise us so we can update our listings and share it with all of you.

++++STOUT MEN'S SHOP
501 Washington Street
Boston, Mass. 02111 (2nd Floor)
617-542-5397

A men's store with the personal touch which provides a wide range of large haberdashery for men. Shirts up to 23" neck, pants to 88" waist, and many other specialties. Free alterations.

Recommended by Bron Warsaskas

+++ JOSEPH M. KLEIN BIG MAN'S STORE
118 Stanton Street
New York, New York 10002 (cr. Essex)
212-228-1166

Very good prices for a wide range of men's and women's clothing with special emphasis on sport clothes. Free alterations.

Recommended by Mike Simpson

+++ Dr. Francis Ottaviano Jr.
15 Sheridan Square
New York, New York
212-CH-2-2412

Dr. Ottaviano is a sympathetic G. P. in the heart of Greenwich Village. Rates: \$15 for initial visit, \$10 thereafter. Affil. with St. Vincent's Hospital.

Recommended by Naomi Shadowitz

--- Barney's Clothes
111 Seventh Avenue
New York, New York
212-929-9000

Barney's spends a lot of money on ads but not much on selection or training sales personnel. The former is meager, the latter rude and pushy.

Disparaged by Mike Simpson

BOARD NOTES

Resigned: Eileen LeFebure, Karen Wynn-Cohen.
Appointed: Peggy Greensfelder (to fill Karen's term); Florane Sclar, V. P. to fill Eileen's role.

... Ridicule

Anyone who prefers fat people is encouraged to keep this preference "in the closet" by ridicule. This (in)action reinforces the negative image which fat people have of themselves, as few partners present themselves, especially in public. The usual sexual meeting grounds such as dances, bars, the beach, parties, computer dating and friends are in practice closed to the fat. Fat admirers (F. A. s) are forced into a lonely pursuit of their preference. The conscious effort to hide their preference leads to frequently intense feelings of shame, and the logical reluctance to share their true feelings with others. The feelings become cyclic, with ridicule triggering feelings of shame which result in hiding the wish to have a fat partner. The very act of hiding then makes the individual more sensitive to societal jibes at fat people and their partners.

Sexual pursuit is learned in adolescence. Teenagers constantly "rank" one another (use insult humor) in order to determine status and socially acceptable norms. Banding together they feel more comfortable as they try to acquire confidence in dating skills. Moving in packs from fear and ignorance, the youths judge the other boys and girls by their tenuous standards. Those who do not fit the models, even if sexually attractive to some, are ridiculed. This constant taunting of the fat (among others) forces the fat admirer to feel different. While these actions begin in adolescence, they are often maintained in adulthood.

As it is socially "out" to seek a fat partner, most fat admirers are forced into covert behavior which scars them psychologically. The scarring is psycho-combatative in nature, as it forces F.A.s into assumptions of self dislike and conflict. ("If I like a fat woman, and everybody lets me know that this is not 'good', what is wrong with me? I must be sick."). As a result it is more difficult for F.A.s to have successful love relationships, to marry and to procreate. Thus the F.A. frequently remains isolated and lonely.

Fat people, too, are scarred by the ridicule of individuals and the media. They are discouraged from perceiving of themselves sexually and therefore do not learn to present themselves sexually through their dress, movements and other forms of expression of their sexuality. This inhibition acts as another barrier to approach by fat admirers.

As an F.A. I prefer the soft feel of a fat woman. Racquel Welch and Bridget Bardot do not excite me in the slightest. I prefer to look at the more amply endowed figure. Psychologically, I enjoy the hedonistic nature of many fat people, which is in the ideal expressed in sex, eating, and social gregariousness.

EDITORIAL

by Naomi Shadowitz

I am pleased to announce the debut of a new NAAFA publication - FAT CHANCE, the Journal of the National Association to Aid Fat Americans. This office has received a number of excellent articles whose length precludes inclusion in the Newsletter. Therefore, I approached the Board at a recent meeting and was given permission to start a magazine.

Manuscripts will be accepted in any style (fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry), humorous and serious, illustrated or unillustrated (cartoons and drawings are also acceptable). Articles must be double spaced and typewritten. It is recommended that a copy be kept by the author. If a stamped, self addressed envelope is included and the submission is rejected, it will be returned.

FAT CHANCE will appear whenever a sufficient number of articles have been approved. Thus there is no deadline - the magazine will be sent at varying intervals.

Those who have been harboring secret fantasies of seeing their thoughts in print (although NAAFA cannot afford to pay for any selections), please send them to: FAT CHANCE, % Shadowitz, 151 Norfolk St., NYC 10002.

Note: All articles in the Newsletter are the opinion of the by lined writer and do not represent the opinion of NAAFA or any subsidiary thereof.

**fiction • a fat heroine
fashion • make it yourself
fat survival guide • gossip • artwork**

CT. CHAPTER NEWSLETTER--for free first issue
send 13¢ stamp, your name & address to:
CT. CHAPTER*P.O.BOX 263*MILFORD*CT: 06460.

If fat people and their admirers are to have an easier time of it in this society, they have to fight ridicule every place in which it occurs. A non-fighting group is a perfect target for every brickbat. American culture is puritanical, hence its extreme emotionalism about fat and sex. Relaxed views of food and sex threaten the overly repressed. The image of fat people viewing themselves sexually intensifies the fear, since it represents the erosion of two primary American "virtues" - self denial and social conformity. As a combination of drives the merger of fat and sexuality serves to truly frighten most of our society.

Ridicule leads to shame, disgust and guilt. People imbued with these feelings are powerless to retaliate against those who maintain the onslaught. When we have individually refused to accept the ridicule, and retaliate by viewing ourselves as attractive, sexually desirable men and women, we will attain a measure of equality.