

NAAFA

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Newsletter

November 1989

Inside!

Special Lifestyles Issue
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NAAFA:
The National Association to
Advance Fat Acceptance

formerly
The National Association
to Aid Fat Americans

Abby Prints NAAFA Letter

A letter from NAAFA Executive Director Sally E. Smith was featured in an October 3, 1989 *Dear Abby* column. Smith wrote in response to Abby's positive commentary in a previous column where Abby encouraged those who make disparaging comments about fat people to change their ways.

Smith pointed out that fat children often receive no support from any source and that yo-yo dieting is dangerous. She went on to say that "People come in all colors, shapes, and sizes. If we would all be more accepting of the uniqueness of each person, instead of attempting to make everyone conform to a certain physical ideal, we would have a much healthier society, both physically and mentally."

NAAFA's address was included in the article. As of the *Newsletter* deadline, one thousand Abby readers have requested NAAFA literature. ∞

American Attendants Fight Weight Limits

"Weigh my job performance, not my body," is the slogan of flight attendants who have accused American Airlines of having the strictest weight limits in the industry—limits they want changed.

According to officials of the Association of Professional Flight Attendants, representing 16,000 American employees, the union is mounting a campaign to force American to stop firing, suspending or disciplining "overweight" employees. "We want the company to change its archaic, discriminatory and unhealthy policy," said union vice-president Colleen Brenner.

A weight policy lawsuit, filed in Dallas by the union in 1988, is not scheduled for hearings until 1991. Recently nego-

**"WEIGH MY JOB
PERFORMANCE,
NOT MY BODY."**

tiations between the airline and flight attendants faltered, causing the union to take their cause to the public.

The nationwide publicity campaign began in September with a media conference and two billboards placed near the Dallas-Ft. Worth airport advertising the "Weigh my job performance, not my body" slogan. Similar billboards will also appear in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles; and flight

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Executive Director Addresses Bariatricians



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SALLY E. SMITH

At the invitation of the American Society of Bariatric Physicians, NAAFA's Executive Director Sally E. Smith gave two presentations at their conference in San Diego, CA in October. (Bariatricians' practices predominantly consist of fat patients who come to them for weight loss.)

In a workshop entitled, "Better understanding your patients: Knowing what being fat feels like," Smith attempted to get participants to face their own prejudices and feelings about fat people. She then demonstrated that, while fat people in our society are oppressed, not all fat people are victims. Smith says, "I used examples such as inadequate seating, anti-fat material in the media, job discrimination, an appointment with a new doctor, in order to make them

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American

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attendants will wear similar buttons and put special tags on their luggage. The union also plans to distribute thousands of flyers to airline passengers during the upcoming holiday season. "We are not fooling around this time," Brenner told reporters.

American spokesman Ed Stewart responded to questions from the *Dallas Times Herald* by saying, "It's a customer contact business. These are grooming standards that we have to live by because it represents American. It is important to us." The policy that he is defending calls for a four step procedure: If supervisors think an attendant looks too heavy, they can ask for a weigh-in. If overweight by American standards, the attendant can be ordered to lose at a rate of 1 1/2 pounds per week with a specific deadline. If the weight isn't lost, the attendant can be disciplined, then suspended, and finally fired. Hundreds of attendants have been affected by these rules.

Union officials report that some flight attendants have "resorted to bulimia, crash weight-loss programs, diuretics and other unhealthy measures" to keep their jobs.

COMMENTARY

Last month we reported on the settlement between Pan American World Airways and the Independent Union of Flight Attendants who fought weight limits at that airline. The basis of that suit centered around sex discrimination, as female attendants were held to stricter restrictions than male attendants. The weight limits were slightly relaxed as a result of the settlement.

The situation at American appears to be far worse. At American, a 5'6" woman can't weigh more than 133 pounds, a full 22 pounds less than the weight limit at Pan Am!

An American flight attendant stopped at NAAFA's registration booth at the convention in Los Angeles and took NAAFA literature. Sally Smith reports that she recently received a call from a local representative of the union (who heard about us from the woman in Los Angeles) asking for more information, which we provided.

As we said last month, determining job service by the number of pounds someone weighs is totally unfair and it is a practice NAAFA opposes. We can hope that the union's campaign enlightens the public to the message we've been sending for years: "Weigh my job performance, not my body!" ◇◇

Activism Alert

Your letters can make a difference in educating or shaping the opinions of people and corporations.

This month we encourage NAAFA's to write American Airlines about their discriminatory weight policy for flight attendants:

Mr. Robert Crandall, President
American Airlines
PO Box 619616
Dallas-Ft. Worth Airport, TX 75261-9616

and to also write the Association of Professional Flight Attendants, the union that is fighting that weight policy with their "Weigh my job performance, not my body" campaign:

Ms. Colleen Brenner, Vice-President
Association of Professional Flight Attendants
1004 W. Eules Blvd.
Eules, TX 76040

Please send copies of your letters to the NAAFA office. ◇◇

Major Donors Thanked

In 1989, the following people have donated cash, made in kind contributions, or made pledges towards the Major Donor Program:

\$1000 or more

Conrad H. Blickenstorfer (NY)
Harold Gossett (VA)
Marilyn Rock (MI)
Sue Waller (MD)

\$500 or more

Miriam Berg (NY)
Katherine Khalife (NH)
Neil Osbourn (CT)
Sally E. Smith (CA)
Susan Tenzer (PA)

\$250 or more

Paula and Neil Dachis (MD)
Lynn McAfee (PA)
Victoria Reed (CT)

The special Major Donor program was developed to finance the future expansion of NAAFA including membership recruitment drives and professional staff development. (It does not replace our normal fundraising activities.) Some of the projects that have been funded by Major Donors have included development of the Executive Directorship, advertising campaigns, and direct mail promotions.

Major Donor contributions and pledges have ranged from \$250 to thousands of dollars. Most donors have been approached on a personal basis. If you would like to know more about the program and its goals, please invite us to approach you. An officer, board member, or the founder will be happy to contact you to further explain the program.

Special thanks goes to all our Major Donors for their support. ◇◇

Welcome

to two new chapters:

The Stroudsburg Chapter
(Pennsylvania)
Marie Ditmann
Chairperson Pro Tem

Arizona Chapter
Christine Cook Applegate and
Randall W. Applegate
Co-Chairpersons Pro Tem

If you would like information about these groups, other chapters, or NAAFA's Special Interest Groups, contact the NAAFA office. ◇◇

SUBSCRIBE!

RADIANCE is an upbeat, positive quarterly magazine for women all sizes of large, of all ages, lifestyles and ethnic groups. It's a dynamic resource linking large women with the products, services and fashions just for them.

Each issue features articles on health, media, and fashion along with compelling profiles of successful large women from all walks of life. Poetry and art decorate each issue as *RADIANCE* encourages and supports its readers to live fully now, whatever their size.



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NAAFA Newsletter

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Bariatricians

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"I WAS TRYING TO ILLUSTRATE THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOSE WEIGHT TO GAIN SELF RESPECT."

see the horrendous obstacles that are placed before us every day. I then explained how an *average fat person* would react to these scenarios, and how a *fat activist* would react. I was trying to illustrate that you don't have to lose weight to gain self respect."

In her address to the general assembly, Smith spoke about how society's negative attitudes affect fat people. She discussed discrimination in employment, education, access to physical accommodations, and access to adequate medical care. Smith also spoke about how oppression affects the self esteem of fat people. In addition, she tried to educate the physicians by reading them the *Declaration of the Rights of Fat People in Health Care*, and giving them guidelines to increase the comfort of their fat patients in a health care setting.

Smith's reactions to the conference were mixed. "Bariatricians give little credence to the setpoint theory, or to the negative effects of yo-yo dieting. In addition, many of them are still prescribing anorexic agents (diet pills) to help their patients lose weight. However, I found that most of the physicians were genuinely interested in what I had to say, and my presentations seemed to increase the sensitivity of many doctors to our issues.

"In general I would say that the experience was both a personal and professional victory. On a personal level, I found that speaking to a group of "diet doctors" was one of the most frightening and challenging things I have ever done. Professionally, I feel as though the bariatricians' interest in dialoguing with those in the size acceptance movement is a breakthrough, and perhaps one which will carry over into other segments of the medical community."

The complete text of Ms. Smith's address is available from the NAAFA office upon request ∞

NAAFA, Inc.

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Sally E. Smith

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NAAFA: The National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-exempt educational, human rights organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for fat people.

NAAFA is not a diet group, but seeks alternate ways to enrich the lives of its members and large people everywhere through public education, research, advocacy and support.

Regular membership in NAAFA is \$35 per year. Other membership categories are available. For more information, contact the Membership Services office:

NAAFA
PO Box 188620
Sacramento, CA 95818
or call (916) 443-0303.



Member Feels Isolated

Dear Editor,

I appreciate receiving the NAAFA Newsletter. It's my only source of connection with others considered "fat." It's been a positive note in my life, especially at a time when I'm dealing with many issues in my life and making progress. Yet, I still feel a little isolated at times as I am unable to attend NAAFA functions and know of no one in my area who belongs. Again, thank you for the Newsletter.

—Janie Brown (Maine)

Thanks for your comments, Janie. Your situation is not an uncommon one in NAAFA. Many of our members can't attend events because of various personal reasons or because they live too far from a chapter. While the number of NAAFA chapters is growing, we still do not have one in every state. Perhaps you are our advance guard in Maine!

We wish we could deliver a group of NAAFA's to your doorstep, but the best we can do is to deliver those people through the pages of this Newsletter.

We've selected several articles from members that deal with their personal feelings and lifestyles. Tamsen Cooper (MA) tells how NAAFA gave her the tools to change her life. Frances White (CA) shares the story of Mark and Gina Varney, a NAAFA couple looking to adopt a child. June Bailey (OH) shares her feelings about a threat we fat people have faced all our lives, and Judy Weeg (IA) tells of her frustrations about the criticism that "she let herself go."

We would also like to suggest that a good way to meet other NAAFA's through the mail is to join the Pen Pal program. You can get applications from the NAAFA office.

— Editor ◊◊

We Need To Ask

by June Bailey (OH)

During all the years I starved myself in pursuit of a thin body, hating myself every minute of my life, making myself



miserable, sick and unhappy, I kept asking a question which was never answered.

Doctors, magazine articles, and well-meaning friends kept telling me I would live

longer if I lost weight. I believed that my colossal efforts to lose weight would reward me with a longer life—until I got an answer to my question, that is. You see, nobody ever said HOW MUCH LONGER I would live. Twenty years? Ten years? Well, I've finally found the answer. The best estimate I can get of how many more years I will live if I reduce my weight and am no longer "morbidly obese" is 2.2 years. I repeat: 2.2 years.

I'm more than a little disappointed. Had I known this, I would have eaten those pieces of my own birthday cake that I turned down because I was dieting. I could have had a candy bar once in a while. I could have saved all that money I spent on new wardrobes every time

my size changed and spent it on a college education instead. In other words, I could kick myself.

Now, I think I have this figured out. Both of my grandmothers were fat and they both lived to be 86 years of age. Both lived very difficult lives. Both did plenty of hard work, had many responsibilities, few physical comforts, and a great number of stressful events in their lives. They didn't know what dieting was. My fat paternal grandmother, who bore 14 children, survived three surgeries for colon cancer and lived another 20 years after the last one. Aside from some arthritis, my fat maternal grandmother was very healthy until she had a massive stroke and died a few days later, near her 86th birthday.

I figure that if I could find a way to permanently lose weight, I could possibly live to be 88.2 years of age. If I stay the way I am (fat), I will probably die when I'm 86, like my fat grandmothers did. As a person who prides herself on having some common sense, I think that living to the age of 86 instead of 88.2 isn't so bad.

We all know there are no guarantees of longevity. Anything can happen. Even the medical people can't guarantee that I'll live those extra 2.2 years. I mean, I could slip on a banana peel sometime in

P&R

the next ten minutes. I could fall out of an airplane, get run over by a truck, hairspray myself to death. Anything can happen. Fatalistic? No. Realistic!

Besides there not being any guarantee that I will live 2.2 more years, there is no guarantee of the quality of my life in those elusive 2.2 years. In view of the many health and economic problems which older Americans face, I'm not really sure at this point that I want to live 2.2 years longer. As time marches on and I get closer to joining that group of older people, I wonder how many years I'll be able to live independently, and I worry more about being able to survive in a society that is just as obsessed with youth as it is with thinness.

So what am I going to do? Get younger? The magazines are already telling me if I get a face-lift, I'll look younger. How much younger? 2.2 years younger? Will it be worth it to get my jowls sucked out, my wrinkles filled in, my eyelids and chin lifted? Or, when I'm 86, will I be kicking myself again because I didn't have it done, and now I look like I'm 86 and not 83.8?

I think the next time somebody says we're going to live longer if we lose weight, we need to ask how much longer. If the answer is 2.2 years, I'm going straight to the refrigerator and enjoy a big piece of Sara Lee cheesecake while I still have teeth. Then, if I get to die at the ripe old age of 86, I'll go willingly—with a little dab of whipped cream sticking to the corner of my mouth. ◊◊

Lifestyles Special

Finding Myself

by Tamsen Cooper (MA)

Call me radical. I believe in action.

"What has _____ ever done for me?" You can fill in the blank with "NAAFA," your local chapter's name,



your chapter chairperson, society, whatever. Do you ever find yourself asking or thinking along these lines? I know some of you do, and I just can't tell you how frustrating and

disheartening that is for me and other NAAFA leaders.

I'm going to take a risk—I'm going to tell you about my life to make a point: I grew up as the fat daughter of a fat daughter, both of us filled with fear and self-hatred. Throughout my childhood and adolescence I was abused—physically, emotionally and sexually. I began smoking at eleven, drinking at twelve, and sleeping around at thirteen. Why? They were coping mechanisms, albeit self-destructive ones.

My son was born in February of 1975—38 days after Christmas, 35 days after my mother committed suicide, 17 days after I turned 15, and 10 months after I dropped out of junior high school. Was I the best of mothers? No, but I was the best mother I could be.

I hated myself. I hated my life. I was a fat, uneducated, 15-year old trying to support myself and raise my baby. I can't tell you how often suicide and alcoholism seemed like viable alternatives. I even tried them on for size.

I spent ten more years filled with fear and self-hatred, trying to fit in—a fat girl in a thin world. I desperately wanted to lose weight—that seemed like the magical key. All my life it came down to that... I was (or I felt) fat. In 1985 I joined Overeaters Anonymous (OA) where I was literally told over and over, "You are garbage if you are fat,—you are worthless unless you're thin." I withdrew further from the world.

I gave up custody of my son to my grandmother, became agoraphobic and lived a life filled with terror. For two years I literally could not answer the telephone or the doorbell, or even go out on my own front porch unless my boyfriend accompanied me. I was severely disabled—paralyzed by depression, fear and rage.

Then one day I was watching Sally Jessy Raphael. Her guests that day were "fat admirers" Bill Fabrey, Conrad Blickenstorfer, and Neil Dachis. It was incredible to hear them talk positively about fat people, fat admirers, and NAAFA!

It took me a couple of months, but I tracked down the address and joined NAAFA. They sent me all kinds of literature. Did it change my life? Not at first—because at first, I just waited with my fat little hands out thinking, "What are you going to do for me." "How are you going to make my life better?"

Little by little, I began to take action myself. I wrote to the SIGs and joined

I didn't think it was possible, given my situation. I was absolutely petrified, but I couldn't say no to Bill Fabrey! The producers of *People are Talking* called me the next morning, and the more I talked to them about examples of discrimination in my own experience, the angrier I got.

Well, I went on that show—and it was a turning point in my life. I got great responses from everyone; but most of all I felt proud of myself—for the first time in many years! I discovered that I could actually do something that terrified me—and the world didn't come crashing down around my ears.

That was two years ago. I've gone back to work. I've regained custody of my son. I've been instrumental in starting the New England Chapter of NAAFA and was recently elected its first president. I've seen the chapter grow in 10 months from a mailing list of under 50 to one of over 300 people. I've worked very hard on our new chapter, I'm so proud of our chapter, myself and everyone who have contributed.

WHAT HAS NAAFA EVER DONE FOR YOU?

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR YOURSELF?

some. I read every word NAAFA sent me. I read every book I could get that had fat-positive messages. I watched every program regarding fat people—and I started to get angry. I began to write activism letters when I was offended by something in the media, and I got some results!

I began to reach out. I placed ads for friends and I responded to ads. I joined the Pen Pal program and wrote reams of letters to dozens of NAAFAns. I eventually got up the courage to attend a Largess/NAAFA related weekend on Cape Cod.

Despite all this growth, I remained a virtual prisoner in my apartment—no job, no friends. I was still a very frightened person. On January 25, 1988, late in the evening, I got a phone call. It was Bill Fabrey asking if I would go on live television in about 36 hours with several other NAAFAns, to talk about discrimination suffered by fat people.

So what is the point of this article? I wanted to answer this question, "What has NAAFA done for me?" After all of this, the answer has to be nothing. NAAFA is a tool which provides the means and the support for growth, education, activity, and opportunity. But I had to pick up that tool and use it, slowly and clumsily at first, but eventually easily and with more confidence.

Next time you find yourself asking, "What has NAAFA done for me?" please remember, you have to use the tools NAAFA provides. No one can make your life better without your active participation. Whatever you want from NAAFA or your chapter—you can get it! Events, committees, activism—get involved! After all, you can lead a fat person to the pool, but you can't make 'em swim.

What have you done for yourself lately?

Reprinted from NEC-Lines, the publication of the New England Chapter of NAAFA. ◇◇

Adoption

by Frances M. White (CA)



It's always a pleasant surprise to read about someone you know. I had that pleasure when I opened the September 1989 issue of BBW.

"There's Mark and Gina!" I said smiling to myself.

September's story of couples who have met and married via Friendship Express ads was about Mark Varney and Gina Gershwin-Varney. Some of you know Gina as the coordinator of NAAFA's Super SIG. The couple lives in Fairfield, California, close to Mare Island Naval Shipyard, where Mark is a civilian employee.

What made Mark and Gina's story unique was their quest for a child. They came to the attention of BBW when Gina asked about the possibility of placing an ad to adopt in the BBW classified.

Babies were being born all around Gina, to friends, relatives and neighbors, but no little Varneys. So Mark and Gina had apparently joined the ranks of the one million American couples unable to have their own children.

Added to these couples are thousands of single women who have found themselves childless, with no man in their lives and with biological clocks ticking. This combination leads to incredible competition for 50,000 children available for adoption each year.

The desire to adopt has come at a time when there are fewer babies to adopt. There is never a shortage of older children or children with physical challenges available for adoption. And AASK, the Association for Adoption of Special Kids has been in the forefront of placing these children for years. The quest for a baby to adopt has even been a continuing theme in last season's L.A. Law, with Ann and Stuart facing a new roadblock each week.

One answer is to turn to foreign adoption, according to William Pierce, president of the National Committee for

Adoption. In 1987, the most recent year for which statistics are available, Americans adopted 10,019 foreign babies. This is a 46% increase over 1977.

Most foreign adoptions involve Asian children, with South Korea as the most common country of origin. Countries south of the border would seem to be a closer source, but most Latin American countries have more stringent laws regarding extra-territorial adoption than do Asian countries.

A recent entry on the list of foundations formed to aid foreign adoptions is the group Americans for African Adoptions. AFAA, which deals with children from drought and famine-plagued areas of Africa, was featured in Family Circle (October 17, 1989). So far, the children they've placed have gone to families in Indiana and Michigan.

A new legal specialty of adoption law has sprung up to serve people who want to adopt, and books are being published to aid the adoption search, such as *The Private Guide to Adoption* by Stanley Mickelson. On October 6, 1989 he was a featured guest on Joan Lunden's television program, *Everyday*.

The successful search for a child to adopt has been likened to the successful job search. The only thing you can't do is directly advertise for a baby. You

GINA FOUND THAT MOST AGENCIES DIDN'T WANT TO DEAL WITH HER BECAUSE OF HER SIZE.

start with simple networking. Surely some friend has a friend who can't keep her baby, or your doctor knows of a case in which someone must give up a child. To increase your prospects, you write a resume about yourself and mail it out to as many lawyers specializing in adoption law as you can afford. You contact student health clinics on college campuses for another potential source of babies. You can work through public agencies. But most agencies deal only with couples and have strict requirements on the length of marriage prior to trying to adopt, age of the prospective parents, and health of both parents.

Gina Gershwin-Varney found that, with a few exceptions, most agencies

didn't want to deal with her because of her size. She recommends two agencies that make referrals in several states: Adoption Families of America, Inc., 33078 Highway 100 North, Suite 203, Minneapolis, MN 55422; and National Adoption Information Clearing House, 1400 Eye Street N.W., Suite 600, Washington D.C. 20005. Gina also found that once you get the name of an agency, the best approach is to confront the agency on the phone about size issues before much time had been invested on either side.

Although the process may seem daunting, there are success stories. Louise Wolfe of San Francisco Bay Area NAAFA chose to join a support group of single women who wanted to be become moms. She was able to network and find her beautiful baby daughter Lydia. In fact, Lydia became the youngest member of NAAFA when one month after her birth, she was enrolled in the special membership class of Auxiliary Member.



GINA GERSHWIN-VARNEY AND MARK VARNEY

So what about Mark and Gina? They are 30 years of age, own a 3-bedroom home in a good neighborhood in a prosperous, growing community halfway between San Francisco and Sacramento. They are a loving, devoted and stable NAAFA couple. They want a baby and are willing to take one of any nationality. If you can help the Varneys in their quest or want to offer words of encouragement, you can write to them at PO Box 3336, Fairfield, CA 94533-3336.

[The weight of a parent can be a very serious consideration in the eyes of some adoption agencies. Eleven years ago, a lawsuit in Wisconsin received national attention when a couple, each weighing 200 pounds, were denied adoption by a state agency. The matter was resolved by the governor, who declared that his grandmother had been fat, and with no ill effects.

Improving the adoption situation should be on NAAFA's agenda of social ills to receive more attention in the future. —Ed.] ♦♦

She Just Let Herself Go

Judy Weeg (IA)

Recently I was given the privilege of overhearing a conversation between two old friends. I was the topic. I thought to myself, "should I let my presence be known?" Too late; the conversation was in full bloom, so I sat back for the ride. It isn't every day that we get to hear much truth from each other's mouths. I was curious. Most of the conversation was about my "Perils of Pauline" lifestyle.

The chatter finally turned to the topic of my body changes since they had last seen me in 1980. These words boiled my blood, as the gossip continued, "...and can you believe the size she is now? She has just *let herself go!*" After hearing these cutting words from my so-called friends, I imagined all sorts of revenge—picking them up with my "Amazon" arms and flinging their emaciated figures off into the worst edges of the ozone layer. Instead I returned to the party with a wounded soul, and pretended that nothing happened. I would like to now respond to these words on behalf of all NAAFA members who may have had the alleged misfortune to *let themselves go*. The first response involves an answer to the comment that is the most simplified



conclusion of the naturally thin (NT) world. Just how far did I let myself go?

I let myself go to the point of being given diet pills (amphetamines) at the age of 10. I let myself go to the point of my pediatrician threatening to hospitalize me to have the fat cut out of my body at the age of 12, resulting in reoccurring nightmares. I let myself go to the point of being on every diet in recorded history by the time I was 16. I let myself go to the point of going to the fat farms (American's version of Nazi concentration camps) every summer of my late teens and twenties. I let myself go to the point of mutilating my body with the gastric bubble, requiring hospitalization three times a year. I let myself go to the point of having permanent digestive tract damage due to the gastric bubble, and who knows, probably an early death with the resulting allergies to most common foods and environmental allergens resulting from my body's breakdown from the dangerous device.

So belatedly, I ask my NT, wee, petite, diminutive friends—did I let myself go far enough? What more is wanted of me? The final mutilation? The intestinal bypass or stomach stapling? Must I die to be accepted and understood? And after I am dead, will there be satisfaction in the NT world? No. I will be proclaimed dead from obesity, not weight loss surgery complications.

Since I am in a no-win situation with the NT world, I see only one solution: to educate the NT world about the truth of the naturally fat (NF) world. Changes in attitudes don't occur overnight, and most political ideologies take root in the midst of great suffering and violence. Why are we (why am I) as naturally fat

people, masochistically perpetrating violence on our own bodies?

In May I attended the Mid-Atlantic conference in Virginia. Carrie Hemenway (MA) spoke about the workshops she runs across the country trying to teach fat women to love their bodies, and also how she educates the naturally thin participants to understand the naturally fat physical make-up. She begins her lectures by gesturing to her body parts and saying, "This is my stomach—well-rounded; these are my breasts; and these are my thighs. This is my body, I own it, and love it." Well, this is my body, not the doctor's body, not my unaccepting family's body, not the public's body, not my size 5 friends' body. THIS IS MY BODY! I was free at last, Oh Lord, I was free at last. (Where have we heard these words before!)

And this is how far I have let myself go—to a new attitude of self love at any size my body decides to be comfortable at. I have even let myself go to the point of no return: I am mailing this article to my size 5 friends somewhere in the ozone layer over an Iowa corn field.

Reprinted from *Heartbeat*, the publication of the Heartland Chapter of NAAFA. ♦♦

Big & Beautiful Ski Festival

The Big & Beautiful Ski Classic, a week-long ski festival for plus-sized skiers, will take place February 4 -11, 1990 at the Balsams/Wilderness Resort in Dixville Notch, New Hampshire.

Highlights include ski events and social gatherings for all ages, levels of ability, and physical size. The Big & Beautiful Ski Classic Cup on Saturday, February 10, culminates the event with a foot/poundage race to benefit the National Ski Patrol Ass'n. Competitors will be weighed privately and the vertical feet skied within a four hour time window will be multiplied by weight to determine points and winners.

Skiing is a wonderful sport for active people according to Leslie Colburn of event sponsor Beautiful Skier and Big Sir activewear. Unfortunately, lack of equipment and apparel designed to accommodate large skiers and a negative reaction from media, ski area personnel, and other skiers discourages plus sized people from the sport. "We expect this event to successfully show that large people constitute an active sporting market," says Colburn. "With the help of the Balsams, we'll show large skiers that they can ski without prejudice." For information about the event, contact Leslie Colburn at Beautiful Skier: (603) 647-8899.♦♦

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