

☆☆☆ CONVENTION SPECIAL EDITION ☆☆☆

ANNUAL CONVENTION DRAWS RECORD-BREAKING ATTENDANCE

More than 200 NAAFAs gathered over Labor Day weekend at the Newark Airport Marriott in New Jersey for NAAFA's 18th national convention. Members travelled from twenty-five states and two European countries to participate in the program that was both entertaining and educational.

There were more than 20 workshops held during the five day program. Subjects included health, job discrimination, activism, eating disorders, AIDS prevention, disability rights, and "fat realities" which probed the emotional impact of growing up fat and what to do with it as adults. There was also a hugging workshop, which is always quite popular, and a viewing of the video Miss or Myth? about the Miss California beauty pageant and the surrounding protest demonstrations.

Both Marlene Solomon (publisher of MAGNA magazine for big and tall men) and Alice Ansfield (publisher of RADIANCE magazine for large women) were on hand to accept awards and lead workshops about their respective publications.

There were also meetings and special programs for members of NAAFA's Special Interest Groups (SIGS). Meetings were held by the Leadership, Feminist, F.A. (Fat Admirer), Fat Men's, Singles, and Couples SIGS.

The luncheon programs were varied and very well received. The first was a fashion show featuring 12 designers and retailers. Most of the clothes shown were either available for purchase at the convention or were available by custom order.

The Awards luncheon featured speeches by Founder William J. Fabrey and keynote speaker Alice Ansfield of RADIANCE. (Excerpts from their speeches are included in this issue.) Achievement and service awards were presented by NAAFA's Awards Committee. Louise Wolfe and Judy Freespirit from Fat Lip Readers Theater performed three pieces from Fat Lip as a way of saying thanks for their award.

The Testimonial luncheon included the Presidential address and a chance for attendees to come up to the microphone to say a few words. (The text of President Eileen M. Lefebure's speech is included in this issue.)

But the highlight of the luncheon program was for many the Chapter Rally. Signs, banners, fabulous and funny chapter hats, buttons, songs, poems, and high spirits filled the room as chapters vied for prizes for best banner/presentation, best

costume, and best chapter hug. On a more serious note, leaders shared facts, plans, and views from their home chapters.

The evening programs included two pool parties, two dances, and a talent show. The show featured music, comedy, and song from Ann Hawkins (CT), David Whiteis (IL), Susan Mason (NJ), Ray Simpson (CA), Paula Dachis (MD), and Aglaia Koras-Bain (NJ).

At the wrap-up rap--where participants evaluate the convention and make suggestions for next year--the consensus was that the Marriott staff was friendly and very accommodating and that the hotel had been a good choice for the convention.

The theme of this year's convention was unity: "*Closer together, closer to our goals.*" Certainly for those five days, the spirit of the NAAFA family was very evident. We can only hope that those feelings were taken home by all the participants and will continue throughout the year. ☆

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

by Eileen M. Lefebure

(Excerpts from her speech delivered at the 1987 convention, Monday, September 7, 1987.)

I'm very pleased to address this NAAFA assembly once again. At this point in the convention, on the last day, everyone is feeling that convention "high". I've thought about what creates that mood and have decided that aside from all the fun we have in the pool, at the workshops, and at the meals and dances, the main reason why we feel so good is that we can be ourselves here. We can relax all those fears relating to our size. We don't have to worry about someone staring as we eat or dance or swim. We're encouraged to be ourselves. There's no need for fat related facades, because we all know we're accepted here. Most of that unfortunately disappears as soon as we get back into the mainstream of life, but I've been thinking about how wonderful it would be if we could all leave here and go back into the world with the same self-confidence we feel during these five days.

I guess the point I want to make is we should all be who we are, all the time. Not just here at NAAFA where it's easy, but out there in the real world. I feel we should live our lives without so much emphasis on being fat. We are all first women and men who just happen to be fat. It doesn't matter how much we weigh. We are all unique individuals with

unique paths to follow. Each person on this planet manifests his/her qualities in a unique manner and therefore no two of us are ever alike, whether we're fat or skinny.

We must not put our lives on hold. We will not suddenly wake up in a world which accepts us for who we are unless we are working toward that goal. We must act as though we deserve to be treated with respect. Together we can accomplish that goal.

Of course there still are the do-gooders trying to convince you that this new diet WILL WORK. After all, they say, they're just concerned with your health! It's hard dealing with these do-gooders, because they can be so convincing and sometimes they're people we care about deeply. But most of them really don't care about you and are just attempting to manipulate and control you. Every day we're hit in dozens of subtle ways with new diets, new diet books, diet centers, foods, and surgeries.

Each time someone suggests a new diet to me, if they're a friend, I remind them that my dieting days are over. If they're not a friend, I try to gently explain that diets don't work and I'm not interested in listening. I often start quoting Paul Ernsberger's report on weight-loss surgery and that generally changes their train of thought pretty quickly. But you must be definite about how you feel about yourself. If you're wishy-washy, you're a prime target for their manipulation.

An old philosopher wrote that it doesn't matter what anyone says to you, it cannot hurt you unless you allow it. It's your reaction that matters.

All if this is really not a matter of weight but it is a matter of being true to yourself: Being who you really are, not what someone else thinks you should be. Only you know what makes you happy and what makes you sad. Get to know yourself better. Learn to love yourself, accept, and approve of yourself. Then when anyone comes along with an attack, you will be working from a strong base. It might have been established here at NAAFA, but it will have become a part of your being. Then, whenever there's someone or something unpleasant to deal with, you can reach down inside of YOURSELF and tap into that strength which comes from knowing yourself. If you're happy, confident and comfortable with yourself, no matter what your size, no one will be able to tell you how you should be living your life.

Although I do not agree with many of the tenets preached by Werner Erhard, the father of the EST Training Seminars, I do agree with this philosophy:

THE WAY IT IS IS ENOUGH
WHO YOU ARE IS ENOUGH
THE ONLY THING YOU HAVE
TO DO IS BE.

When you leave the convention, go with your head held high, a confident new being. Go back to the world a new person, an updated person from the experiences of this weekend. This is the way we can change the world! ★

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FOUNDER'S ADDRESS

by William J. Fabrey

(Excerpts from his speech delivered at the 1987 convention, Saturday, September 5, 1987.)

I have some good news and some bad news to share with you today. First of all, one bit of good news is that the September issue of New Woman Magazine mentions NAAFA in their medical column having to do with experimental weight loss programs. The article says that many fat people feel victimized by such programs and includes NAAFA's address for more information. So we're getting lots of mail--but the bad news is that it's not from people wanting to join NAAFA--it's mostly from people wanting to know how to get into experimental weight loss programs!

We're also in an unlikely place--a magazine called Beauty Digest. They actually reprinted an article by Jane Brody, which mentions NAAFA. On the magazine's cover it even says "Why skinny isn't chic anymore!" Of course, headlines also proclaim "A great new face in 10 minutes" and "Secret European youth treatments." But I guess anything that gets the word out is okay...

There's a news item recently in USA Today that says that bulimia may be a lot less common than previously thought. That's the good news. The bad news is that there is still a big problem out there or eating disorder clinics wouldn't have waiting lists.

Vogue just published its third large-size fashion section, and its editorial coverage is excellent. But the bad news is that they appear to still be using only size 14-16 models--except for the "Just My Size" and the "Fitting Pretty" pantyhose ads.

And more good news: The impressive figure of William Conrad is back on television this year. He's starring in a new show called "Jake and the Fat Man". The bad news is, however, that USA Today and other publications just can't resist writing about the show, using long strings of fat jokes.

There's other good news--NAAFA isn't alone in this movement. We have Radiance, Magna, BBW, and groups such as Largess. The fat liberation (or size acceptance or advancement) movement is the sum of its many parts. I consider this fact to be the best news I've heard all decade.

I think that the pendulum is swinging back toward acceptance of the larger figure. There is more acceptance of diversity in the fashion world. I feel optimistic about it. But there is so much contradictory news each day--the good mixed in with the bad, that it's a bit hard to see where we are on a day to day basis. But I believe that the overall trend is that things are improving.

There's a dilemma in our trying to break out of the fat stereotype and away from size discrimination. The dilemma is that we won't be accepted until we accept ourselves--yet, fat people themselves seem to be the toughest to convince that they are okay. We get all sorts of support for NAAFA's goals from people who are not fat. It is very often easier to convince a thin person that it is wrong to discriminate against fat people than it is to convince a fat person. Fat people have all this emotional baggage from being oppressed all their lives. I'm not an expert on how oppressed minorities break out of that cycle, but we have to find solutions for the problem!

In spite of all these signs of progress, I'm really not happy.

I enjoy my work in NAAFA and in the movement, but it's hard for me to be satisfied because we have still failed to reach most fat people in this country. I know that we will ultimately succeed, but until we do, we cannot rest.

The other thing we're up against is best explained by the following story: NAAFA recently received a letter from a woman who wrote: "I'm a former member and I joined a weight loss program but I'm not sure if it is any good. Enclosed is a brochure about the program. Could you have your experts look at it and tell me if it is a safe program or not. It's only costing me \$12 a week. P.S.--I really will get arround to renewing my membership when I find the money." (In three weeks her weight-loss program will cost her more than her annual NAAFA dues!) We have to eliminate the belief held by some members that we're competing with the RCA record club for their money. NAAFA is selling self-esteem, obviously a very difficult product to market!

Let me conclude by saying that we need more of everything. Everything we have been doing up to now is fine, but we need a lot more of it. We need more membership--we shouldn't have 1,500 members, we should have 15,000 or 150,000 members. We need more money from outside sources, and more membership dues. We need more advertising and publicity. We need more leadership.

There is a leadership vacuum at all levels--I can say that without impugning the efforts of our current leadership. The 60 or so leaders can't do it alone. We need more people on the local and national level. There are positions to be filled--there are even new committees to be formed because no one has invented them yet. The only way these jobs can be filled is if you step forward to help.

I'd like to challenge each one of you to search yourself for ways you can help the movement. Look deep within yourself for some resource you haven't tapped yet--some ability or talent you can use. Become more of an activist. Become more involved in NAAFA than you already are. I'm sure that most of us can find something more we can do.

Finally, I'd like to put in a plug for unity. Each of us has our own motives for being active in NAAFA. I'll bet that if we polled all the people here at the convention we would find a hundred or so different reasons for being a member. I think we should all be tolerant of each other's motives for being involved.

Don't go home after the convention to "business as usual". Go back and try to take some of what you got here with you and make it work for you. Let it improve your own life, or perhaps you can use it to help improve someone else's life (and as a side effect you will improve your own). I am deeply honored by your presence at this convention and your dedication to the movement. Thank you all for coming. ✨

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ALICE ANSFIELD GIVES KEYNOTE ADDRESS

(Excerpts of the national convention keynote address--given September 5, 1987 by Alice Ansfield, publisher of *Radiance* magazine.)

It's a pleasure to be here at a NAAFA convention. I'm glad to be here--receiving support from everybody. So thank you for for that, first of all.

I've talked in front of other audiences--the last was to an audience of 350 dieticians. And so it is really good to be in front of a friendly group who know what I'm taking about. I've never had this experience before. It turned out that a lot of the dieticians subscribe to *Radiance*. Many of them came up afterwards and said that they had people in their families who were larger--and I think that may be what got them involved in being dieticians in the first place. They were really appreciative of the things said. They actually laughed and lightened up a bit about the issue. So there is hope out there.

But I can relate to what Bill Fabrey had to say. There is still a lot of work to be done. Too many fat people are still unhappy. NAAFA has 1,500 members, *Radiance* has 1,800 subscribers. And I thought that by the end of my first year of publishing *Radiance* that I would have 5000 subscribers! So things are slow. Sometimes it's like pulling teeth. I still run after women on the street and give them copies of *Radiance*. Some of them actually come back to me and say, "Thank you. This is wonderful".

It's also good to be here because I'm so busy working on *Radiance* that I don't pause to reflect or look at what is happening--I'm too busy doing the work. So I thank you for this opportunity just to be here, and for your supportive comments. I need them--because I sometimes feel that I am working in a vacuum. (Although I do have a group of large women and friends in the Bay area [CA] who are supportive.)

I have some NAAFA friends to thank for helping me along the way. When I first decided to start *Radiance*, someone told me to call Bill Fabrey for advice and support. So I called him one night about 2 weeks into the whole thing--and my phone bill has never been the same since. In fact I had to add money to my budget to cover phone expenses. Another is Paul Ernsberger, who I feel is a gold mine that we have writing for us. His articles add credibility and prestige to what we are doing. So I am thrilled to have your participation, Paul. And another key person from NAAFA who has been a real supporter is Carrie Hemenway. We speak every few months, but I never met her in person until this convention. So I feel that *Radiance* and NAAFA have been aligned--there have been people helping to bring *Radiance* out besides me.

Radiance also couldn't have begun if it wasn't for the preparatory work done by other groups--Fat Lip Readers Theater, the Fat Underground in L.A., and all the other size acceptance work that has been done. I think that we came along at a good time.

Part of what I'm doing here today, besides trying to promote size acceptance and feeling good about yourselves, is asking for each of you to relate my words to your own life and to encourage each of you to take risks. I think that everybody is so valuable and that we have so much energy, that once we free it up, we can accomplish anything. Once I stopped thinking about what I was eating all day, once I stopped

worrying about if I looked too fat to go out to a swim party etc., once I started to let go of that and accepted myself--I started to have the energy to attempt a project like **Radiance**.

I'd like to answer some of the most often asked questions about **Radiance**.

How and why was **Radiance** started? **Radiance** is actually a mistake! I had no intention of starting a magazine; I had no idea it would be what it is today. I had this simple, harmless, little idea. I joined an exercise class for large women and about a month into the class I said to the instructor, Rosezella Canty- Letsome, I feel like I could do a newsletter for the women in the class and tell them where to shop, maybe I could have a therapist write an article on self-esteem, a nutritionist write about nutrition-without-guilt and so forth; and she said, "It sounds like a great idea."

So I sat down at my typewriter and picked up my phone--I called about 10 people and found writers and someone who was willing to word-process the first issue for free. And then I started getting calls from people wanting to advertise, and I thought, "How do you do that...?" I really knew nothing about it, but I asked a lot of questions, and figured it out.

As to why we were started, let me read something from our very first editorial: "...**Radiance** was created with the hope of bringing large women support, encouragement, humor, information, and just plain delight with themselves, their bodies and their lives."

Where did the name **Radiance** come from? We were several weeks into setting up the publication and we still didn't have a name for it. A number of ideas had been rejected as being too boring. So one night after exercise class, we went out for hot fudge sundaes and coffee. We were out late, and then that night I woke up at 3:00 AM and I sat up in bed and said "Radiance". I thought "That's perfect. That's really what I want to say to people."

How long has **Radiance** been around and how often is it published? We decided to make it a quarterly publication. We've published 12 issues over the last three years. We've had different themes, and each issue has grown and improved. We just signed on with three national distributors so we'll be available in bookstores and newsstands soon.

What kind of a response do we get to **Radiance**? Ninety-eight percent of the letters and calls we receive are positive. However, every issue receives a certain amount of flack. Some of it comes from people who just don't want to let the good feelings in--they want to lose weight and not feel good about themselves at their current size. Some comes from people who don't understand what we are about. No matter who we put on the cover, there is always a misunderstanding about the nature of **Radiance**.

But the most controversial issue was the one with the lawyer Carole Cullum of San Francisco on the cover. The feature article was a last minute replacement and we had to do it fast--including the photography. Within two days after the issue went out I received a call from a buyer from an apparel mart who said, "How could you have done this? You just set large women back 10 years by putting this person on the cover. The photograph is horrible. Her chins are showing. She's wearing the wrong color. The photo should have been shot from above instead of from below to be more flattering. You're just embarrassing large women." And she wasn't the only one who complained. Even large women called and asked how could I have done this.

One of the hardest things about doing the magazine is coming up against people boundaries--their limits on this issue. My friends told me "This is not about her wearing the wrong color. It's really because she is a larger sized women." Calls came in for two weeks and finally I sat down to figure out what I felt about it. I did learn a few things from the comments-- but now when I look at this issue and I see Carole's face, I think that it's the other way around--that I did more for large women by putting Carole Cullum on the cover.

Why aren't there more "bigger" women in **Radiance**? I'm still asking my advertisers to use bigger women and women from different ethnic groups and ages and different sizes of large. But for the most part the ads are still coming in with white, size 14-16 women. The more recent issues, however, have shown some improvement in this area.

Is **Radiance** a west coast or national magazine? I realized within the first few weeks that **Radiance** was more than a publication for the women in my exercise class. "This is something for the whole country," I thought. I tried to ignore that thought in the beginning--but of course that has changed and we are more national now. The information in **Radiance** has no geographical boundaries.

Most of our ads right now are from the west coast, but we want to show that there are abundant resources for people all over the country. But I've had to start from where I am. The stores in New York have been resistant--they don't think that we are a fashion magazine, so they don't advertise with us. And we are not going to become a "fashion" magazine. The people in New York think that we are too political--they call us a militant magazine-- and the militants in San Francisco think we are fluff!

Well, I had to start somewhere--on the west coast and directed mainly at women. But I think we speak to all large people and we're going to be bringing more men's issues into it. I want **Radiance** to be a forum for people with different views, different expressions, different lifestyles, and different ideas. I want it to be a vehicle for people to get in touch with each other--to know what is going on around the country.

What's ahead for **Radiance**? Our current issue is on children and weight. For a number of personal reasons it was the hardest issue for me to do so far. Upcoming issues have as their main theme large women and sports, and a multi-cultural issue featuring accomplished women from different ethnic backgrounds.

I really appreciate you having me here. And I look forward to your continued support, working with you, hearing from you and joining together to help people feel better about themselves.

[Editor's Note: **Radiance** needs your support. Subscribe for yourself, and consider giving **Radiance** as a holiday gift.] ★

**THANK YOU...
TO ALL THE VOLUNTEERS WHO
HELPED MAKE THE CONVENTION
SUCH A SUCCESS!**