

NAAFA Newsletter

VOLUME X

ISSUE # 6

1985

NAAFA BOOSTED BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

In a series of recent events, several agencies of the federal government made it clear that they consider NAAFA an important resource in three key areas: Seat belts, weight-loss surgery, and fraudulent weight-loss schemes.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Federal agency involved with rules about seat belts and other safety features in cars, and which determines which designs get approval for manufacture or sale in the United States, has contacted NAAFA for help in learning more about "fit" problems between fat people and their seat belts. NAAFA's Chairman (combining his engineering background with direct knowledge of problems fat people face fitting in cars) has written a detailed report on the subject for the agency. After discussion about a variety of seat belt and shoulder harness problems, and the difficulties posed by extenders, the report concluded that the best solution is to increase the minimum length of the belts as required by regulations, possibly by as much as 16 inches.

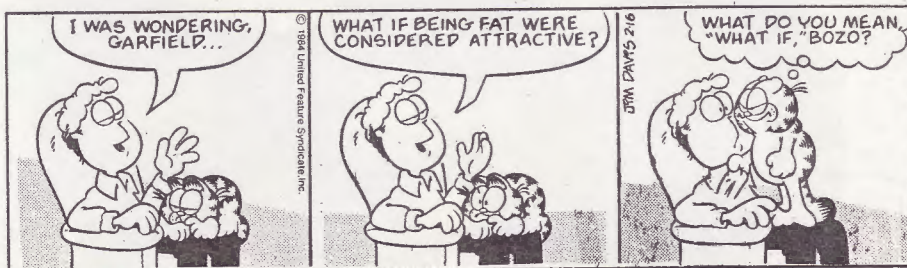
At their Vehicle Research and Testing Center in Ohio, the USDOT has been conducting tests on seven cars using a driver weighing over 300 pounds. It is understood that the decision about a possible increase in the required minimum length of the seat belts in new cars may rest with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and they have a copy of NAAFA's report. Further developments will be reported as they become available.

A milestone for health activists occurred when NBC Radio news called the government-funded National Institute of Health (NIH) in Maryland. NBC was looking for information on the subject of weight-loss surgery. They were told by the NIH that the best source of comprehensive information on the subject is an organization based in Bellerose, NY. NBC promptly called NAAFA and was referred to Dr. Paul Ernsberger and his Report on Weight-Loss Surgery. Since then, other reporters have been referred to NAAFA by the NIH.

On the same subject, NAAFA's office has been receiving a number of requests for the surgery report, from individuals who write to the National Health Information Clearinghouse for such information.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has written to NAAFA requesting help in planning a national health fraud survey (Harris poll) within the next few months. The areas of interest include cancer, arthritis, and rapid weight loss. The FDA writes that since NAAFA has been active in the health fraud area involving weight loss, they wish to obtain NAAFA's advice and expertise before proceeding in that area. NAAFA's Health Committee pledged its complete support for the survey; a draft of the proposed survey has now been received for NAAFA's comments and suggestions. ■

Garfield



DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS GIVEN AT CONVENTION

In a moving ceremony at the awards luncheon, a total of eight Distinguished Achievement awards were given at the annual convention last year. A number of the awards are given each year to recognize those who have made an "outstanding contribution to the advancement of self-respect, dignity, and a better life for fat people."

Joint awards were issued to actor Farnham Scott and actress/writer/producer January Stevens, for their roles in the film FAT CHANCE. The awards were given for their "outstanding performances as co-stars in the film, in which it is shown how two people, a man and a woman, can overcome pain and loneliness in their lives and find happiness with each other, despite their larger-than-average waistlines." Mr. Scott and Ms. Stevens accepted their awards in person, talked briefly about their experiences in making the film, and were present two days later, when FAT CHANCE was shown to conventioners.



Another award was given to Jim Davis, the creator of the well-known cartoon character Garfield the cat. Mr. Davis was recognized for his helping to educate the public towards more acceptance of fat people. Supporters of Garfield point out that the "tubby tabby" is the best-known fat activist in the public eye today.

The Honorable Mary Rose Oakar, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Ohio, received an award for her courage and dedication in helping to alert the public and the medical community to the dangers of over-the-counter diet pills containing PPA and caffeine and other "look-alike" amphetamin-like substances. Rep. Oakar is Chairman of the House Subcommittee on the Aging, and conducted hearings that were criticized by several pharmaceutical companies manufacturing such diet pills.

Eric Johnson, director of the Audio-Visual Department at Grandview Hospital in Dayton, Ohio, was honored for his key role in the production of the educational

video "Being Obese" which advances the concept of acceptance for fat people. "Being Obese" was shown during the video workshop at the convention, and can be seen in the fall on PBS television stations. Mr. Johnson accepted his award in person, and talked about the reluctance of some hospitals and health care facilities to accept the video as a training film, which was its original purpose.

NAAFA MEMBERS RECEIVE SERVICE AWARDS

At the same meeting, a number of NAAFans received special service awards for various contributions for assisting with NAAFA's workload. They were as follows:

"PENCE" SERVICE AWARDS

Pence awards, named after their originator, Fletcher Pence of St. Croix, V.I., are issued to those who, in the opinion of the Awards Committee and the Board of Directors, donate hundreds of hours of volunteer time (or equivalent) to NAAFA.

First-time awardees:

Conrad Blickenstorfer (NY) for his loan of computer equipment, software, and providing training in its use;

June Bailey (OH) for her extensive writing activities on behalf of NAAFA, several local chapters, and her local support group as well;

David Whiteis (IL) for his creative writing in the Newsletter and his local publication, the Big Times (Chicago Chapter).



Lloyd Ingram and Bunny Peckham receive service awards.

Those who have previously received Pence awards, and have merited "endorsements" for continued service:

Elisabeth Williams (NY) for her continued service as Chairperson of the Volunteer Service Committee (which helps make NAAFA's mailings from the office in Belle-rose), and as the Chairperson of the Pen Pal Committee;

Noel Nyman (WA) for his continued service as Chairperson of the NAAFA-Date Committee, and also for performing data processing (membership labels, printouts, etc.) for the Newsletter and Membership Committees;

Bunny Peckham (NY) for her on-going efforts as chairperson of the Fundraising Committee (without which NAAFA could not exist);

Peggy Williams and Russell F. Williams (MD), for their continued service on the Activism and the NAAFA-Date Committees.

HONORABLE MENTION awards are given to recognize service to NAAFA that helps keep the wheels running—a "pat on the back"...

Erica Manfred (NY) for her outstanding writing and support of NAAFA in writing three articles—one in Ms. magazine, and two in the Village Voice newspaper;

Lisbeth Fisher Burns (NY) for her enormous help in the Campaign '84 fund drive;

Dorothy Williams and Annette Paffen (NY) for their efforts on the Volunteer Service Committee;

Robbie Kassell (NY) for his efforts on the above committee, and also for his extensive newspaper and magazine clippings for the Dr. Ethel Weiss-Shed memorial library;

Valerie Corcoran (CT), Lloyd Ingram (NY) and Marie Limmer (MD) for their extensive clippings for the library;

Anna Cannizzaro and Ira Cohen (NY) for their excellence while serving as official NAAFA photographers;

Susan Dubin (CA) for her activism projects on the West coast.

In reading the names of the above awardees, Chairman Fabrey said that "The danger in giving service awards is that in recognizing the work of some, we might fail to recognize the work of others who, on the local level, or even the national scene, are loyal volunteers, plugging away at their committee or chapter work, helping the movement in hundreds of ways. To those we fail to recognize with an award, please know that your efforts are appreciated just the same!" ■

(continued from page 1)

Three awards were given to actresses Deah Schwartz, Marcia Kimmell, and Anne Wilford, for the unique stage production "Leftovers", which they co-authored, co-produced, and in which they were the sole performers. "Leftovers", which had a long run in San Francisco, and a relatively short run in New York, helped to reveal the fruitlessness of compulsive dieting, and the positive effects of coming to terms with one's own weight. The show dealt mainly with the efforts of the three to overcome compulsive eating and dieting, but it recognized other causes of obesity in a workshop held after the show, for any members of the audience who wanted to participate.

Finally, a special Distinguished Achievement award, designated the "Marvin Grosswirth Memorial Award" for excellence in creative writing, editing, and production of the NAAFA Newsletter, was given to Managing Editor Nancy Summer. The award was created after the death last year of Marvin Grosswirth, who, as a former Board member and long-time member of the Publications Committee, helped a succession of Newsletter editors write and edit well. Grosswirth was a professional writer, and a high-quality Newsletter was one of his goals. ■

Left to right:

Deah Schwartz
Anne Wilford
Marcia Kimmell



editorial

A RETURN TO THE SIXTIES?

by Nancy Summer
Managing Editor



In the last few months a number of events have taken place that are reminiscent of the 1960's: Columbia University students fasted and picketed against South Africa, and Amy Carter was arrested in Washington protesting the same thing. There were demonstrations in many cities on Good Friday in favor of relief to the starving people of Africa. Public concern

has been mounting about events in Central America and the controversial "sanctuary" movement has been started by groups of concerned church members. There has been some talk about a new Broadway production that will do for the sixties what "Grease" did for the fifties, and a number of writers have been wondering in magazines and newspapers, whether the eighties will indeed bring back some of the idealism of the sixties.

We don't need a return to the drugs, the day-glo paint, and the drop-outs of the sixties, but it might be nice to have "brotherhood" and a desire for social change replace the heavy focus on self and self-improvement that has been the cornerstone of the "Me Decade". During the seventies the focus of our society went from changing the world to changing ourselves. We stopped protesting Vietnam, discrimination, and pollution and got into therapy, went on a diet or joined a health club.

There is much to say in favor of self-improvement; however, I believe that we have reached a point where we are counting calories and push-ups because it's easier than thinking about the effects of pollution and nuclear war. We can have some direct control over our own bodies, we think, but there is very little we can individually do about the world situation.

NAAFA as a "social reform" organization has suffered the effects of the "Me Generation" in two ways.

Born in the late sixties, NAAFA may have been partly the result of the belief that we had the ability to change the world. Certainly, many of NAAFA's charter members maintained their memberships because of their belief that NAAFA's goals were valid, not because there was a good Newsletter, an exciting convention, or a NAAFA-Date program (because those things were not a regular part of early membership).

But in the last ten years, the focus has shifted to a heavy emphasis on NAAFA's goal as a self-help, support organization. Most people join now because they are looking for what they can get from NAAFA. That's okay, but we could use a few thousand members who join just to support us as a social reform movement, not because they are looking for any personal benefits.

The other way the "Me Generation" has affected NAAFA's membership is the way it has limited the number of fat people who come to us seeking help. Fat people outside of NAAFA, and within our membership as well, are still trying to change their lives by changing their bodies.

Lonely? Join a diet club. Can't get nice clothes? Lose weight. Out of work? Improve your appearance. Unhappy? Get control of your life by controlling your eating. The answer to every problem is to change your body...to change yourself.

Of course, these answers do not work for the majority. Most people just sputter along through life living with the illusion that they are improving their situations. Despite their best efforts, their waistline (and their attitude towards life) never seem to change much.

But some people who join NAAFA do start looking for the answers to their "problems" beyond themselves. Lonely? They get involved in their chapter or join a committee. Can't get nice clothes? They write complaint letters to manufacturers and stores that don't carry

large sizes and they support those that do. Out of work? They support discrimination legislation, either through their own work, by writing letters, or financially supporting groups working for new laws. Unhappy? They take control of their lives by putting weight in proper perspective, focusing on other aspects of their personalities and attitudes, and they stop blaming all their problems on their size.

I hope this trend continues, with more people feeling that they are able to effect and change the world around them. Perhaps it's time for fat people to get out of the diet clubs and into the streets! (Or at least into NAAFA!)

But right now it's time for NAAFA to stress programs that encourage "supporters" (fat and thin) to join our cause, solely on the grounds that our goals are valid. **We need their help.** I hope the day arrives when no member would ever consider saying, "Oh, you're too thin for NAAFA!" because our membership would be filled with our thin supporters, friends and family members. ■

When these concepts were discussed at the April meeting of the Board of Directors, the Chairman suggested a new membership category. Called Friends of NAAFA, its approval by the Board signals an increased effort by NAAFA to get more financial and moral support from those who have no reason to join NAAFA as a "full" member. Friends of NAAFA are to receive a modest quarterly publication similar to NAAFA-Gram, devoted only to those things that an outside supporter might want to hear about. The word "fat", an explosive word among many potential supporters, will be used sparingly.

NAAFA NEWSLETTER

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NAAFA FORWARDING SERVICE

Often, our readers wish to write to NAAFA members who are featured in this Newsletter. NAAFA's mailing list is strictly confidential, but our office is able to forward personal mail for a \$5 fee for each letter forwarded. The fee covers expenses and includes a tax-deductible donation of \$3 to assist NAAFA in its general purposes.

If you wish to use this service, seal your letter in an envelope that has the proper postage affixed, and enclose it with the correct fee in a larger envelope addressed to NAAFA, PO Box 43, Bellerose, NY 11426.

Mail to committees is forwarded free of charge. This mail should not be sealed in an inner envelope.

Foreign members only: Fees must be paid in U.S. funds only. Also, if your check is not drawn on a U.S. bank, please include an additional \$10 per check to cover international bank charges. Do not affix postage to the letter(s) being forwarded. ■

news

XEROX JOB BIAS CASE SETS IMPORTANT PRECEDENT

New York State's highest court ruled on May 7, 1985 that a person cannot be denied a job solely on the basis of their weight. The ruling, made by the Court of Appeals, came in the McDermott vs. Xerox Corp. case, and said that obesity is an "impairment" under the state's human-rights laws and that employers who deny a job to obese persons must be able to prove that those people are not able to do their assigned tasks.

Catherine McDermott filed the complaint against the Xerox Corporation 11 years ago, when she was first asked to accept a position as a systems analyst by Xerox, but later was turned down for the job when the medical department observed that she was almost 100 pounds "overweight". The issue was not that she was in poor health at the time, but rather that "active gross obesity" could lead to "potential impairments that McDermott might develop in the future". They also questioned her mental stability based on the fact that she was fat.

Early this year Xerox offered her \$100,000 in an out-of-court settlement, but she refused because she wanted her legal claim vindicated. "If they had offered me \$500,000, I wouldn't have taken it," McDermott said. "The point was, I was trying to get a job." She says that, having won the case, she probably won't get much more than \$100,000, anyway, since for most of the 11 years, she was employed, and is only entitled to the difference in pay between her actual job, and the one she would have held with Xerox, with compound interest, plus her expenses—mainly the expense of making lots of Xerox copies, she says, jokingly...

During the 11 years of litigation, McDermott acted as her own attorney, assisted by the State Division of Human Rights. Rosamond Prosterman, the staff attorney with the division who most recently has been involved with the McDermott case, says: "Obese people should have the same chance as anyone else with a disability to get a job or to work in an atmosphere free from discrimination." Ms. Prosterman believes that the main disability possessed by fat people is a "social" one.

COMMENTARY

Congratulations to Catherine McDermott, for her courage and determination which paid off in her battle with Xerox.

The case has special interest for several reasons. One is that, because of the headlines, many people learned for the first time of the existence of size discrimination in hiring. Another is that the legal principles involved in the case may apply in many other states that have similar legislation. And third, because of cases like this one, major corporations may have to take a closer look at the policies of their medical departments in summarily refusing to allow the hiring of "overweight" people.

This well-publicized case was written up by various newspapers and wire services with headlines like "Obese Woman Wins Suit Against Xerox" (Associated Press); "Xerox Challenged by Worker For Bias Against Fat People" (New York Law Journal); "Fat Lady Flattens Xerox in Job Suit" (New York Post); "Fat Woman Has Victory in Job Bias" (USA Today); and so forth.

The press was intrigued by the case, involving elements of "the little guy" fighting a big corporation singlehandedly and winning. The aspect of size discrimination added a sensational element for headline writers. The sight of a fat woman courageously battling the Xerox Corp. for 11 years, up through the courts until New York's Court of Appeals decided in her favor, was an inspiration for many observers.

The only negative aspects in the case relate to the poor reaction on the part of a few columnists and editorial writers, who felt that an employer should have the right to refuse to hire someone solely on the grounds of their weight.

Also, the court's interpretation of the law was based on the consideration of Ms. McDermott as having a

non-job-related "disability". (Since the original complaint was filed 11 years ago, an amendment to the law was created, which allowed for "perceived" disability, where a job applicant need not be considered to be disabled in order to fall under the provisions of the law, if the employer perceives the applicant as having a disability.)

McDermott denied being physically disabled, but claimed that she should be regarded as impaired within the definition of the law. Catherine McDermott weighed 249 pounds and stood 5 feet 6 inches in height at the time the complaint was brought, in 1974. Someone rejected by an employer on the grounds of "overweight", say, only 30 or 40 pounds, might have a tough time showing "perceived" disability. For this reason, some observers say that there should still be separate legislation outlawing size discrimination.

One of the most refreshing things about McDermott is her modesty. She acts as if anyone in her shoes would have done the same thing. What she did, she did almost singlehandedly. She says she knew about NAAFA, but in the end, didn't need to use our library for her research.

Incidentally, we certainly don't have anything against Xerox as a company—except for its dogged defense of an indefensible policy within its Medical Department. After all, as Dr. William Bennett said in his letter to the Ohio legislature, if you wish to discriminate in hiring against a member of any group you believe to have a higher-than-average health risk factor, than why single out the obese? Why not be evenhanded, and disqualify other groups as well. Smokers, those who carry or use firearms, those near retirement age, certain ethnic groups, accident-prone people, drug addicts and alcoholics, and those with ancestors with diabetes, heart disease, or other illness related to genetics, should also be prevented from working, using that (faulty) logic!

Anyway, I wish we had more Catherine McDermotts in the size acceptance movement. Meanwhile, she can serve as a good example to us all! ■

NEW ASPARTAME RISK CITED

In a recent release by UPI (United Press International), the possibility has been raised of new health risks in the consumption of the popular sugar substitute marketed under the trade name of "NutraSweet". The substance, manufactured by the G.D. Searle Co., is used in many soft drinks and more than 70 other products, and has been the subject of much controversy since its introduction and approval by the FDA.

According to the UPI article, two pediatric and genetic researchers say that many pregnant women who consume aspartame may have babies with permanent brain damage. One of the scientists, Dr. Louis Elsas, director of medical genetics at Emory University in Atlanta, also said he believes a key aspartame component can cause similar damage to infants if they ingest it in the six months following birth. The other scientist is Dr. Reuben Matalon, professor of pediatrics and genetics at the University of Illinois Medical School.

In addition, a new lawsuit filed on behalf of a five-year-old boy, charges that aspartame is an "unreasonably dangerous and harmful food additive" that causes permanent effects when combined with glucose and given to children under six years old.

In another development, it was disclosed that the U.S. General Accounting Office is investigating the manner in which newly-appointed Commissioner Arthur Hull Hayes of the FDA approved aspartame in 1981 over the objections of several agency scientists who challenged brain tumor studies.

Officials of G.D. Searle, which last year sold more than \$600 million in NutraSweet, dismiss all the criticisms of aspartame. They assert the product has undergone extensive testing and is safe. Dr. Richard Gaull, vice president for nutrition and medical affairs of Searle's NutraSweet group, said aspartame "has no adverse effects on the behavior of children" with the exception of a select group who are alerted to the contents in warning labels."

Meanwhile, according to the New York Times (July 19), the Searle family, which holds controlling interest in the company bearing their name, have accepted the \$2.7 billion bid by the Monsanto Co. for acquisition of the

company. Last fall, Searle family members had announced their desire to diversify their holdings, but a number of offers from other companies were rejected. It is reported that Donald H. Rumsfeld, a former U.S. Secretary of Defense, who is currently president of G.D. Searle, may be offered a job in the newly-merged company.

COMMENTARY

Despite the controversy about its safety, millions of people consume products containing aspartame (Nutra-Sweet) on a daily basis. Except for some diabetics, who avoid consuming sugar in their diet, most people who buy "diet" products containing NutraSweet do so in the apparently misguided belief that sugar substitutes are useful in weight control. However, according to Dr. William Bennett and others, sugar substitutes do not fool the body's biochemical mechanism, and the body finds other ways of remaining fat. [See "Sugar Fights Back" in the last Newsletter.] But for millions, the hope provided by such products is far more important than any risks to their health...or so they think!

Why is it, that in reading the various headlines about the G.D. Searle Co., some of which are mentioned in the article above, one gets an uncomfortable feeling that tens of millions of people are serving as guinea pigs, and there is a lot more going on behind the scenes than is ever printed in newspapers? I'll drink pure water (if I can find any), thank you, before I will consume a soft drink with NutraSweet, at least until all the results are in! ■

NUTRI/SYSTEMS EMPIRE UNDERGOES SLIMMING

Recent articles in various financial and general-interest publications have commented on the decline of the Nutri/Sustems empire headed by Harold Katz. Katz started Nutri/Systems in 1971 after struggling for years, selling brushes, vacuum cleaners and encyclopedias door-to-door. He became intrigued with the concept of franchising (people pay a flat fee up front for the franchise and then royalties forever). He didn't care what he franchised, but he noticed that his mother, Sophie, was spending \$60 a week trying to lose weight. (Mrs. Katz was reportedly been through her son's program more than 20 times, presumably losing weight and regaining it each time.)

At his peak earning periods, Katz was able to draw a salary of \$600,000 a year--and watch his empire grow to a net worth of \$300 million. It has since declined to less than \$20 million.

With all that cash coming in, Katz chose to acquire several other corporations, but some acquisitions didn't work out well. Gloria Marshall Figure Salons, with more than 220 salons in 21 states, were closed in 1984 due to competition from other salons offering more machinery than just an exercise bicycle. Some other Katz companies showed losses, and folded or were sold. Only the Nutri/System chain of over 700 weight-loss centers throughout the U.S. consistently created a profit for Katz's corporation, although that profit was considerably reduced after 1983. Katz himself has been forced to take a pay cut of \$120,000--dropping him to \$480,000 a year.

The corporation is currently involved in litigation with a number of franchisees who have complained that they have not been allowed to keep enough of the profits. Franchisees must purchase the prepackaged food products from the corporation at a high markup (and on a cash basis only)...as well as turn over 7% of their profits after initially paying \$50,000 for their franchises. This, and tougher competition in the marketplace has led to a lot of internal strife within the organization.

While the future of Nutri/Systems is not as rosy as it appeared in the past, fat people are still lining up at the doors. A deal to sell control of Nutri/Systems fell through last year. Had the sale been completed, Katz would have walked away with \$50 million.

COMMENTARY

The Katz empire was built upon the backs of brow-beaten, despairing, sometimes suicidal fat people, mainly women, who were willing to pay ANY price to look slimmer and become more acceptable to both themselves and to soc-

ety. Critics of Nutri/Systems say that their customers lost not only their money but sometimes their health as well. Nutri/Systems customers not only pay \$500 to join the program, they are also required to purchase their pre-packaged food from Nutri/Systems, resulting in a phenomenal amount of money changing hands!

There will always be a Harold Katz--there are, in fact, thousands of Harold Katzs!--looking to make a fast buck at the expense of fat people. They can't truthfully promise a thin body to anyone, but what they have to sell is hope, and that is why they succeed, time after time.

What NAAFA has to sell is hope of a different kind --not for a slim figure, but for some human self-worth and dignity. But because what most fat people want is a slim figure first and foremost, feeling that once they lose weight, all good things will follow automatically, they would prefer to invest \$500 in a Nutri/Systems contract than \$30 for a NAAFA membership. Fortunately, some "see the light", and NAAFA counts among its membership, plenty of Nutri/System survivors... ■

HERBALIFE UNDER INVESTIGATION

U.S. Senate hearings were held recently on Herbalife health and weight-loss products; the resulting adverse publicity has apparently caused the company to lay off a major portion of their work force. The May 1985 issue of Consumer Reports reviewed a number of scams related to food supplements, and the article placed Herbalife in that category. Publications like the New York Times, Newsweek, and many others, carried major coverage of the Herbalife hearings.

At the hearings, several nutritionists called the Herbalife products a fraud, saying the ingredients may be unsafe because of potentially toxic or carcinogenic herbs they contain. But the founder of Herbalife International of California, Mark Hughes, said that nearly 10 billion portions of Herbalife have been used safely and effectively, and that most users not only lose weight, but keep it off for years.

Hughes is also trying to cope with lawsuits by the State of California and the Santa Cruz District Attorney, who claim that Herbalife engages in numerous illegal statements and practices.

COMMENTARY

Readers would do well to avoid Herbalife products, at least until (and if) the questions about safety and long-term effectiveness are resolved. The subject is serious enough to merit more complete coverage in an upcoming Newsletter.

Meanwhile, one of the most annoying aspects of Herbalife is being ignored: The maniacal zeal of its sales people. Herbalife distributors are so persistent, even walking up to fat people on the street, that they can become extremely objectionable.

Although most Herbalife distributors appear to believe in their products, they also have a strong profit motive. They are reportedly part of a network of 700,000 distributors in the U.S., who operate under a form of "pyramid" sales scheme. Like the Cambridge "diet counselors" of previous years, they consider every fat person a potential customer--regardless of the health or nutritional problems of that customer.

Herbalife or Cambridge "counselors" have been known to attempt (usually without success) to sell their products in a NAAFA setting, at a national convention or a local chapter meeting. Perhaps it's worth mentioning that such behavior is in violation of NAAFA's new "Minimum Standards" code. Rule #9 prohibits "attempting to promote weight-loss methods or paraphernalia in a NAAFA setting; or promoting same to any individual NAAFA member privately without his or her consent." NAAFA members can go anywhere and, in effect, be insulted by weight-loss salesmen, who presume that they must necessarily be unhappy about their size. A NAAFA event, national or local, should be a place where a member doesn't have to worry about running into a weight-loss salesperson! ■

FDA SHUTS DOWN MAIL-ORDER COMPANY

The Food and Drug Administration, in its efforts to fight health fraud, seized \$2.4 million worth of products from the Robertson-Taylor Company of Florida--the largest mail-order company of its kind. Metabolite-2050, a guar gum weight-loss product, Cellulase EFX, a anti-cellulite cream, and Anorex-CCK, also a weight-loss product (made from the brains of cows), were some of the widely promoted items seized.

The products were promoted for mail order in full-page ads in many national and local newspapers, and sold in some health food stores, despite the fact that none of the products have ever been approved for any medical purposes by the FDA. Robertson-Taylor never even applied for approval prior to marketing.

The company has a choice now: To contest the action, or accept a judgement that would lead to the destruction of its inventory.

DHEA BANNED BY FDA

Dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA), a steroidal hormone used for weight loss, will no longer be available for sale in health food stores. The FDA banned the product, stating that it is a new drug that has not yet been approved, some of the supplements may have been manufactured from human urine, and that DHEA is known to interfere with reproduction in animals.

GRAPEFRUIT DIET BACK IN STYLE?

One of those \$19.95 diet products touted recently in television ads is the good-old grapefruit pills of the 1960's. The ads claim that you can eat as much as you want and still lose weight if you take their pills and follow their "plan". The plan, however, is an 800 calorie diet--on which most everyone can lose weight with or without the pills. \$19.95 brings you a 15-day supply of these "guaranteed" pills.

COMMENTARY

It's encouraging that the FDA is now moving on some of the worse offenders in the questionable diet product industry. Unfortunately, by the time the FDA is alerted and can take action, the companies selling the products have amassed such profits that the ensuing legal problems are well worth facing.

The Robertson-Taylor Corp. placed hundreds of expensive full-page ads. Their advertising budget must have been in the millions. A loss of an inventory worth only \$2.4 million may not be a problem to them--comparable to a mosquito bite when compared to the profits made while in business.

This is all highly reminiscent of the starch blocker craze several years ago, when manufacturers and distributors made fortunes while the FDA deliberated on possible action. (One east coast newspaper was still carrying large, costly ads for starch blockers even as they were also reporting on the controversy surrounding the product. Later, when the FDA banned the sale of starch blockers, the same newspaper, noted for its excellent investigative reporting, made no mention of the FDA action!)

The FDA has its hands full in the area. (Those who question the right or advisability of the FDA to interfere with the right of people to make their own health decisions, should be reminded that there are few segments of the population as desperate and as gullible as fat people seeking weight loss, except for, perhaps, the millions of arthritis sufferers.) NAAAFans can help by sending the FDA copies of all questionable advertising, especially those that contain health claims. Maybe it will help them move more quickly against violators.

One important way to combat this problem is, of course, in educating fat people to be less desperate about their weight and to be better consumers so they won't waste their money on such scams. However, as long as desperate people are willing to line up with money in their hands, anxious to try any method, no matter how preposterous, to lose weight, then there will be "entrepreneurs" willing to take their money! ■

activism

RECENT ACTIVISM

Russell F. Williams, Co-Chairperson of the Activism Committee reports that further efforts with regard to seat belt legislation are being made, currently in Pennsylvania. He emphasizes that the goal of the Activism Committee is not to defeat such legislation, but to point out the deficiencies and incongruities in the wording frequently found in such laws. [See coverage of seat belt laws in the last Newsletter--Ed.] The Committee believes that no law should penalize a state's citizens for being too large to fit existing seat belts.

In another action, a columnist in a small weekly newspaper, the Shopper, based in Fair Lawn, NJ, lampooned fat people in such a vicious way that a number of NAAAFans wrote to her newspaper and voiced their opinion. Midge Boardman, who writes the column "Funny You Should Ask" received many letters, and not from just the New Jersey area. While the NJ chapter (Jim Brown and Mary-Jane Grace, Co-Chairpersons) wrote a strongly-worded letter, so did some members of other chapters, after seeing reprints of the offending article. The response from NAAFA members was so encouraging, that Russell Williams was prompted to write the following brief letter to Ms. Boardman:

"As Co-Chairperson of the Activism Committee of the National Association to Aid Fat Americans, I have been encouraging the membership to object, in writing, to comments perceived as ridicule. As you can see, my efforts are meeting with success. Fat people endure a great deal of suffering in our society. If you are a person with compassion, help reduce, not increase, our sufferings."

After Catherine McDermott won her case against the Xerox Corp., the Journal Herald in Dayton, OH ran a negative editorial called "You'll Know She Won Case When the Fat Lady Sings". Several NAAAFans wrote to that newspaper protesting the wording of the editorial.

In the area of Health Activism, Dr. Paul Ernsberger reports that he and Debra Ernsberger are assembling a "Doctor's Packet" of information, designed to help practicing physicians develop a more enlightened attitude toward their obese patients. One plan is to make the packet available so that NAAFA members could order the packet, enclosing their doctor's address, and the printed materials, along with an explanatory letter, would be sent to the doctor. The member's identity could remain confidential, if so requested.

The packet would primarily contain articles from medical journals that take an enlightened stand on fatness and are potentially valuable for the practicing physician. It would also include reprints of Newsletter articles and specials on health. An important third ingredient is case histories, in which fat people tell, in their own words, what they have gone through with doctors. Reading these experiences can give doctors insight into their relationships with fat patients.

Dr. Ernsberger suggests that anyone who can provide an anecdote or short essay about an experience with a health professional that might be informative, should send it to the NAAFA Health Committee, PO Box 43, Bellerose, NY 11426. All replies will be held strictly confidential, and will be reprinted using age and sex only. ■

MEDIA WATCH

All forms of the media (radio, TV, magazines, newspapers, books, and even computer bulletin boards) have the ability to influence how people think on various issues. They have the ability to educate, to inform, and to (occasionally) misinform the public. It is therefore in the best interests of the size acceptance movement to keep abreast of developments in the media. In this column, items will be mentioned that might not specifically fit into the column on publicity.

The American Express Travel Related Services Company has published an interview with NAAFA award-winner Jim Davis, creator of the "Garfield" comic strip series. Davis is quoted as saying, "While there are

medical reasons for some people to control their weight, being a little overweight may not be the worst thing in the world for others. Garfield is a militant cat who proudly defends his right to be just what he is—a tubby tabby." In his interview, Davis stressed the educational value of the comics, especially for children.

The tri-weekly news supplement, NAAFA-Gram has succeeded in publishing eight issues since it began. (Issue #1 was dated January 7, 1985). Many NAAAFans receiving NAAFA-Gram have written to say that they are thrilled at receiving up-to-the-minute news about NAAFA and the movement. (See NAAFA-Gram report on page 12 of the last Newsletter.)

A recent issue of BBW magazine listed support groups for fat people. There was no mention of NAAFA or its local chapters, yet BBW receives copies of NAAFA mailings and some local chapter bulletins as well. From the standpoint of the size acceptance movement, BBW is thought by most NAAAFans to do a fine job, and many have expressed regrets that a communications gap apparently exists. A NAAFA Distinguished Achievement Award, offered to BBW Editor-in-Chief Carole Shaw in 1983, was declined by her at the time.

The Lucie Arnaz television show provided a pleasant surprise when she gave some unique advice recently. She plays a psychiatrist on a radio phone-in talk show, and the script had a woman call in and explain that she was afraid of losing her boyfriend because she was fat. Lucie's enlightened answer was, "How do you know he doesn't like large women?" That response would have been impossible a few years ago. Some television writer has apparently heard of F.A.s.!

A similar thing happened in Woman's Day magazine. In the June 11 issue, author Eda LeShan penned a cover story titled "How to Hold Onto the Man You've Got." Dr. LeShan appeared with Chairman Fabrey on WOR-TV in New York several years ago, and was intrigued by the concept that some people may prefer to date those with the abundant figure. In her current article, LeShan heads one section "When You Like Yourself..." and tells the story of a woman who "was always very attractive to men—even though she was five-foot-two and weighed about two hundred pounds! She enjoyed men and considered herself an earthy, sexy lady." After her husband died, she had many suitors...

"Being Obese", the award-winning 24-minute video produced by the Grandview Hospital Audiovisual Department (Eric Johnson, Director) is to be broadcast by PBS television stations in an expanded 27-minute version within the next few weeks...

A publication called Radiance, written primarily for full-figured women in the San Francisco/ Bay area, is not simply devoted to fashion—it gets into self-awareness, fitness, and other subjects. An early crisis related to whether or not to accept weight-loss advertising appears to have been resolved—such ads can no longer be found in the publication. Most advertising is slanted towards those who live in the Bay area, but some national advertising can be seen. Interested NAAAFans can write to Radiance, PO Box 31703, Oakland, CA 94604. Published quarterly, a year's subscription costs \$10.

Carole Shaw, editor of BBW magazine, and Richard Simmons, exercise guru and Johnnie-come-lately fat fashions designer, appeared together again on television. It's hard to imagine that anyone could outtalk Simmons, but Shaw, armed with a coach's whistle, a list of quotes from Simmons' book, and a tremendous amount of energy, clearly held her own on ABC's The Morning Show, hosted by Regis Philbin in New York. Philbin, who usually has a lot to say about weight issues, barely got a word in while Simmons and Shaw continued to speak over each other. The one issue that Simmons and Shaw agreed on: They both disagreed with the "killer disease" proclamation of the NIH... ■

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.

c.o.b.'s corner

by William J. Fabrey
Chairman of the Board

MAROONED IN LOS ANGELES...

Recently, after an engineering convention in Las Vegas, I experienced the cancellation of my flight reservation back to New York during the United Airlines strike. With no housing available in town, and no flights to any eastern cities available for several days, I did the next best thing: I hopped on a "commuter" flight to Los Angeles and spent the night at the Los Angeles Airport Marriott, prior to getting a flight to New York the next morning.



So it would seem that, for a few hours at least, I was "marooned" in Los Angeles. However, the Los Angeles Airport Marriott, at which NAAFA is holding its 1985 annual convention, was like being in a tropical paradise, at least for a New Yorker! Lavish in its design, and with excellent food and accommodations, I can't imagine a better place to stay for the weekend of August 23-26. Maybe I'll see you there!

LANE BRYANT: DIET HUCKSTER!

It was bad enough in the old days, with Lane Bryant's limited sizes, matronly styles, refusal to use plus-size models, stodgy advertising, and size-nine clerks laughing at their size 27 customers behind their backs. After all, where else could fat women shop!

From time to time, it looked like LB (Lane Bryant) might be seeing the light. They brought out a publication for mail order customers, that once plugged NAAFA and caused us to receive 100 new members, in 1977. They also created the magazine It's Me (but later sold it). Once or twice, they tried using plus-sized models in a retail catalog. They even hired Dr. Susan Wooley as a Psychological Consultant to give talks at various LB stores around the country (but dropped her contract after a few months of excellent public speaking).

Meanwhile, the fashion industry has been undergoing a revolution in providing more stylish clothing for women in much larger sizes than ever before. The folks at LB responded by selling out to Brylane Corp., which also bought out the Roaman's chain, and turned their stores into LB stores. They had enormous potential to be a major force in improving the fashions of the average fat woman. What did they do with that potential?

Well, you can still find limited sizes, matronly styles (although to a lesser degree), refusal to use plus-size models, stodgy advertising, and size-nine clerks laughing at their size 27 customers at some LB stores. When the rest of the industry was coming out with nicer clothes up to size 52 and above, good old LB was cutting back on the upper size range in their stores. It is now clear that Brylane Corp. believes that their market is mainly confined to low-income women (although their prices aren't that low), women who can't travel to any other store, women who don't know a well-made garment from a badly-made one, and women who have such a low opinion of themselves that they would never want to see models with the same body type as their own.

Are they right? Well, the marketplace will determine that—I don't really care whether they meet the needs of fat women—I believe that if they don't, their competitors will succeed in doing so, in the long run. What amazes and angers me most is the fact that Lane Bryant charge customers now receive, with their monthly statement, some sales literature for vitamins, health foods, shampoo, and last month, it was for Lane Bryant NATURE'S BOUNTY HERBAL DIET PLAN! "Start Losing Weight

Right Away", they tell you. "Compare to Herbalife and SAVE!"

And this month, now that "herbal diets" are receiving adverse publicity in the press, their flyer reads "Curb your appetite naturally" with GLUCOMANNAN capsules; and "Maintain the active metabolism you need to lose weight" with KLB6 Complete tablets.

Checks are to be made payable to the Arco Nutrition Center (a division of Brylane Corp.)—or LB charge card holders can phone in their order! It is clear that LB is now, in addition to their other "sins", just another diet huckster. Now, we cannot say whether these products are safe or unsafe—but all the evidence points to the long-term ineffectiveness of such diet "aids". At the very least, they are hard on the pocketbook, and they reinforce the low self-esteem of LB customers.

"After all, if you didn't let yourself be so fat, you wouldn't have to receive these reminders to lose weight—in fact, you wouldn't need to (reluctantly) shop in our stores..." they almost seem to be saying.

Other than hospital patients, I have never seen a more reluctant bunch of customers through the years than women in a LB store. They hate being there, they hate the reason why they are there, they long for the day when they no longer have to shop there. Sometimes, these feelings go back to their childhood, when they were dragged by their mothers into the chubette department, where other little girls didn't have to go!

Wouldn't it be nice, for a change, if LB would help make their customers feel more desirable about their bodies and their femininity? Does LB really think they would lose customers if they helped work on a more favorable image for the queen-sized woman? If they used occasional plus-sized models? If they gave up peddling junk diet products?

Would it hurt their sales if they would be a leader in the movement to make fat people feel better about themselves, in bodies that are unlikely to ever get slim and stay that way? Perhaps Brylane thinks that they will make more money by encouraging yo-yo dieting, which in itself, demands many changes of wardrobe. If that is what they think, they are wrong...a woman who feels good about herself, and stabilizes her weight, has more incentive to spend money on good clothes. Most women who are yo-yo dieters rarely spend as much, despite their changes in size...they're afraid to buy very many clothes, for fear of rapidly changing size, and being unable to wear them.

If you are a Lane Bryant charge customer, and you agree with me that it is inappropriate for a distributor of large-size women's fashions to promote diet products that may well compromise the health or self-esteem of its customers, please write to them, at the address on your monthly statement, and send us a copy of your letter! ■

health

[Editor's note: In November of 1984, NAAFA published Dr. Ernsberger's "Report on Weight-Loss Surgery", an abbreviated version of a much longer report. The sections that were removed are to be serialized in the Newsletter this year. The following is the first installment.]

THE RISE, FALL, AND REBIRTH OF INTESTINAL BYPASS

by Paul Ernsberger, Ph.D.
Chairman: Advisory Board
and Health Committee

Intestinal bypass surgery was devised as a weight-loss method in 1969 (103) as a replacement for the hazardous intestine-to-colon (jejunocolonic) bypass in use since 1956, which was gradually abandoned because of the rapid development of liver failure. University of Iowa surgeon Dr. E.E. Mason, who wrote the book on weight-loss surgery, reports that of those receiving intestine-to-colon-bypass, "Nearly all these patients either died or had the operation reversed (1)." Even when informed of the high risk of death, fat patients continued to demand the operation.

The intestinal bypass was hailed as a safer procedure, was quickly put into widespread use, and remained very popular among surgeons for the next decade. In this operation, the small intestine is severed and reconnected close to the colon. Food then bypasses nine-tenths of the small intestine. This prevents the intestine from absorbing nutrients, so that food passes through undigested. Fewer calories are absorbed, resulting in weight loss. Although this may sound miraculous, everyone's digestive tract at some time or another has failed to completely absorb food—this is the cause of the condition we all know as diarrhea. Unfortunately, intestinal bypass (like diarrhea) prevents the absorption not only of calories, but also of vital nutrients, so that constant malnutrition with serious vitamin and mineral deficiencies results.

Once the operation had been popular for several years, more and more doctors began to notice that intestinal bypass patients were having an extraordinary number of health problems. By the mid-1970's there was growing agreement in the medical community that the intestinal bypass operation opened a "Pandora's box" of complications and side-effects, many of them potentially fatal (1,99,104-107). In a 1979 symposium the hazards from 37 separate complications were summarized and it was concluded: "We may soon have witnessed the last [intestinal] bypass operation (107)."

THE TOLL

"Above all, do no harm."
--the Hippocratic Oath, circa 400 B.C.

Nobody knows just how many fat people have received intestinal bypass operations. Over 10,000 patients have been showcased in medical journal reports; many times that number had the operation without being part of a published study. A conservative estimate might be 150,000 intestinal bypass patients. Using figures in medical journal reports by weight-loss surgeons (2, 104-7), the following figures emerge: 74,000 of these people have life-threatening complications; 44,000 have liver malfunctions which are steadily worsening and likely to be ultimately fatal; 31,000 have recurring kidney stones.

How many people have died after intestinal bypass? Based on surgeon's published reports, I have calculated the long-term death rate among patients with intact bypasses:

% who died	Years followed	Reference
6.3%	2.7	108
6.6%	4.2	106
4.6%	4.7	109
10.6%	5.3	110
6.7%	5.5	104



PLEASE NOTE! When you write that letter of praise or protest regarding fat issues to newspapers, TV shows, companies, legislators, doctors, etc., please remember to send a copy to the NAAFA office for distribution to NAAFA committees. Not only do committees such as Activism and Health want to be informed, but some letters are reprinted in this Newsletter.

If you'd like to help NAAFA stay informed by contributing to the Dr. Ethel Weiss Shed Memorial Library, please send articles and news items to the NAAFA office. Be sure to write, in the margin or the back of the clipping, **your name and the date, city, and publication** in which the article appeared.

Your articles may be used for the news and/or activism columns of the Newsletter, or for the NAAFA 'Xtra' (supplement).

Thank you to all the NAAFA members who contributed newspaper clippings and articles, especially June Bailey, Conrad Blickenstorfer, Jim Brown, Mary-Jane Grace, Robbie Kassell, and Susan Tenzer, and others whose articles were used to prepare news and commentary for this issue. Commentaries were prepared by the Editor, and/or Chairman Fabrey.

These figures indicate that people who have had intestinal bypasses, usually previously healthy women in their 20's and 30's, have a 1-2% chance of dying for each year following surgery. In contrast, "morbidly obese" women aged 25-34 who have not had weight-loss surgery have only a 0.2% chance of expiring within a year (49). Because most intestinal bypass survivors had their operations 10-15 years ago, the current death toll could be as high as 36,000. [Author's note: A statistic in the "Report on Weight-Loss Surgery" that provoked a lot of strong reactions was my estimate that these operations have produced more fatalities than the American death toll in the Vietnam war. Most of the deaths in that estimate were from intestinal bypass. The death toll from stomach stapling alone will exceed 50,000 by the early 1990's, if present trends continue.]

Physical deterioration of the liver takes place in 49% of intestinal bypass patients after only one year (111), and liver damage may be universal in the long run. 100% of patients tested had kidney damage, and many were on the verge of kidney failure (105). With 150,000 victims, intestinal bypass has become a major cause of liver and kidney disease in this country, second perhaps only to alcoholism.

Liver damage and other problems can be reduced by reversing the bypass, but the reconnection surgery is risky in patients with severe liver disease, and many do not survive the operation (112). While it may seem advisable to reverse intestinal bypass operations at the first sign of trouble, reversals usually take place only when bypass complications are life-threatening.

Patients often resist reversal of the operation. Observed one psychiatrist: "Patients are usually willing to endure ill health from bypass complications for several years before they agree, reluctantly, to a reversal of the bypass (39)." One woman who had intestinal bypass relates that "I got yellow jaundice from it, and my liver is damaged as a result. I have to have blood tests every three months for the rest of my life. If I should have trouble with my liver now, the best thing would be for me to have the intestine reconnected. I'd never do that unless it was a matter of life and death, and even then I don't know if I'd do it (92)." When another woman told her family that her doctor had recommended reconnection, and that she'd almost certainly regain every lost pound, she was told "Don't do it. We'd rather see you dead than fat again (113)."

One surgeon remarked, "Some patients resist, literally to the death, advice to have the bypass taken down because of complications. This tells us something about the suffering that these patients experience because of morbid obesity and how intensely averse they are to returning to their prior obese state (114)." Another study reinforced the idea that many fat people find their condition a "fate worse than death". A survey of patients who asked their doctors about weight-loss surgery showed that 57% of them had previously attempted suicide (115). In contrast, among patients who had no interest in weight-loss surgery, almost none had ever attempted suicide.

A SWITCH TO THE STOMACH

Most surgeons switched to one of the newer stomach operations, hoping these operations would result in less disability and death. There are well over a dozen types of stomach surgery for weight loss. Each creates a tiny artificial stomach out of a portion of the original stomach, usually closing off the stomach with a staple gun (1-16, 30-37, 50-75, 82-98). The operations cause weight loss by limiting food intake; no more than a few mouthfuls can be eaten without vomiting. This effectively limits the patient to very small meals. The operation is said to be analogous to jaw wiring (1), in which the teeth are fastened together to prevent eating; with this surgery the stomach rather than the mouth is sealed shut.

Despite increasing use of the stomach operations for weight-loss, and almost universal condemnation of the intestinal operations, 20,000 intestinal bypass operations were performed in 1981 (116). This number may even be increasing as more and more complications of the stomach stapling procedures are disclosed. During 1982-3, ten medical centers affiliated with leading medical schools publicly declared their intent to continue performing intestinal bypass (100, 117, 118). In 1984, the

leading medical journal on obesity ran an article declaring that intestinal bypass, "is still an alternative in the treatment of morbid obesity (109)."

Many surgeons still prefer the intestinal bypass, and a group recently summarized their position in Obesity and Bariatric Medicine (100). They point out that while the intestinal bypass is often harmful or fatal, this is a known risk, while the risks of the newer stomach operations are still unknown, because no long-term follow-ups have been reported. Intestinal bypass proponents suggest that the newer stomach operations could prove just as deadly as the intestinal bypass in the long run (109). Indeed, some of the side effects of the two operations are similar. Dr. T. Kenneth Thornlakson, a professor in the Department of Surgery at the University of Manitoba, concluded last year that "Compared to other operations for morbid obesity, [intestinal] bypass is the safest (110a)."

Other surgeons use intestinal bypass on selected patients. The stomach operations fail to decrease blood sugar or cholesterol levels, while the intestinal bypass causes impressive falls in both. Because of this, the intestinal bypass is often done in patients with diabetes or high cholesterol, conditions found only in a small minority of those receiving weight-loss surgery (111).

Very heavy persons seldom lose an appreciable amount of weight following one of the stomach stapling surgeries; the thinner someone is before the operation, the greater their weight loss (34). For this reason, intestinal bypass is still done on very fat patients (111). A group of Canadian surgeons has endorsed the continued use of intestinal bypass for "superheavyweight" patients (111a).

At least one surgeon claims that while everyone else's patients may be dying, his patients are doing just fine (117). Another enthuses: "We continue to be greatly impressed by this procedure, although, clearly, our experience is not universal (118)." Among those who may not be greatly impressed by intestinal bypass are the over 100,000 surviving relatives of deceased intestinal bypass patients.

Intestinal bypass proponents point out that this operation is the only weight-loss technique with 10-year success rates approaching 50%, and point to a 99% failure rate for nonsurgical treatments, such as modified fasting. They also question the great variety of stomach operations: "If gastric bypass works so well, why the gastroplasties, gastric staplings and other modifications (100)?"

The intense rivalry between intestinal and stomach weight-loss surgery has led to some unusual situations. In Minneapolis, Dr. Leonard Crowley converts failed intestinal bypasses into stomach bypasses at St. Mary's Hospital (46), while less than two miles away at the University of Minnesota Hospital, Dr. Harold Buchwald performs intestinal bypass on top of failed stomach bypasses (71). A similar situation holds in Iowa City (1).

Part of the revival of intestinal bypass is prompted by new variations on the operation. "Bilio-intestinal" bypass differs from regular intestinal bypass only in terms of what is done with the bypassed length of intestine. In bilio-intestinal bypass, the end of the gallbladder is sliced off and one end of the bypassed intestine is sewn to it. A hole is punched in the colon, and the other end of the bypassed intestine is attached to the hole. This operation reduces, but does not eliminate, the diarrhea with intestinal bypass. Bilio-intestinal bypass causes all of the major complications of ordinary intestinal bypass, but complications are somewhat less frequent and severe (119). However, it is not yet known whether this operation might cause undesirable side-effects of its own.

The "bilio-pancreatic-intestinal" bypass is probably the most drastic rearrangement of the internal workings of the human body ever to be performed on a routine basis. Dr. Nicola Scopinaro, the Italian surgeon who originated the procedure, based it on an operation invented in 1923 and used to intentionally cause ulcers in dogs, so that experimental ulcer treatments could then be tried on them (120). Since Scopinaro knew that the operation would cause ulcers, he decided to prevent them by simply removing three-fourths of the stomach, including the major portions producing acid secretions and hormones. The stump of the upper intestine is then sewn shut. The intestine is sliced open about halfway down

and the bottom of the upper half of the intestine is attached to the bottom of the lower half of the intestine in a Y-shaped junction by punching a hole in the lower intestine. The top of the lower half of the intestine is then pulled up to the remaining stump of stomach and attached.

The bilio-pancreatic-intestinal bypass is reported to cause less severe versions of several of the complications of ordinary intestinal bypass. However, since it involves reduction of both the stomach and the intestine, it might be expected to cause the complications of both the stomach and the intestinal forms of weight-loss surgery. A frequent and spectacular complication of this intestinal bypass variation is kwashiorkor, a severe malnutrition disease (122,123). Most Americans had their first exposure to kwashiorkor during the Biafran War in the late 1960's, when the newsmagazines were awash with photos of young children with hard, protruding bellies and bulging eyes. This same horrifying disease has been produced in thousands of fat Americans who sought slenderness through surgery.

In summary, intestinal bypass is an extremely dangerous operation which results in many potentially fatal complications. Nevertheless, intestinal bypass and related operations continue to be done and may even be undergoing a revival.

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A note to NAAFans who have had weight-loss surgery: Even if you are not now having problems, you should consider getting a checkup from a gastroenterologist (G.I. specialist). These doctors have specialized knowledge of the digestive tract that other doctors, including your surgeon, do not have. More and more gastroenterologists have experience with long-term care of weight-loss surgery patients. Ask your regular doctor for a referral. Your gastroenterologist might appreciate a copy of "Report on Weight-Loss Surgery" because it can guide him to important medical journal references.

INTESTINAL BYPASS: A TRUE STORY



by Mary-Jane Grace
New Jersey

I was always fat. I grew up fat. I never knew anything different. The only problems I ever encountered were from well-meaning people. "You have such a pretty face," they told me. They were always telling me how much better my life would be if only I was thin. When

you hear this long enough you begin to believe it. I've been on every diet known to man and some I made up myself. The most I ever lost at one time was 50 pounds—only to regain it plus some more. When I learned of intestinal bypass surgery, it seemed just like the miracle I had prayed for. Before I underwent the procedure the only health problem I had was a cold, now and then. I was in perfect health except for my weight.

After surgery I began to lose weight at a tremendous rate. The diarrhea was constant. I became addicted to the pills I took to control the diarrhea. Because of a chemical imbalance in my system I lost most of my hair. When summer arrived, my body no longer would cool itself. I suffered many attacks of heat stroke. In winter, I could not generate any body heat.

The bacteria that is normally present in the intestines to digest food had nothing to do in my body. It showed up on my skin and began destroying it. After two years, I had lost a total of 300 pounds, had very little hair, my skin was covered by open, oozing sores and I had a very rare form of Lupus. I was put on large doses of steroids to keep me alive. From the steroids I began to lose what little hair I had left, and before this treatment was completed, I had developed cataracts in both eyes. Finally, after six years of sheer HELL I was forced to make the decision that either the surgery would be reversed, or I would have to make funeral arrangements. I entered the hospital to try to build up my system enough to withstand the surgery. Nothing helped. The doctors were forced to operate even though my chances for survival were small.

Right after surgery I took no nourishment by mouth but I was gaining weight every day. Within nine months I was back within 50 pounds of my starting weight. Not only was I fat again, but now I was suffering from impaired vision. My body is full of scars and my overall health leaves a lot to be desired. My mental health suffered just as much, if not more, than my physical health.

It's been five years now since reversal and I can just begin to say I feel good again. I only wish I had accepted myself for the way I was before surgery. Since I have stopped dieting, I've lost some weight and I'm becoming active outside the home again.

Every step I've taken on my road to recovery has been difficult, but I refuse to give up. PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE realize that surgery, diet pills, and anything else that comes out on the market are not going to solve your problems. Accept what you have and know that there are so many people out there much worse off than you. Don't listen to others when they could not possibly know how it is to live in your body. Just be happy and live life to the fullest. I AM! ■

[Mary-Jane Grace is a Co-Chairperson of the New Jersey Chapter.]

NEXT ISSUE

MORE FROM PAUL ERNSBERGER, LETTERS, PEOPLE NEWS, POETRY, ANOTHER WEDDING! LIFESTYLES, SPOTLIGHT ON A CHAPTER CHAIRPERSON, HUMOR, AND LOTS MORE...

GRANTS NEEDED!

Anyone who has information regarding available grants or experience with grant writing is urged to contact Chairman Bill Fabrey. NAAFA needs your help.

"KILLER DISEASE" UPDATE

As most NAAFAans know, on February 13, a panel of doctors, under the auspices of the National Institute of Health, held a press conference that resulted in headlines such as "Government Panel Calls Obesity a Killer Disease." [Details of the story were published in the last Newsletter.--Ed.] Meanwhile, Drs. Paul Ernsberger and Paul Haskew of the University of Connecticut have prepared a formal (academic) rebuttal, publication of which will be announced in this Newsletter when the information is available.

On March 16, a rebuttal to the NIH panel report, written by Dr. William Bennett and Joel Gurin, appeared in the NEW YORK TIMES, the Cleveland Plain Dealer, and many other newspapers. Dr. Bennett is Editor of the Harvard Medical School Health Letter, and a NAAFA advisor; Joel Gurin is Editor of American Health magazine. Both are co-authors of the book The Dieter's Dilemma and recipients of Distinguished Achievement Awards from NAAFA in 1982.

Apparently, the "killer disease" pronouncement has met with a degree of scepticism within the medical community. And, in early June, National Public Radio did a well-produced and edited three-day series on the subject, interviewing Drs. Ernsberger, Haskew, Bennett, and NAAFA advisor Susan Wooley, representing the side of scepticism in the debate. They were opposed by Drs. Jules Hirsch and Morton B. Glenn, who favored the panel's report (Hirsch chaired the committee that approved it). Over a million radio listeners probably heard the broadcast throughout the country.

Other public references to the subject included a letter published in the NEW YORK TIMES (April 3) written by Dr. Morton B. Glenn, who objected to Bennett and Gurin's rebuttal to the "killer disease" pronouncement. That letter was answered by a letter from Dr. Ernsberger, published in the TIMES on May 2. Headlined "Ups and Downs of Weight Can Be Dangerous", Ernsberger gave data to refute Dr. Glenn's claims, and concluded that "most individuals, scientists included, feel that body fat is ugly and a sign of undesirable traits" and that he is "dismayed that his colleagues have misrepresented the evidence to uphold a cultural bias." ■

feature

AN ALTERNATIVE NAAFAN LIFESTYLE

by Ann E. Merson

Each person approaches an organization like NAAFA with different expectations of what it can offer him or her. For some it is a forum for political activism to help right the wrongs of fat discrimination. To others it opens many social doors that our neurotically thin society has shut fast to anyone who does not adhere to their concept of physical acceptability. All of us are seeking our identity and acceptance of fat people as functioning, deserving, normal parts of the whole. I joined NAAFA for all of the above reasons and found a lot more. NAAFA helped me have a baby.

Before I recount my personal experience, please bear the following in mind. I do not advocate or in any way recommend single parenthood to everyone. It is not an easy life for me or my child. There are times of financial, physical and emotional hardship. My social life, including my ability to attend local NAAFA functions, is practically non-existent. A baby can not be expected to fulfill all our needs or be the answer to everyone's loneliness. I am writing this more to suggest that there are alternatives for each of us, and with enough self-respect and creativity, we have the right to choose our own lifestyle.

My story is little different from other fat women. I've been fat all my life and suffered the same social and job-related stigmas, the name calling and dateless Saturday nights. Along with the rest of the baby boom generation I liberated myself, but soon discovered that this did not extend to fat women. I was given a new lease on sexual freedom, but when I entered the main-

stream I found myself preyed upon by men who expected my gratitude for a one night stand as long as I didn't make any demands for dinner and movies or a permanent commitment.

I had been brought up hearing that "normal men do not marry fat girls", and my experiences confirmed it. My mother, in a constant battle with her weight, made sure her four daughters knew that it was because she was thin that my father fell in love with and married her. When I tried to fight the system, I was sent to shrinks, all of whom stressed the importance of losing weight. March to your own drummer, but make damn sure it's okay with the rest of the world first.

It was a therapist who recommended NAAFA to me. I had complained that even though I was being good and losing weight on the latest fad diet, I was getting discouraged because I still had no social life. My first exposure to NAAFA was at the 1979 National Convention held in Virginia. I freely admit to the chip on my shoulder. "You people are full of it," I sneered to myself. "Do you really believe that fat people are as good as thin ones?" These dreamers were going to have to prove to me that I had the right to self-respect, that I could like myself no matter how much I weighed.

My weekend with NAAFA did not change me overnight. But it started a whole new thought process, a search for answers within. Here were a group of people I did not have to make excuses to or hide from. They accepted my body and looked beyond. Over the months I began to realize that it was time to quit blaming the rest of the world for my unhappiness. If I stopped using my weight as the reason for not trying, maybe I would try more.

The evolution was slow. I began to recognize my capabilities and play up my strong points. I failed new endeavors many more times than I succeeded, but relied on a newly-acquired confidence to see me through the rough patches. I went to meetings and dances and joined NAAFA-Date. I met many men, some who were sensitive and encouraging, others who were in the mold I had always known. I did not find Mr. Right. However, my experiences forced me to acknowledge that it was the person, not the fat, that was the main factor in my problems with male-female relationships.

As my sense of self-worth grew, so did my desire to have a family. The newfound feelings that I deserved a chance gave me the impetus to make my decision. The idea of raising a child as a single parent was not born through my exposure to NAAFA. From an early age I had gone through a myriad of emotional stances on the issue. I have always loved children, and as the years passed found the craving for motherhood growing out of proportion. There were periods of denial, defiance, guilt and fear; and finally acceptance that I would be making the choice alone.

I researched adoption and foster-parenting but decided in the end that I wanted to try for a biological child. My sex life had been sporadic. There was no male friend or lover I felt comfortable enough with to involve as a donor. I ruled out a one night stand as it seemed contrived, impersonal and impossible to explain to a child.

I chose to use artificial insemination. Although it too was impersonal in the sense that the procedure was done in a doctor's office and the donor unknown, I rationalized that this was to be my child, born of my decision and therefore my total responsibility. There would be no tug-of-love divorce, no stranger who might show up later claiming paternal rights, and no sense of desertion or abandonment for my child. Consequently, the anger and resentment for depriving her/him of a father, or any chance to find out who the father was, (all records are confidential, even from me) would fall squarely on my shoulders. My child would be told the truth at the right time.

Inevitably there would be people who could not deal with our situation. Having been the butt of jeers and taunts, a social outcast for most of my life, I agonized over my decision to deliberately set up my child for the same pain and rejection. Could I love her/him enough to compensate for those who would forever see him/her as a bastard?

My family and friends were appalled. Was it really fair or right to do this to an innocent child?

THE HERBALDEATH STORY

by June Bailey
Ohio

How could I be capable of raising a baby under this pressure when I didn't even have the self-control to lose weight? My father summed up the universal feeling by saying that since I refused to make myself physically attractive enough to catch a husband in order to produce children in the traditional way, I didn't deserve to have a child at all. I listened to them all and followed my heart. I had accepted the NAAFA credo; like yourself for the person you are and don't apologize for being fat.

And I didn't apologize. Not to my obstetrician who predicted all kinds of problems during my pregnancy due to my weight. Not to my friends or family for doing something for which they expressed their strong disapproval. Not to clients or co-workers who were stunned by my condition. And not to the media who sought to portray me and my ever-growing single cohorts as selfish and incapable women who only care for their wants. I knew two things: That my child would always feel wanted and would always feel loved.

I was lucky. I had an easy pregnancy and delivery. I saw the birth of a healthy, beautiful girl and held her seconds after her first cry, feeling the icicles of years' worth of pain melt away. As each day, month, and year passes the love grows and radiates, continually unlocking doors from the past and allowing me to deal with my anger and unhappiness at growing up a fat girl.

Again, my choice is an individual one. It is selfish and could have repercussions that will hurt more than the fat label ever did. But there are those times when my three year old daughter asks me why I am fat, and I can say to her it's because I am; and she will learn to accept people for who they are and not what they look like. ■

ALL MY CUSTOMERS

(Scenes from a large-size shop)

by Joanne Preissler
as told to N. Summer

NAAFA member and former model Joanne Preissler owns a large size fashion store called Fully Feminine in Farmingdale, New York. Joanne has a number of interesting stories about her customers and the more unusual things that have happened in her shop. The following story is the third installment in our series ALL MY CUSTOMERS.

THE UNTRIED TEDDY

One of my customers is a frumpy woman in her twenties, probably a size 42. She's the mother of four young children and usually looks disheveled (I've spotted baby formula on her clothes at times). She only purchases polyester pants and very plain tops...never anything dressy or stylish. I have the feeling that there is little extra spending money in their household.

But one day she came to the store and spotted the teddies. She checked the sizes and the price and left. Three days later she came back, selected a black teddy and, without trying it on, came to the register all red-faced and embarrassed.

"Come on," I said laughing as I rang up the sale. "You've got four kids. You shouldn't be embarrassed about buying some sexy lingerie!"

She giggled and said, "When I told my husband about your teddies...well, would you believe it? He handed me money and told me to buy one." She took her package and off she went.

About five weeks passed and she returned to the store. I asked her, "How's the black teddy? How did it fit?"

"I don't know," she replied and then, noticing my surprise, added, "You're probably going to find this strange, but I never even got to try it on for my husband. All I have to do is hang it on the door knob, and he's all over me."

I guess that teddy won't wear out for a long, long time! ■

My Dad received this magazine in the mail. He didn't order it; they mailed it to him...free! Isn't that nice? He passed it on to me because he knows I'm always yakking about how fat people shouldn't get hood-winked into buying stuff that promises weight loss.

The magazine, in full color on slick paper, says it's the "ENGLISH EDITION", so people will think it's published in other languages. You can subscribe to it if you live in the U.S.A., Canada, Australia or the United Kingdom, all English-speaking countries...correct me if I'm wrong.

Well, this magazine has page after page of weight-loss stories. (Pay attention F.A.'s: You might want to subscribe for the "before" photos!) There is a disclaimer in the magazine which says that the statements of the users or distributors of the products, (which are not named but which one can quickly surmise from the name of the company), are not intended for the sale of the products. The uses and purposes of the products are delineated in the "official literature" which is the only representations anyone should rely on. Any statements in the magazine should not be construed as a claim that the products are for anything but the uses set forth in the literature or on the labels. In other words, the company does not want you to think that IT is saying you can lose weight and earn lots of money. BUT, the magazine has 10 weight-loss and financial success stories to tempt you. Are you keeping track of this?

If they are not selling the product, the financial success, or the weight loss, why does the company offer to pay "\$200 for signed weight-loss and product testimonials"? I hope you can rush your answer to me before my Dad gets another issue in the mail. He's 71 and fat and just a regular working man, and I wouldn't want him to get the idea that he's failed at anything.

If you submit a story to the magazine, you can send "before" and "after" photos, but they don't want the photos cut or cropped. They want to do that themselves. You must presently look like the "after" photo, so don't bother sending one if you have lost weight and gained it back. If you are planning on buying the product, making bundles of money, losing weight and getting \$200 for writing a story about it, you'd better do it fast... before you gain the weight back or lose something like your money, your hair, your teeth, or your life.

Here are some of the things the "users/distributors" say happened to them after they lost weight: One lady got to work on time for a change. One guy's father, grandmother and sisters lost weight and his mother got help for her arthritis. Another guy felt so good that he stopped smoking and can swim 100 lengths of the pool every day, five days a week. (What does he do on the other two days?)

My favorite is the one from the lady who lost 95 pounds. She went from 320 pounds to 225, from a size 52 to a 40 blouse and from a 48 to a 34 pants. I wonder how she manages fitting into those sizes at 225. I weight less than she does and wear a size 42 blouse and 38 pants. She must be REALLY tall!

Another guy was really cute in his "before" photo, (you know how we female F.A.'s notice these things). But he lost weight and now he doesn't look anything like himself; he's not even cute anymore.

They mailed us all these marvelous success stories --and they say that they aren't trying to sell us anything! Unbelievable! ■

ORIGINAL STORIES, FEATURE ARTICLES, HUMOROUS ANECDOTES, POETRY, etc., needed for the Newsletter. You don't have to be a professional writer to contribute, but you do have to be willing to donate your material. Mail your submission to NAAFA, PO Box 43, Bellerose, NY 11426, to the attention of the Newsletter Editor.

people



WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

DEBRA BIEBER and DR. PAUL ERNSBERGER were married on June 24, 1984 in Chicago, Illinois, after a courtship lasting two years. Debbie and Paul were both active in the Chicago chapter of NAAFA at the time they married, although at the time they met, Debbie was living in Paul's hometown of Minneapolis, and Paul was living in Debbie's hometown of Chicago. As Debbie tells it, "We initially met when I answered an ad that Paul had placed in *BBW* magazine...He planned to call me on his next trip home, but forgot to bring my address. He didn't have my phone number because I had forgotten to send it to him. Fate drew us together when Paul boarded a city bus and recognized me from the photos we had exchanged. The rest is history!"

Dr. Ernsberger (Chair of NAAFA's Advisory Board) is currently a Research Fellow at Cornell University Medical College, and Debra Bieber Ernsberger (Chair of NAAFA's Feminist SIG) is a Research Assistant at Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, both in New York City. ■

PEOPLE NEWS

DR. CLORINDA A. FORTE, a recent graduate of New York Chiropractic College, has just opened her offices for the practice of chiropractic in the Pelham Bay section of the Bronx in New York City. She has also been named one of the Outstanding Young Women of America for 1984.

RUTH SWIDER of New Jersey was recently appointed by the mayor to the position of Commissioner of the Sayreville Housing Authority.

DR. SUSAN MATTHEWS, mezzo-soprano, portrayed the role of the Devil's Grandmother in the American premier of "Griffelkin", an opera by the Skylight Comic Opera of Milwaukee. In April, she sang the role of Praskovia in the Florentine Opera Company's production of Franz Lehar's "The Merry Widow", also in Milwaukee. On May 7th, Susan performed in recital at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, where she is an Assistant Professor.

LOUIS R. BROCKMAN graduated with honors in June from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay with a Bachelor of Science degree in Managerial Accounting. In August, he will enter the Masters in Accounting program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where he has been awarded a non-service fellowship.

PAULA DACHIS has just begun a position as account representative with one of the top-ranked investment management firms in the country. She also acts as the assistant to the portfolio manager. Paula serves as NAAFA's President. ■

OBITUARIES

WILMA F. KUNS

Long-time NAAFA member Wilma Kuns died in December, 1984, after an illness lasting three months. Wilma, who



resided in San Francisco, California, held a Patron membership in NAAFA for many years, and is remembered for her generosity, which revealed itself on many occasions. For example, the first NAAFA office to be located in a commercial building (September, 1977) was made possible by a donation from Wilma, and led to the tripling of NAAFA membership at that time.

Wilma Kuns was known to her friends in NAAFA as something of a scrappy character, yet kindhearted and fun in many ways. She was not active in her local chapter for various reasons, but had several NAAFA friends in the local area. She attended every national convention for years, and was a familiar sight, ambling from one event to the next with the help of her cane.



She apologized for not attending the last convention (August, 1984), feeling that she was simply not up to the trip.

Her strongly-held views about the relationship between male and female NAAFA members led to her collaboration, with another NAAFA member, on a private publication called the "Willendorf Exchange" several years ago. The caricatures to the left were drawn of Wilma by a friend and she often used them on her stationery.



During her final days in the hospital, Wilma received a tape prepared by Lisbeth Fisher Burns (NY), Chairperson of the Membership Committee, which had recorded greetings from several of Wilma's friends of long standing in NAAFA.

DR. DAVID C. GREENWOOD

Dr. Greenwood, a NAAFA member since 1977, reportedly died in May of 1984. Not much is known about his death, but Dr. Greenwood, who resided in Washington, DC, was a Life member of NAAFA, and was active in various NAAFA activities, including national conventions. Dr. Greenwood was proud of his taste for the abundant figure, and considered himself a holdover from a previous day and age, when fat was in fashion. Dr. Greenwood was a scholar, was well-versed in Oriental culture and languages, and had more than one textbook to his credit.



If you have an announcement of a promotion, a new job, an award you received, or a graduation...please share it with us. Your accomplishments may encourage someone else to follow in your footsteps.

Please send your announcements, as well as any birth or marriage announcements (with wedding pictures, please!) to People News, c/o NAAFA, PO Box 43, Bellerose, NY 11426.

SPOTLIGHT ON: BARBARA COLGIN--

NORTHERN OHIO CHAPTER CHAIRPERSON

Interview by Nancy Summer



If I had to use only one word to describe Barbara Colgin, it would be warmth. I don't know if it is her smile, her ability to put people around her at ease, or her great hugs, but Barbara's warmth is not reserved just for her close friends. It radiates into her chapter, her hug therapy workshops, and into everything she does.

"For me, NAAFA is like getting another chance at life...and you can't keep what you have if you can't give it away," Barbara told me. Perhaps that attitude is the key to her successful leadership within the NAAFA community. She understands, from first-hand experience, the hardships that fat people face, and has learned how to overcome those hardships. More importantly, she is willing to share her knowledge with others.

Besides her office in the Northern Ohio Chapter, she is also Coordinator of the national Special Interest Group (SIG) for Singles, and the editor of Singular, the SIG's publication. She also runs hug therapy workshops, a concept that she did not originate, but rather tailored to the fat experience.

When not engaged in NAAFA business, Barbara is a student of psychology and health services management at Dyke College in Cleveland, or engaged in one of her favorite pastimes like swimming, movies, theater, dancing or reading.

Barbara first heard about NAAFA from a friend and attended a New Years' party in Cleveland in 1983. "I felt like I had come home...like I plugged into something that I had been looking for all my life." June Bailey was chairperson at that time and Barbara describes her as her mentor. "June, Mary Jo and Jerry Hoxworth, and all the people in the group were wonderful to me. I had lots of enthusiasm but no confidence in myself. June encouraged me from the beginning."

But Barbara had taken some steps towards fat liberation before she came to NAAFA. It was anger that drove her back to college after 10 years of low-paying jobs. "I was an honors student in high school. In fact, one of the things that kept me going was my pride in my abilities in school. But my guidance counselor told me that I would never get into college because I was too fat and a socially unacceptable person."

This was not Barbara's first experience with fat discrimination. She was teased terribly as a child. In fact, she almost dropped out of high school in tenth grade because of the stress of dealing with the other students. Her parents transferred her to a private school.

Barbara tried many diets. At age 15, she was sent to a "fat girls camp" and lost 60 pounds. Over the next three months, she gained it all back. "I felt like a failure, and my parents were mad at me. The camp had cost a lot of money. They also expected that I could lose weight and keep it off...that it was a matter of will power."

Also as a teen, Barbara tried Weight Watchers. "They said I was so fat that they wouldn't let me in the teenage group and put me in the adult group instead. It didn't work. I gained nine pounds the first week on the program!" For ten years, Barbara was a member of Over-eaters Anonymous (OA). "OA never helped me lose weight, but it was a good support group for me. I didn't get from it what I've gotten from NAAFA, though."

What has she gotten from NAAFA? "NAAFA has changed my life so much. I started living: Doing all the things that are important to me...things that I denied myself for years. I go places now that I would not have gone before. NAAFA gives us the tools to use in society: I've become more assertive. I've discovered leadership abilities that I never knew I had. (In fact, I used to be so grateful just to be part of something, that I never

considered leading.) I've learned to take risks. I've discovered how to succeed."

Barbara isn't finished changing yet. "I joined NAAFA for the social aspect of the organization, but you can't stagnate. I've grown into a fat activist. I like the person I'm becoming, and I want to help others in NAAFA the way I've been helped." Barbara is really making the most of "her second chance at life."

ABOUT THE NORTHERN OHIO CHAPTER OF NAAFA

Barbara describes her chapter as a closely knit group with little internal dissension. "We may not be the biggest chapter, but we are very active and committed."

The chapter's activity schedule emphasizes dinners and socials, regional gathering weekends and some workshops. There is a chapter-sponsored emotional support group that meets once a month. The chapter also engages in fundraising for the Ohio legislation effort.

They are very proud of their publication, The Bountiful Buckeye Bulletin (BBB), co-published by the Northern Ohio and Ohio chapters and edited by June Bailey. Barbara is the associate editor. ■

BEHIND THE SCENES...

Much of what goes on in NAAFA is actually "behind the scenes", and is rarely reported in this Newsletter. However, some members like to get an occasional glimpse of what NAAFA accomplishes in the routine "line of business." The following is a recent sampling of some of the things that go on, week in and week out, in NAAFA. It does not include publicity, or other items reported on elsewhere in the Newsletter.

A film company in San Francisco wrote, requesting assistance in planning a film about the lives of fat women. They were contacted by a NAAFA officer, who was receptive to receiving from them a proposal for the project and for the obtaining of a grant for the purpose of producing the film. Such a proposal is planned for sometime in the fall.

A member of NAAFA's Anthropometrics Committee established a meaningful contact in the "Ergonomics" center of a leading university, one that may lead to NAAFA's involvement in some experimental office furniture, especially seating, for fat people.

A member called asking for support in a case in which she was being evicted from her apartment, and was convinced that her weight was involved in her landlord's low opinion of her. A letter was dispatched, written on NAAFA letterhead, that stated that while NAAFA officials did not know the tenant personally, just the same, it was taking an interest in the proceedings to the extent that the member's size not be a consideration in the evaluation of her as a tenant. A conversation was held with the woman's lawyer, who stated that the eviction was based on shaky grounds, and would probably be overturned.

A non-member called, wanting to hold a discussion of the merits and dangers of weight-loss surgery. A NAAFA officer returned her call, and spoke to both her and her husband, urging them to order NAAFA's paper on the surgery, and to seek a medical opinion from another doctor before proceeding. Although the husband disagreed, and wanted his wife to proceed with the surgery the following week, she was very concerned, and did order NAAFA's paper.

The mother of a fat teenager called in desperation about the plight of her daughter. Her request for help was routed to an active NAAFA member who had especially vivid experiences as a fat child, and could relate to the concerns of both mother and daughter. A lengthy and positive phone conference was held, including the daughter, and some information was mailed to the family.

The City of New York sent a tax bill to NAAFA for more than \$1000, due to its office being located within city limits. However, NAAFA's office is not within the New York city limits...!

A woman (a non-member) called, stating that she was being harassed on her job. Her call was referred to a NAAFA member who has been helpful in other requests for advice in the past. ■

from the committees

PUBLICITY REPORT

An important goal in fulfilling NAAFA's goal to re-educate the public is the use of publicity in radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, etc. Since publicity was last covered in the Spring, 1984 Newsletter, NAAFA and the entire movement has received an unprecedented amount of national and local publicity throughout the country. The following are a few highlights of recent coverage.

The F.A. experience was the subject of an article carried by the Los Angeles Times last fall. The article mentioned NAAFA, Abundantly Yours, NAAFA's F.A. SIG, and BBW magazine--and quoted and/or pictured NAAFAn Conrad Blickenstorfer (NY), Rhonda Wood, Guy Russo, Arthur McKee, Joyce Rue, Deborah Ingersoll, and Susan Dubin (all CA). The article led to at least 30 radio shows and other newspaper articles around the country, and gave a boost to Los Angeles chapter membership.

In November, the nationally syndicated TV talk show Sally Jessy Raphael did a show featuring NAAFAn Linda Martin (MO & NY), Becky Haas (IL), Bill McCauley (IL) and Nancy Summer (NY). An assortment of topics including health, and parents' treatment of fat children were discussed.

In January, Chairman Bill Fabrey, and Nancy Summer (both NY) appeared with several dieters on the Phil Donahue TV talk show. Also on the show was Dr. Richard B. Stuart of the University of Utah, the author of the survey on sexuality that appeared in Weight Watchers magazine. Dr. Stuart appeared to be supportive of the views expressed by Fabrey and Summer, although some in the audience were far from receptive. The topic of discussion was limited to the effects of weight on sexual relationships.

Also in January, a TV show, AM-Chicago, brought about a record-breaking viewer response in the form of more than 500 phone inquiries to the Chicago chapter. Appearing on that show were Linda Solarczyk (IL) and Chairman Fabrey. Dating and sex, F.A.'s, fashions, and self-esteem were the focus of discussion, and both audience and phone-in guests were very supportive.

In March, the Cable News Network carried a segment on fitness featuring NAAFA Vice-President Elisabeth Williams and member Eli Langner (both NY). It illustrated that exercise and health can be part of the daily lives of fat people, without the emphasis on weight loss. Also in March, Bill Fabrey was interviewed on the Mutual Radio Network (up to 800 stations) on the subject of seat belts and fat acceptance.

March was a busy month--NAAFAn Susan Mason (NJ) and Lynn McAfee (PA) were among the guests on a Philadelphia TV show called People Are Talking on the subject of fat discrimination. A call-in survey was held during the broadcast in which the viewers were asked to call in their vote as to whether they think that fat people are discriminated against. An overwhelming 78% voted yes, they felt that fat people experience discrimination...

Fabrey, and member Neil Dachis (MD) were also guests on the same Philadelphia show a few weeks later, airing their views about being F.A.s. Also on that show was the pioneering Ford model Ann Harper, who was perhaps the first significant fashion model of larger proportions to be used by the fashion industry. On the same show, some in the studio audience complained that the size 16 and 18 models used in an on-the-air fashion show were too small to do justice to the large size fashions!

NAAFAn Robert Bain, Nancy Summer, and Bill Fabrey appeared on The Morning Show with Regis Philbin and Ann Abernathy. Although Abernathy appeared dumbfounded by what the three NAAFA members had to say about discrimination, health, and attractiveness, Philbin offered unexpected support throughout the discussion, and held up a copy of the Newsletter for viewers to see, praising it highly. Editorial staff, take note!

A cover story in Ms. magazine (May, 1985) was called "We'll Always be Fat but Fat Can Be Fit!". The piece, by Carol Sternhell, has received praise from feminists and others in NAAFA. NAAFA members were interviewed for the article, and NAAFA was mentioned in the resource list at

the end.

The newspaper USA TODAY mentioned NAAFA in a front-page story about organizations that help people adjust to unusual problems. The Associated Press did a story about the problems that fat people encounter with seat belts, and quoted Bill Fabrey and New Jersey seat belt activist Beth Marinelli.

Association Trends, the outstanding publication with a readership of 30,000 association executives, has reprinted some "Fatlets" from page 7 of the last Newsletter (Vol.X, #5). Under the headline of "NAAFA Definitions", they reproduced our comments about Thigh Strain, Dietribe, Elegaut, and Faminine.

Some short interviews with NAAFAn and others were shown on local (NY) WCBS-TV and WPIX-TV shows about fat discrimination and other topics. Those taping interviews included NAAFA Secretary Eileen Lefebure; author and NAAFAn Erica Manfred; and Bill Fabrey. It's Me editor Marilyn Thelen was also interviewed.

A flood of radio and press interviews followed the McDermott vs. Xerox decision. Bill Fabrey did an interview on the National Public Radio network, among others. Also, radio news wire service took an interest in Judy Freespirit's (CA) letter to the producer of the TV series, Hill Street Blues (protesting their inclusion of very negative material reinforcing fat stereotypes), a copy of which was included in the last Newsletter. Calls from a number of radio stations resulted in interviews with Judy, and others. The national TV show Entertainment Tonight mentioned Judy's complaints with some sarcastic jibes at NAAFA...

Interest in the criticism of Hill Street Blues, seat belt legislation, the Xerox case, and weight-loss surgery produced an all-time peak in media interest in NAAFA around the end of April. At that time, up to seven interviews a day were being given by various NAAFA officers and members on a variety of topics.

Upcoming publicity known about at presstime of this Newsletter include an article in an upcoming issue of Redbook magazine by Carol Sternhell about couples (some are NAAFAn) in which one or both of the partners are fat, without a negative effect on their relationships; and one or more stories by the physical fitness editor of Washington Living magazine based on NAAFA, and the concept that a fat person's health can be optimized without weight loss. Also forthcoming is an article in American Health magazine by Dr. Paul Ernsberger on the subject of obesity and job discrimination, with the emphasis on the role of company doctors. ■

"MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL BEHAVIOR" ESTABLISHED; COMMITTEE REVIEWING COMPLAINTS

NAAFA members received with their last Newsletter, a letter from the newly-formed "Minimum Standards Committee", with a list of 16 kinds of behavior that are now "officially" recognized as offensive at NAAFA events and activities. According to the four co-chairpersons of the committee, some praise for the new code has been received and no criticism has been received from anyone feeling that the code is too lenient or too strict.

On the immediate agenda of the committee is the completion of procedures for administering the code in a fair and even-handed manner; and the creation of a compact brochure explaining the code to new members and also non-members attending chapter meetings, dances, and national functions for the first time.

The committee also reports that a number of complaints have already been received and been marked for investigation. Apparently, prior to the code, some NAAFAn did not know that certain behavior was anti-social, or that they had the right to complain when they felt victimized...

Typical cases: Non-members who attend events and "collect" phone numbers or addresses, later making offensive and/or obscene contacts; people making harrasing calls because they perceive that they are in social competition with other NAAFAn; a rejected suitor

subjecting someone to a barrage of obscene or hang-up phone calls at all hours of the day or night, etc.

Variations, it seems, include many other things prohibited by the new code--such as uninvited calls to NAAFA's at their workplace, visits to their residence, anonymous mail--ultimately causing some of the victims to regret the day they ever attended a NAAFA function.

The committee suggests that NAAFA's who have had experiences with recent violations of the code should write a letter, describing what occurred that they feel constitutes a violation. In particular, the most serious violations, according to the committee, are those that occur several times, revealing a pattern of objectionable behavior--or those that present an immediate threat to one's health or livelihood, or to the goals of NAAFA.

The Minimum Standards committee has pointed out that there is a world of difference between the usual competitive world of "singles"--and the extreme anti-social behavior of the type that led to the need for the new code. It has also said that it will not get involved in "lover's quarrels", nor is the code to compete with the Ten Commandments, or with traditional law enforcement!

In establishing the code, the Board of Directors took the position that its primary purpose is to further the goals of NAAFA, and to screen out individuals whose behavior is harmful to those goals--not to tell people how to run their personal lives. This still permits a wide variation in standards of behavior and morality. NAAFA is a human rights organization and must allow for many different kinds of people, as long as they support the organization's goals, and their behavior is not destructive to those goals. ■

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

A member asked us: "Why do I have to send a certified check or money order to pay for my convention registration. It's so inconvenient!"

The "certified" rule was created to avoid the embarrassment and problems caused by collecting convention fees from members whose checks have "bounced".

We have had problems of this nature in the past. For example: **Dave King** (CA) mailed a check for his 1984 convention fees before the certification deadline, but the check (\$220) was returned unpaid by the bank weeks later after the convention, due to "insufficient funds". When King was contacted by NAAFA's Treasurer to cover the check, he agreed to do so, but no payment was received as of the June 22, 1985 Board of Directors meeting.

Because of the above, King, a familiar face at past conventions, has been barred from all future events and programs, including the 1985 convention. The Board took the position that King's debt--a loss that can only be offset by fundraising and the generosity of other NAAFA's--was made worse by his apparent lack of good faith.

Recently, (11 months after the convention) Mr. King assured the Treasurer that his payment (including interest) would be forthcoming as he wants to attend the 1985 Convention. Should such payment be received, the Board may review its decision about King's attendance.

There are many challenging projects facing members of the fat acceptance movement--collection calls to Dave King or any other member should not be one of them.

--The Treasurer ■

TEENAGE COMMITTEE REACTIVATED

Nellie Hensley of Maryland has agreed to chair the Teenage Committee which was originally formed to help fat teens who contact NAAFA.

Fat teens have some special problems, usually relating to family and peer pressure, limited ability to attend NAAFA events (where most if not all attendees are adults), limited finances, and lack of parental permission to join a self-acceptance group such as NAAFA.

Two brochures are currently available, both of them very limited in scope. The committee's goals are to increase the materials available for teens and their parents, and to perhaps start a Youth or Teenage special interest group where teens do not have to be full members of NAAFA to participate or receive a publication.

Once again, anyone who has a specific interest, educational background or professional expertise in this area is asked to contact the committee. ■

GROUP TRAVEL COMMITTEE REACTIVATED

Eileen Lefebure, a NAAFA co-founder and current Board member has been appointed to chair NAAFA's dormant Group Travel Committee. A veteran of many cruises, Lefebure has chosen to make NAAFA's first group project a cruise. The ship selected sails from New York into the sunny Caribbean and is the most amply designed cruise ship available. Armless chairs will be made available to NAAFA's. The tentative plans are for an early spring sailing.

If you are a cruise buff, someone who has always wanted to go on a cruise but was afraid to go, or someone who just gets real tired of winter and wants balmy tropical breezes in March/April, please write the committee in care of the NAAFA office. The committee would like an estimate of the number of people interested in such a project.

Other suggestions for travel projects are welcomed as well. ■

GRANT COMMITTEE FORMED

A special committee to research grants has been formed, chaired by William Fabrey. Conrad Blickenstorfer was immediately appointed to the committee as he has been quite active in researching possible grants and writing for information and application forms from many granting agencies.

It is felt by many in NAAFA's leadership that, despite the fact that NAAFA has survived for over 16 years on the dues and donations of its members, one or more grants would greatly enhance NAAFA's ability to serve the fat community through education, activism and support.

Anyone who has information about specific grants, or experience in grant writing is encouraged to contact the committee. ■

ELECTION COMMITTEE REPORT

Several changes were made to the national election procedure this year. Most of the changes were concerned with a rules change to allow for a bulk mailing of the election materials. This will save NAAFA approximately \$300-400 on the election annually, but also forced a change in the basic timing of the election to account for the additional mailing time. Votes will be counted in the fall rather than in June as before, and the winners will be sworn in this year at the October Board meeting.

Election materials will be mailed to all current NAAFA members in July or early August.

[Don't forget to vote. Your opinion counts. --Ed.] ■

OTHER APPOINTMENTS AND ELECTIONS

Eileen M. Lefebure has been elected to the position of NAAFA Secretary. She replaces Angela Cappiello, who resigned from the position last year. Eileen is listed as a Co-Founder of NAAFA, having been present at the very first meeting in June, 1969, along with seven other people. She is no stranger to her new position, having served as Secretary for several years after the founding.

William Fabrey, Paula Dachis, Elisabeth Williams, and Nancy Summer were elected to a one-year term as Chairman of the Board, President, Vice-President, and Treasurer, respectively. (Annual NAAFA elections, in which all NAAFA members can vote, determine who serves on the Board of Directors. Board members, in turn, elect their officers.)

Nellie Hensley has been appointed to chair the Committee on Committees; as "Committees Coordinator", it is her job to keep track of which national committees are productive, and which are not; and to keep the list of committees up to date, occasionally submitting it for publication, so that all NAAFA's can see what volunteer positions are vacant. ■

letters

LETTERS TO NAAFA

ADOPTION AGENCY HAS "WEIGHT PROBLEM"

Dear NAAFA,

Enclosed is my membership application and fee.

We are in the process of adopting a child through an agency that deals in Korean adoptions. One of the workers has told us that the State of Alabama is very hesitant about approving adoptions when the adoptive parents have a weight problem. We have to supply extra documentation from our doctors...to the state.

In my discussion with [the agency], I said that I understood their concern about the health of adoptive parents and guessed that the State would probably question other potentially damaging habits, like smoking cigarettes. The worker said the State of Alabama never questioned smoking, in spite of all the documentation showing smoking to be hazardous to smokers and those around them. I am quite concerned that those of us with weight problems (which may or may not affect health) are being studied so closely while others with proven health-damaging habits are not even being questioned about how their habit has affected their lifestyle and health.

I am enclosing a copy of the adoption agency's letter in which the extra medical information was requested... Both of our doctors thought it a bit strange that they were requested to guess how long we would live since that is something no one will ever know, weight problems or not.

L.B.
Alabama

[The following are excerpts from the agency's letter...]

Dear Mr. and Mrs. B:

We have recently received your medicals, as requested, and your physician notes that he prescribed a weight reduction program for you both due to excess weight. We will need an additional statement from your physician indicating how your health is affected by this weight (i.e. blood pressure, lifestyle activities, heart problems, etc.) We will also need for the physician to indicate that the excess weight, in his opinion, does not create a life threatening situation, alter life expectancy or in any way affect your ability to parent.

Our study of your health for the evaluation of your home must include the above. In addition, your file must be submitted to the Department of Pensions and Security for them to concur with our approval and they will, in all likelihood, question your excess weight.

We look forward to working with you and will hope you can supply this additional information in the near future.

Sincerely,
---- ADOPTION AGENCY
Executive Director

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Over the years NAAFA has received a number of complaints like the one posed by Mrs. B. Apparently, many adoption agencies consider an "overweight" parent to be a possible detriment to the adopted child. The reasons most often given are two: Concern for what they perceive to be an increased health risk, with a possible early death or disability of a parent; and concern that the applicant's obesity is indicative of some other disorder, either emotional or simply a lack of discipline. A few agencies have also commented that the child's upbringing may be hurt by having a parent who is appreciably "different" than other parents.

However, adoption agencies are treading on shaky ground in adhering to anti-fat standards like the above. In the late 1970's there was a celebrated case in Wisconsin, in which an "overweight" couple were denied an

adoption on the grounds of their weight. They received a child after national publicity caused Wisconsin legislators to consider the case; some public figures even stood up and announced that "their mothers were fat and were good mothers anyway!" The agency had to come up with some hasty denials of anti-fat policies, and placed a child with the couple soon thereafter.

There may be a difference between private and public adoption agencies in how they handle the weight issue. Public agencies, receiving public funds and/or enjoying tax-exempt status, can probably be scrutinized more closely. In the case of Mrs. B., the adoption agency claims that the state agency (Department of Pensions and Security) has final say. We would say that if the adoption is blocked by either the adoption agency or the state agency, there is probably an appeals process available.

We are not suggesting that Mr and Mrs B. take the case to the media except as a last resort. We are suggesting that there is a good chance that if they are turned down, that they should go through channels (including, if necessary, the governor of the State of Alabama) or to another agency until they are successful.

Those NAAFA members who have been involved in similar problems might write to Mr and Mrs B. with suggestions. Letters received on this subject will be forwarded to the B.'s, and considered for possible publication in this Newsletter, if permission is given.] ■

SOMETIMES WE GET THE STRANGEST MAIL...

[This letter was addressed to all us NAAFA's and we thought that perhaps we might share this letter with everyone. It's typical of the bizarre letters received by the office from time to time...By the way, if you decided to respond to the writer, DON'T send him/her your return address. S/he may not be someone that anyone should get to know.]

National Association to Aid Fat Americans
Box 43, Bellerose, NY 11426

Dear Chubby-wubbies,

Hey, just joking. Don't be so damn sensitive.

I want your group's heavy endorsement of my new Lemming diet. It's been approved by several of my pets, and the main thrust is that the person can eat everything and anything they want! But it must be absorbed through the armpits!

I give a 500% money-back return to anyone who strictly follows this diet and doesn't lose at least 5 pounds per week. I also sold my stock in a big deodorant company.

I'm also starting a new dance craze that goes with the monster hit single "Figgy-Fat Farmer's Flatulent Foo-Foo" (the flipside of "Porky Peggy's Perky Pogo").

We're talking megabucks here,
T.R. Lemming (Dr.)
Box 55068
Madison, Wisc. 53705

PS: Wouldn't a big dish of ice cream really hit the spot about now?

[EDITOR'S NOTE: I don't think I'll bother to personally respond to Dr. Lemming. However, if I did, I'd probably say:

Dear Dr. Lemming,

A big dish of ice cream would really hit the spot right now...if I could aim it at your face. Your sense of humor really leaves much to be desired.

I have a wonderful suggestion for you and your Lemming diet. Why don't you follow the rest of the lemmings and jump off a cliff and drown.

Hey, just joking. Don't be so damn sensitive!

Sincerely,
Not very amused at all ■

LETTERS TO THE NEWSLETTER

Dear Editor,

Each time I receive the Newsletter, I intend to sit down and write you. Finally I am doing so.

I received the Newsletter a few days ago and felt it was one of the best ever... As one of NAAFA's charter members, I've seen them all... The articles are interesting and I believe that those members who never get to a convention nor to chapter functions now really know what's happening.

I applaud your efforts and hope that you will continue...

Eileen M. Lefebure
New York ■

GREETINGS FROM OVERSEAS

Dear NAAFA,

You might be curious why a Norwegian living thousands of miles from your country would join your organization. The explanation is quite simple: Being an F.A., living in a nation of joggers and bodybuilders, isn't any fun at all. There is a social pressure to be slim and to have a healthy body. Although not everyone has reached this point, all of them want to [act like] they have.

Fat people, [above] all others, get mobbed for looking and being different shaped than those who are "normal". And those who are F.A.'s in Norway--of course they exist--get hang ups about going out with their dates...

Women are always talking about weight loss and slimming down, although it might be just a couple of pounds, so you can imagine then, preferring very large ladies, how I feel.

It was just by coincidence that I got to know about NAAFA. There was [an article] in a Norwegian magazine about the 1983 Convention, run mostly as a curiosity. I got interested, wrote for information, [joined], but as I didn't know much about you, I stayed cool. But after receiving the Newsletter with photos from the 1983 Convention, it seems that it would have been like paradise to me. Lots of nice people, acting [like average size people], being themselves.

I am not fat myself but I like fat women. I don't know why, I can't help it and I won't change it - so I have joined you hoping for a better future...

...I can't imagine starting an organization like yours in Norway. I believe that it would be a mess. We are, in spite of our good beliefs about ourselves, quite intolerant, though it is better now than it was some years ago. We don't want to have another hairstyle than others. We don't want to have another skin color than others. We don't want to wear different clothes than others. And I could go on... And who are these others? It's almost none of us. Just a few made up persons taken from TV, PR campaigns, advertising, magazines and movies. Happy life!

I feel happy as I am and I want everybody else to feel happy as they are.

Greetings from overseas,
Gunnar M. Fjellhammer ■

FAT PORNOGRAPHY: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ABUSE

[Editor's note: In a previous Newsletter, Chairman Fabrey's "COB's Corner" column included a mention of the increase in fat pornography. While stating that he had "ambivalent feelings about pornography", he commented on the recent trend towards more fat-oriented porn being available on the newsstands. This could be construed as a sign that more F.A.'s are coming out of the closet and want the same sort of materials that have been available to thin admirers for decades. We received several letters in response to this issue, one of which follows:]

Dear Mr. Fabrey,

I write in response to your article "Fat Pornography"... I appreciate the discretion with which you have addressed the subject, but would like to add a few points...

To paraphrase author Laura Lederer, there are more than two ways to think about pornography. Usually arguments...are waged between conservative men calling for greater modesty and liberal men calling for greater honesty. However, a third perspective exists: The women's perspective. Specifically, I find--as a fat woman--the creation of "fat porn" disquieting. Instead of being ignored as too ugly or presented as a freak by the publishers of these materials, am I now to be included in an already long line of assault victims, coercion victims, rape victims, and sex objects? Equal opportunity abuse is still abuse; don't do me any favors.

Still, "fat porn" may be enough of a fringe industry to escape the misogynistic trends so prevalent in the mainstream. Perhaps large women engage in this industry voluntarily and are presented as valuable, adult, autonomous human beings. Perhaps, but I doubt it. May I suggest that the men of NAAFA engage in close introspection and examination of these "recreational" materials before availing themselves of them. Is violence of any kind presented? Are the women presented as supplicating, young, foolish, or powerless? Are their comfort and sexuality consistently overlooked? Are they presented as having no other function in life than the service of men?

The men of NAAFA are famous for the support and affection they offer to large women. Let's work together to keep these relationships as kind, fun, and sane as they have always been.

Kelly Fennessy
California

P.S. Recommended reading concerning large women, pornography, and violence against women:

Against Our Will: Men, Women & Rape

by Susan Brownmiller
Simon & Schuster, 1977

The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness

by Kim Chernin
Harper & Row, 1979

Men on Rape

by Timothy Beneke
St. Martin's Press, 1982

Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography

by Laura L. Lederer
Bantam Books, 1980 ■

REACTIONS TO PAPER ON WEIGHT-LOSS SURGERY

Dr. Paul Ernsberger's Report on Weight Loss Surgery has received a number of responses, mostly favorable, from NAAFA members. One of the best reactions so far was a telephone message from a NAAFAn who said that the report arrived just a few days before she was scheduled for the surgery. She read the report, called her doctor and cancelled her plans.

Dr. Richard Stuart, (who appeared on the Phil Donahue show in January with Chairman Fabrey and your Editor), commented to Fabrey that he had read Dr. Ernsberger's report, found it very interesting, and that he was currently working on his own article that came to an even stronger conclusion against the surgery.

Several letters were received, as follows:

WANTS SLAUGHTER TO STOP

...I am so overwhelmed...I am grateful to Dr. Ernsberger that he accomplished the work. On behalf of all fat people everywhere, I offer my gratitude. In my personal opinion, it should stand next to every diet book on every bookshelf in the world. We must now use the report as a tool until the slaughter stops!

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June Bailey
Ohio ■

REPORT MAKES MEMBERSHIP WORTHWHILE

I started not to renew...I didn't think I was receiving anything for my \$25 a year. Then, yesterday I received a copy of the report. That report alone made my membership worthwhile. Thank you so much for sending it, as I was thinking about this surgery. But under no conditions would I ever have it now!

Darlene Hazelwood
Texas ■

DISLIKES REPORT

I am renewing my membership but I don't do it with certainty. I've been a member since 1971, and I'm deeply disappointed on your stand on dieting. It's a moot point, an individual decision, and a ridiculous debate. [We thought that was our position on dieting. NAAFA's "stand" on dieting is and always has been that it is a personal choice.--Ed.]

Secondly, your position on stomach surgery was one-sided. My surgery has saved my life, given me not a moment of trouble, just the best thing I ever did for myself. My husband and I sent your report to my surgeon, and he explained the frequently faulty conclusions of the research. (He also said that some statements were correct.) For those who suffer from "morbid" obesity, you are turning some away from what could be a lifesaver. I wish you'd reconsider your position. I hope someone bothers to read these comments.

Carol Metz
Virginia

[Ms. Metz didn't say how long ago she had the surgery, nor which type she had. It's worth repeating that the Board allowed for possible "success" stories in the position it took. NAAFA's official position, which was covered in a front-page story in the last Newsletter, is that the risks of weight-loss surgery surpass any possible benefits--but it also affirmed the right of the individual to make his or her own informed decisions. Dr. Ernsberger has replied to Carol Metz's letter as follows:

"I am troubled by your letter on NAAFA's position on weight-loss surgery, as yours is only the second negative commentary we have received. I wholeheartedly agree that this is an individual decision. I already know of at least one person who had the surgery after reading the report--they felt the risks were worth it. In any event, people should know about the possible risks. NAAFA's position is a recommendation to its members--not a [total] condemnation of the surgery, those who've had it, or those who perform it. I feel, and the NAAFA Board of Directors agreed--that for most people the risks exceed the benefits. The final decision, of course, rests with the individual.

I am most concerned that your surgeon 'explained the frequently faulty conclusions of the research' contained in my report. (Although he did admit that 'some statements were correct.')

The report is being given as a reference by the National Clearinghouse for Health Information, a government agency. A number of people who have had surgery have given my report to their gastroenterologists (GI specialists), who in turn have found it useful in looking for and treating complications. It would be a serious matter indeed if any of the research were faulty. Please ask your surgeon to contact me and explain what is faulty in the report. Oddly enough, I have not received a single letter from a weight-loss surgeon so far..."

It is important to remember that Dr. Ernsberger did not draw any radical conclusions in his report that were not reinforced by the findings of most of the research papers he studied, some written by surgeons themselves. Ernsberger examined more than 100 such papers. If Metz's surgeon finds fault with some specific items in Ernsberger's report, that is to be expected--the subject is a

very controversial one. After all, Dr. Richard Stuart felt that the report was not hard enough on weight-loss surgery! And, many clinics and hospitals now refuse to perform such surgery.

Those who dispute NAAFA's stand against weight-loss surgery should view NAAFA primarily as a human rights organization, and shouldn't feel it necessary that NAAFA be in 100% agreement with their views. Everyone, from the Chairman on down, has trouble agreeing with 100% of what NAAFA does. It is commendable that, despite her feelings about NAAFA's stand on surgery, Metz renewed her membership!

--Ed.] ■

FEELS THAT STATE SHOULDN'T PAY FOR SURGERY

[Excerpts from a letter written by a member of the Maryland House of Delegates, to the Medical Assistance Compliance Administration in Baltimore:]

In view of Dr. Ernsberger's research, evidence and strong conclusions on this matter, the question of whether the State, through medicaid, should continue paying for stomach stapling operations in the future needs to be raised and thoughtfully considered. I am aware that the State pays for very few of these operations and, then, only if they are pre-authorized. However, perhaps the State shouldn't be paying for any...

Donald F. Munson
Maryland ■

SHE CRIED ABOUT THOSE WHO DIED OR SUFFERED...

[Reprinted from Editor's Notebook, Singular #2, the publication of the Singles SIG, Barbara Colgin, Coordinator]

It was with a great sense of gratitude that I read Paul Ernsberger's Report on Weight-Loss Surgery.

I think back to the times in my life when I considered such surgery. I remember ever so vividly the feelings of desperation and hopelessness that led me to consider the operation--the feelings that somehow everything in my life would change for the better once I became a thin person. Everywhere I went, people kept telling me about this "miracle cure", including my doctor, my dentist, and my friends and acquaintances. Even people who hardly knew me made it their business to tell me about this operation. I thought and thought about it; yet, I could not force myself to go through with it.

I am very thankful that I did not choose the surgery. I have since learned that what the surgery ultimately promised me--happiness--is obtainable without resorting to such dangerous methods. I have learned that happiness is not just for thin people. Happiness is NOW; it's living and enjoying who you are. It's allowing yourself to be vulnerable, to take risks, and to even make mistakes. It is growing every day in self-awareness and self-understanding; it is learning a new skill; it is reaching out and helping someone; it is laughing and embracing the world.

I cried when I thought of all the people who died or suffered from the other major complications of this surgery. I know and understand the desperation that these people felt and all the glowing promises that were made.

With the Ernsberger report, we now have the much needed scientific information at our fingertips to show people that such surgery is not a guarantee of either thinness or happiness. What it is instead is a high-risk surgery of dubious value.

I think all of us within NAAFA should make a concrete effort to spread the news of this report. Send copies to your physicians and other professionals in the health care field, and to your family and friends; and let them know that this surgery is not the answer. If we save but one life, it will be worth it!

Barbara Colgin
Ohio ■

advice

by June Bailey
Support Editor

Dear NAAFAdvice,

After struggling with the decision to join NAAFA, I must say I'm somewhat disillusioned. I'm a fat man with a successful career and wonder what NAAFA has to offer me. Women are more prominent in the organization and most of the offices are held by women. I'm married and not really an F.A., so many of the SIGs are not of interest to me. I'm not interested in women's fashions or the political structure of the organization. We have no chapter here, so it looks like as if all I can do is read the Newsletter. I have an "is this all there is" feeling. How do I fit in?

Signed, Do I fit?

Dear Do I Fit,

Your letter described your successful life and shows you have a high level of awareness about fat issues. The questions you raise about fat men in NAAFA, where most of the men are thin FA's, reflect a growing need. Why hasn't this issue been addressed before? Because most of the fat men tell us that they are more confident about their size than the women are. They also don't verbalize their needs in the same way as women do, so NAAFA doesn't really know what fat men want. Perhaps the answer is for a fat man, with leadership abilities, to begin a fat man's SIG.

In the meantime, don't forget that NAAFA was founded by a man, Bill Fabrey, who remains active in all aspects of NAAFA, and three of the seven current Board members are men.

There are many important jobs which need to be done that transcend gender, such as fair seat-belt legislation that allows for differences in size, anti-discrimination legislation in states that do not have it, and many other projects. NAAFA needs more publicity, more educational materials and information to be disseminated, more health issues explored, more writers for this Newsletter, more activism accomplished. The list is endless. I know you said that you don't want to take on any more "jobs", but remember that NAAFA is a volunteer organization, completely member-supported. Hands, hearts, time, and money are needed. Are you sure that there isn't someplace in all of this for you?

I have found that the more I do for NAAFA, the more I get from my membership. NAAFA membership gives me the opportunity to be part of a growing movement towards acceptance of all people, by all people; toward a change which will better the lives of fat people, women and men. I have not put anything more into NAAFA than many others have, but what I have already received far exceeds anything I could give.

We need men like you in NAAFA who can serve as role models for other fat men who may feel isolation and despair. Tell us what you want, and we'll try to give it to you, but don't leave us. We need you.



Do you need some advice? Do you have a question about personal relationships or emotional issues? You can write to Ann or Abby, but June knows that "FAT IS WHERE IT'S AT" and will use her personal experience as a fat person to answer your questions. Mail them to NAAFAdvice, PO Box 43, Bellerose, N.Y. 11426 and send a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply from June in strict confidence. ■

All letters will be held in

sigs

A FAT MAN'S SIG IN THE OFFING? - In the past, male NAAFAns who happened to be fat have complained that there don't seem to be programs or emphasis within NAAFA oriented to their needs. Mostly, one sees fat women and men who are thin F.A.'s. All this may be about to change, however. There are special interest groups (SIGs) for a variety of people within NAAFA. Why not one for fat men? Gerry Lamb, Chairperson of the Mid-Michigan chapter, has offered to correspond with anyone interested in such a SIG being formed. Write to Gerry Lamb, PO Box 943, East Lansing, MI 48823.

REPORT ON SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)

At present, there are four SIGs in NAAFA—all of them conducted on a national scale, primarily through their own mailing lists, publications, and SIG meetings at the annual conventions. SIGs are handled somewhat like local chapters. They are semi-autonomous groups that, except for a special list of rules for SIGs, and occasional special conditions placed on them by the Board of Directors, are allowed to run themselves. Most SIGs are run by their coordinator. As long as they appear to continue to serve the interests of the special group for which they were chartered, and do not violate any of the constitutional purposes of NAAFA, their autonomy is assured.

SIGs are supposed to send reports of their activities to the Board of Directors through a Board-appointed SIG coordinator. However, the Board has yet to appoint a volunteer to act in the capacity of national SIG coordinator—probably because SIGs are too new in NAAFA to create a group of volunteers with SIG experience.

Meanwhile, SIG members or those interested in further information about specific SIGs should NOT write to the NAAFA office. All questions about specific SIGs should write to the coordinators of those SIGs. ■

the last...

Rather than end this Newsletter with a "LAST WORD", we thought we would conclude with a "LAST PHOTO"!

Enjoying the summer sun and festivities is a group of NAAFAns attending a picnic at the Cumberland Valley Chapter of NAAFA regional gathering held on Memorial Day weekend in Hagerstown, Maryland.



STANDING, TOP ROW: (left to right) Bob Hartenstine (NY), Lisbeth Fisher Burns (NY), George Mills (NY), Barbara Mills (NY), Barbara Colgin (OH), Jerry Hoxworth (OH), Barbara Herten (DC), Mark Tower (NJ), Linda Blackmon (VA), Ira Cohen (NY).
SEATED, SECOND ROW: Sherry Kessler (MI), Peggy Williams (MD), Chris Kaye (WV), Mary Jo Hoxworth (OH), Ruby Greenwald (NY), Anita Ehrlich (MD).
SEATED, FRONT ROW: Ruth Boyle (MD), Russell F. Williams (holding daughter Lori) (MD), Geri Carmichael (OH), Robbie Kassel (NY), Conrad Blickenstorfer (NY). ■