

NAAFA NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION TO AID FAT AMERICANS, INC.

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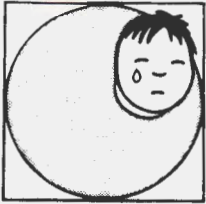
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Editor this issue: W. J. Fabrey

MONSTERS



THE TRANSFIGURATION OF BENNO BLIMPIE

'MONSTERS' REVIEWED

by Joseph W. Fisher

I am in somewhat of a quandry in recommending that any NAAFA member go and see the two plays by Albert Innaurato and William Dews, commonly titled "MONSTERS," now playing at the Astor Place Theater in Manhattan. Certainly, on the face of it, the second of the two plays, Innaurato's "THE TRANSFIGURATION OF BENNO BLIMPIE," should repel any NAAFA member, as it concerns a fat man seemingly bent on nothing more worthwhile than eating himself to death.

The reason I do recommend this play, however, is that (for the first time I can recall) some of the despair, some of the tragic utter loneliness, and, yes, some of the fear of being different just because one is fat in a land where being thin is venerated beyond the appeal of God Almighty Himself, are allowed to be freed from the stage.

"Looks are everything," emphatically states Benno, brilliantly played by James Coco, and how right he is. The identity crisis is over, if there ever was one. We are no longer concerned with who we are, or what we are, or even if we are right or wrong; uppermost always is how do we appear to others. Would that the bright ones succeeded in cloning forty million Robert Redfords and another forty million Chers; the rest of us misshapen ones could be painlessly done away with, and how beautiful life would be then, and how serene in a one-look-only dominated world.

(continued on Page 2)

CONVENTION '77

by Lisbeth Fisher

Many thanks to those of you who returned the convention questionnaire. Although practically all of you who replied wanted the more expensive, two-day weekend, not enough people responded to make it possible. However, perhaps next year...

We have been very fortunate in persuading Sheila Goodman, our vice president, to chair the convention again this year. She has been able to put together at very short notice a super convention that will attempt to please all facets of our NAAFA membership. Many of you who replied to the questionnaire had some very specific comments, and we are trying to make this convention a combined formal/informal affair, and as inexpensive as possible.

The convention will be held in midtown Manhattan on May 28 and 29. We hope to offer theatre tickets for Saturday afternoon, although that is still very tentative. Saturday night we will hold a dance at which wine and cheese will be served, a talent show, and a midnight 50/50 raffle. On Sunday morning, rap sessions are planned. Sunday afternoon there will be an informal buffet luncheon, at which we expect to have one or two speakers. There will be a Distinguished Achievement Award presentation, and then the ever-popular fashion show, with outfits modelled by our own members. We expect that, as in previous years, there will be some television and/or other media coverage of this event.

You will soon be receiving final information and reservation forms for the convention. In the meantime, if you would like to be in the talent show, be a model, open your home to an out-of-town member, or help out at the convention, please contact Sheila at 57 West 84th St., New York, N.Y. 10024, or 212 580-7597. We hope to see you there.

'MONSTERS' REVIEWED (continued)

Not so much that Benno is a monster, as that he is a man who has monstrous acts committed against him. There is his warm, lecherous grandfather, who introduces him to the facts of life when he is a child by attempting to rape a 13-year-old girl in front of Benno's still-innocent eyes. There is his lout of a father, who regularly makes a habit of assaulting his mother while Benno fearfully watches. Finally, there is his acid-voiced mother, who verbally cannibalizes him, until inevitably, inexorably, Benno does become a monster, both to those around him and to himself.

The last five minutes of this one-hour play are totally frightening, yet utterly compelling. As voices out of the darkness shout out items of food, Benno maniacally relives an unspeakably loathsome act committed against him when he was 14 years of age. He then, for the only time in the play, stands up--and commits a last abominable, monstrous act against himself.

There is pain in this play, and especially for NAAFA members, the pain could become intolerable; but there is truth in it as well. Above all, there is a real fat man on the stage--not the arch posturings of a Lynn Redgrave pretending to be fat as she did in MY FAT FRIEND seen on Broadway a couple of years ago; not the apologetic, bumptious Jackie Gleason, sniggering at himself nightly on the tv screen--no, a real, terrified and terrifying, imprisoned-in-an-oven fat man, educating us all.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Bill Fabrey

ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER CONVENTION

This year marks the second convention to be held in the Spring instead of the Fall. It will also be the second relatively informal convention to be held in recent years; last year's meeting was held along relatively unstructured lines, with no formal speaker, but with a very enjoyable musical show. Some may feel that a formal, full-scale convention, rather than



a luncheon-meeting format, would be desirable, but those who feel that way rarely step forward to volunteer their time and energy; nor is it obvious that most members want an expensive type of convention on a grand scale. Most of us don't have that kind of money these days.

Anyway, this year there will be one or two speakers, as well as the talent show that we always threaten to have but never actually get around to. I impulsively volunteered to be in the talent show, but please don't let that stop you from coming!

FAT REVIEW SCORES AGAIN

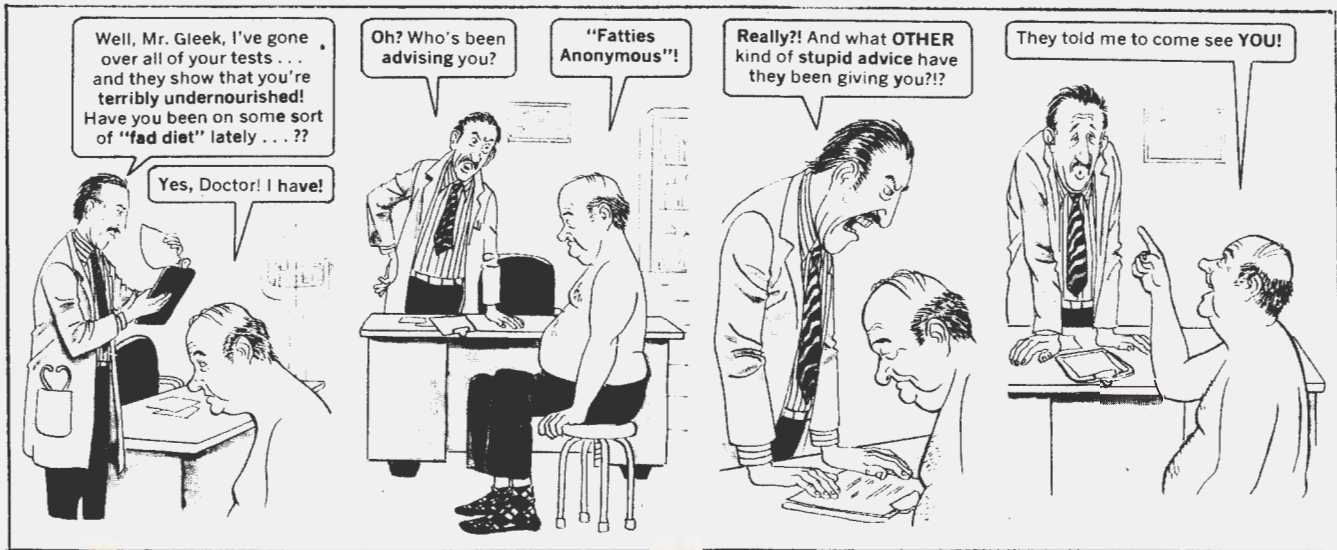
The Jan.-Feb. 1977 issue of THE FAT REVIEW, the publication of the Connecticut Chapter of NAAFA, is playing to mixed reviews. It is both fantastic and outrageous, and is must reading for anyone seriously interested in fat liberation and/or the F.A. (Fat Admirer) sub-culture in our midst! Being an F.A. myself, I enjoy their publication.

However, I have received several oral complaints from individuals who are genuinely offended by various items in the REVIEW, and there are several places that I feel may exceed the limits of good taste for the sake of either entertainment or shock value. On the other hand, it may be good to have a newspaper, underground or otherwise, that can print with impunity things that are too radical, too sexy, or too outrageous for our staid Newsletter to cover. I am not saying that I personally condone everything they print. But I am glad they exist, and wish them good luck with their future issues!

A subscription is available from Scott-Jones, 14 Jean St., Hamden, Ct. 06517. It costs \$6 for six issues per year.

OPEN BOARD MEETING DATES

The next two Board of Directors meetings will be held on April 15 and May 1. The April 15 meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. at the YMCA, Room D (downstairs), 5 West 63rd St., New York City. Members who are interested in attending should call 212 877-4441 or 914 941-8808 to confirm dates, times and meeting locations. Attendance is limited to current members of NAAFA.



MAD Magazine has a satirical approach to the current American scene. Every now and then, we like to reproduce something from MAD, especially the work of the cartoonist, Dave Berg. In 1974 we reprinted Mr. Berg's "Lighter Side of Dieting" (Volume IV, Issue No. 1). His latest comment on the subject of dieting needs no additional explanation!

THE LAST CHANCE DIET

In January, our executive secretary, Lisbeth Fisher, appeared on the Joel A. Spivak Television Show in Philadelphia. Since she was appearing with Dr. Robert Linn, author of *THE LAST CHANCE DIET*, Liz armed herself with an article from the *NEW YORK DAILY NEWS*, dated December 15, 1976.

The article detailed charges made by New York State Attorney General Lefkowitz against Walden Books Co., which operates 417 stores nationally, for misleading advertising. The hardcover book, which sells for \$10, discloses that an indispensable part of the suggested regimen was a liquid protein called "Pro-linn," available only from Dr. Linn. The head of the Bureau of Consumer Frauds and Protection said that Walden's advertisements were misleading because they failed to disclose that the diet could be followed without using Prolinn.

Dr. Linn, an osteopathic physician, who used to be very heavy himself and who followed his own diet to lose weight, protested on the Spivak show that the liquid protein is easily obtainable at a drug store or through your own physician. However, a random check of drug

stores and physicians revealed that it is not, if at all, easily obtainable.

In February, Liz and NAAFA member, Ari Roussimoff, appeared on the A. M. New York Show with Stanley Siegel. It was to be a week of shows about dieting, and they appeared with Dr. H. L. Newbold, whose book entitled, "DR. NEWBOLD'S REVOLUTIONARY NEW DISCOVERIES ABOUT WEIGHT LOSS," will be published soon. His theory is that overweight is caused by allergies.

The very next day, Dr. Linn appeared on the Siegel show, and Siegel really put him through the wringer. He, too, had tried to obtain Dr. Linn's "magic potion" and had been unsuccessful. It came out in the interview that Dr. Linn has grown from running a small office in Pennsylvania to opening up a branch office in Manhattan, which is run by a very large staff. A phone call to his office recently disclosed that Dr. Linn is in the New York office only on Wednesdays. The initial fee is \$110 for a physical examination, EKG, urine test (lab fee not included) and a chest x-ray, which has to be obtained and paid for elsewhere. The weekly fee thereafter is \$60, which includes the patient's supply of Prolinn for the week. Prolinn, by the way, is all the patient ingests during the weight loss period.

LETTERS

[Editorial Note: In the last Newsletter we printed several letters; one was a very critical one, titled "Dislikes Recent Newsletters and Other Things." The author's name was withheld by request.

We defend our right to publish such letters, and the right of members to write them. It sometimes occurs (as in this case) that an individual does not want to have his or her name printed because of a desire to escape social or organizational pressure as a result of an unpopular viewpoint.

The letters printed below have been reproduced intact. It is our intention to print a letter of rebuttal if we receive one.]

MEMBERS RESPOND

Dear Interested and Loyal NAAFA Member:

After reading your letter in the January-February Newsletter, I felt compelled to respond, point by point:

I, too, have been a member of NAAFA for a number of years, and this is my first letter to the Newsletter. As for the three Newsletters which the committee, comprised of five members of the New York Chapter, put out, we volunteered to edit those editions because no one else was either available or wanted the job. We wrote the articles and published material given to us by the NAAFA office. We were not made aware of activities of other chapters, and, therefore, could not publish any information about those chapters. Before the Newsletter was published, it was approved by the Publications Committee (a committee, by the way, of long standing), none of whose members belong to the New York Chapter.

Why must each convention be a carbon copy of the one past? Last year our convention was different, I agree, but different does not mean "bad." As chairperson of that convention, I received only compliments. People said they enjoyed themselves more last year than at any other convention. A play written by NAAFans, performed by NAAFans and for NAAFans in my opinion can never be out of place at a NAAFA function. The idea of fat people enjoying themselves is certainly one of the goals of NAAFA.

NAAFA National had no plans of holding a 1975 convention, much to the disappointment of all of us. Out of desperation and in the short space of about three weeks, members of the New York Chapter planned, implemented and finalized the preparations for "BEST OF NEW YORK." We did it for the membership, not, as you implied, to glorify the New York Chapter.

We must all admit that NAAFA is not perfect, and to pretend that it is insulting to the intelligence of our membership. However negative you might have felt the interview with the Stewarts was, one thing was very clear--THEY MET AND MARRIED THROUGH NAAFA-DATE. Therefore, how unsuccessful is the program? All points of view must be aired. Not to do so would reek of censorship, something we cannot allow at any cost.

If you are, in fact, interested in the future of NAAFA, why don't you come to chapter meetings; why don't you come to Board meetings, to which all NAAFA members are invited; why don't you participate in the running of NAAFA? We want your ideas. Isn't it better to have a voice in what's happening in NAAFA before the fact than be unhappy about it afterwards? You can "change" NAAFA, but you must be heard, and the only way to be heard is to participate actively.

I hope this reply helps you to better understand the problems of NAAFA and makes you want to become more active.

--Sheila Goodman
Vice President, NAAFA
Chairperson, New York
Chapter
Member, Board of Directors

Dear "An Interested and Loyal NAAFA Member":

As per your letter printed in the January-February 1977 Newsletter, I would like to make the following comments.

1. No one else volunteered to help get out the newsletters in question except for a committee of 5 New York Chapter members. We asked for and received help from 2 Board members (one the chairperson of the National Fund Raising Committee, and the other our present Vice President of the NAAFA Board). In the first Newsletter, we requested but did not receive any article or information that other members or Chapters wanted included. We did the best we could with what we had.

2. We cannot take credit for the September-November 1976 Newsletter, as our editorship had ceased with the May-June 1976 issue.

3. THE BEST OF NEW YORK weekend was conceived by the New York Chapter only after the NAAFA Board of Directors had cancelled the convention for that year, and we felt that out-of-town members of NAAFA deserved something. The only thing that the New York Chapter could have stolen was the luncheon and fashion show. The bus tour of New York and the Champagne Dance were strictly ideas of the New York Chapter.

4. The Board of Directors set the date in May '76, named a committee of 5 to come up with an idea for the convention. Two proposals were presented to the Board, along with the format and entertainment. What you saw was what the Board voted for. We have received many compliments on both the convention and the way it was handled.

5. I am sorry that you feel that the New York Chapter is out for itself and to Hell with NAAFA National. If it had not been for our interest in NAAFA, we would not have held a benefit Valentine Dance, with the proceeds going to NAAFA National. This money helped establish a New York telephone in New York City. We have given loans to the Baltimore Chapter to help it through rough times, and gave a grant to the New Jersey Chapter. At no time did we ask for an accounting of how the chapters spent the funds.

6. If you would like to listen to the tapes of the NAAFA-DATE interview, you are free to do so.

7. As an interested and loyal NAAFA member, why not attend Chapter and/or Board of Directors meetings? All Board meetings are open to those who wish to attend.

8. As for other members who are helping NAAFA, they are not just New York members, but members from Connecticut, Maryland and California. We also have members in Kansas who contribute to NAAFA.

9. Since you are a NEW YORKER, you should come out of your shell and contribute to NAAFA as a whole, not just through letter writing (and then not signing it), but through participating at Board meetings and attending Chapter meetings. The New York Chapter is not the only chapter in the area. It is people like you that make me want to quit NAAFA. Why should I take time out of my leisure time to help NAAFA when people like you can only write complaints and not do your share to help make NAAFA better? We can use all the help we can get.

It is my belief that letters of criticism are just as helpful as ones of acclaim. But that criticism must be constructive and not attack and turn one member against another. We joined NAAFA for help, and now, more than ever, NAAFA needs our help in many ways--volunteers, Newsletter editors, file clerks, typists, and donations, no matter how small. Only active members can build a great organization. A few cannot always carry the majority who do nothing.

--Michael Simpson
Mt. Vernon, N.Y.

NEW CATEGORIES ADDED

TO MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

For some time now, our Board of Directors has wanted to broaden NAAFA's membership base, so that more people could take advantage of our unique organization. A committee was formed for this purpose, and Naomi Shadowitz was appointed chairperson. After many meetings with her committee and discussion with the Board, a new application has been produced, and it is being sent to everyone requesting NAAFA literature. The new categories are as follows:

STUDENT--\$5 per year. Applicant must furnish proof of student status.

SENIOR--\$5 per year. Applicant must be 62 or over and submit proof of age.

UNEMPLOYED--Applicant must be unemployed and unable to pay at this time. Applicant must also submit a letter explaining his or her circumstances, such letter to be seen only by members of the Committee on the Unemployed.

Regular memberships have remained at \$10 per year. However, in order to help keep the dues at this low rate, we have obtained our non-profit postal permit for mailing the Newsletter. As reported in the last Newsletter, this will allow us to retain the \$10 dues, as mailings will cost us much less. However, anyone interested in receiving first class mailings of the Newsletter need only fill out the form enclosed with this issue and return it with the fee of \$4, which will cover the extra expense.

Supporting memberships remain at \$25 per year and include a \$15 donation, as well as first class Newsletter mailings.

Joint residency membership status is \$15 per year for two members residing at the same address, and \$5 per year for each additional member at the same address.

Finally, LIFE MEMBERSHIP has been raised to \$250. It will entitle the member to free admission to any national NAAFA function, first class Newsletter mailings, and a handwritten scroll testifying to LIFE MEMBERSHIP status.

Beginning with April renewals, the renewal forms will also have these new categories added to them, so that everyone in NAAFA will be entitled to the special categories. We believe that these changes will greatly benefit our members, and allow more people to participate in the fight against size discrimination.

BOARD ELECTS NEW VICE PRESIDENT



Sheila Goodman has been elected as Vice President of NAAFA, replacing Florane Sclar, who resigned in December. Ms. Goodman, who won a seat on the Board in the election two years ago, and who has also served as Chairperson of the Greater New

York Area Chapter for two years, was elected by the Directors of NAAFA, without a dissenting vote.

Sheila was Chairperson of the 1976 Convention, and holds the same position again this year. She is a legal secretary and office manager of a law firm in New York City; she makes New York her home as well.

NEWS CLIPPINGS NEEDED

The Newsletter would like to increase its regular coverage of news items of current interest to all NAAFA members. NAAFA's who spot an item of interest in a newspaper or magazine, etc., are invited to submit it (an original print, if possible), marked with the name and date of the publication.

Some members have been doing this for years; however, to get the widest possible coverage from all over the country, more members must participate.

NAAFA's who are first to submit original news clippings that are used in the Newsletter will be acknowledged by name under the reprinted article. Those submitting five or more such clippings that are used in subsequent Newsletters will receive a free one-year extension of their NAAFA membership.

NAAFAN SUCCEEDS IN GARMENT INDUSTRY

Karen Scott-Jones, of the fashion boutique "Abundantly Yours," has helped to focus attention on the clothing needs of the fat American. In a recent round of publicity, including newspaper, radio, and tv coverage, she has been asked to explain how and why the fat woman, in particular, can and should look nice in clothes. Ms. Scott-Jones, who has been active in NAAFA circles for years, including the Connecticut Chapter, the Board of Directors, and Chairperson of the Local Chapters Committee, recently focused her energies on the forming of a business enterprise. She reports that "Abundantly Yours" is getting orders by mail for clothes in sizes ranging from 38 to 60 and over, and is about to come out with a new Spring/Summer catalog available from P. O. Box 121, Andover, Ct. 06232.

SACCHARIN BANNED BY FDA

In a move that has upset the processed food industry and some members of the public as well, the U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has banned the artificial sweetener saccharin. The saccharin ban is to go into effect this summer after hearings to be held in Washington, and is based on tests of 1,200 rats by the Health Protection Branch of the Canadian government. The tests showed a cancer-producing effect of massive doses of saccharin. The ban was proposed by the FDA based on the controversial "Delaney Clause," which states that "No additive shall be deemed to be safe if it is found to induce cancer when ingested by man or animal."

Opponents of the proposed ban state that the massive doses given to the rats to induce cancer are far in excess of any dose consumed by human beings in eating food or beverages artificially sweetened by saccharin. Those who defend the ban believe that any additive is unsafe that can in heavy dosages induce cancer, since the long-term effects of reduced dosages may be just as dangerous as a heavy dose over a short period of time. They point out the great increase in the number of victims of this dread disease, and that for the most part, the causes are unknown. Industrial pollutants and food additives are often mentioned as likely sources of the increased incidence of cancer in this country, but direct proof has so far been insufficient to convince established medical opinion.

DIET PILLS BLAMED IN DEATH OF CHILD

(NEWSDAY, 3/18/77, Christopher M. Cook, Hauppauge, N.Y.)

In an article relating to the awarding of surviving children to the mother who killed her son, diet pills have received the blame for the mother's behavior.

"Dr. Peter Cuneo, a psychiatrist at Central Islip State Hospital, where Mrs. Gloria Cusano was confined twice--once after the 1972 killing resulting in her manslaughter conviction, and again last Fall after a suicide attempt--said that the symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia shown by Mrs. Cusano after the killing were caused by amphetamine poisoning. Mrs. Cusano testified that she killed the child, Frank Dennis, 2, during a withdrawal phase from prescribed diet pills she was taking to lose 70 pounds."

Amphetamines have become strictly controlled substances in New York State and many other states in recent years. Mrs. Cusano and thousands of others were the victims of many "diet" doctors who prescribed amphetamine diet pills on a wholesale basis. The practice has declined because of prosecution of a number of diet doctors on drug charges.

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