

# NAAFA Newsletter

VOLUME XI

ISSUE NO. 4

MARCH 1986

© 1986 by the National Association to Aid Fat Americans, Inc., PO Box 43, Bellerose, NY 11426. Nothing may be reprinted without permission except for noncommercial purposes. Managing Editor: Nancy Summer

## NEWS AND COMMENT

### ARIZONA WOMAN FILES SUITS IN WEIGHT DISCRIMINATION CASE

Lauren L. Sawicki has just filed a \$19.25 million lawsuit against Dr. Earl M. Best, an Arizona physician, and a \$17 million suit against the city of Mesa, Arizona. In her suit against Dr. Best, she says that he made a health report to Mesa in which he concluded, without actually giving her an examination, that her weight was a health risk. In addition, in an April, 1985 article in BBW Magazine that was sympathetic to Ms. Sawicki's case, Dr. Best is quoted as telling the BBW reporter that Sawicki "does not have normal agility." Sawicki charges that Dr. Best did not conduct a test for agility, and that his various actions resulted in humiliation, mental stress, and loss of employment.

The loss of employment apparently resulted from Best's adverse report to Mesa in 1983 after Sawicki had applied for a job managing two snack bars at the city's municipal hall, a job for which she says she was amply qualified by previous experience. Sawicki, who says she weighs 340 pounds, stands 5 feet 2 inches in height, and is 30 years old, has filed the suits herself. She says that she has lost and regained thousands of pounds over the years, until nine years ago, she decided that dieting was futile for her, and she accepted being fat. "I'm like everybody else except I weigh more. I honestly think I was meant to be this way because I can handle it. I've always had friends. It never stopped me," she was quoted as saying, in a recent editorial in the Journal-Bulletin of Providence, RI, in October.

Sawicki wrote to NAAFA about her case at the time she was turned down for employment, and her letter was answered by Dr. Paul Ernsberger, who at the time headed NAAFA's Health Committee. Dr. Ernsberger's remarks, which were mentioned in the BBW article, were directed at Dr. Best's report to the city of Mesa, especially Best's advice that Sawicki should avoid "prolonged walking or standing...repeated squatting or bending...", etc. Ernsberger noted that the kinds of exercise advocated by some experts for obese persons often includes prolonged walking, and repeated squatting or bending...

#### COMMENTARY

In a recent letter to NAAFA, and in a telephone interview for this **Newsletter**, Lauren Sawicki expressed the hope that we will let all our members know about her lawsuits. She stated that "I want all fat people to know about (my case), in hopes it will encourage them to stand up and be counted, and to fight for their rights. If they can see one extra big lady fight size discrimination, others will realize they too can fight for it." We agree. ■

### VOGUE MAGAZINE BREAKS INTO LARGE SIZES

The undisputed leader in fashion magazines in the United States, VOGUE, has published a special advertising section for large sizes in its March issue (as forecast in the "Media and Publicity Watch" section in the February **Newsletter**). Prepared by an outfit called HealthCom in New York City, the 30-page supplement features a variety of fashions for women with "plus-sized" figures. The fact that it appears in VOGUE magazine is revolutionary enough; however, it has met with some mixed reviews among many NAAFA's.

Says Janet Schulman (NY), manufacturer of Briana large-size lingerie, recently featured on Sally Jessy Raphael: "The large-size coverage used models that were much too small, even several size 10's. I used size 18's and 20's on the Sally show. As a 'Special Advertising Section', it wasn't even mentioned on the cover or in the table of contents. They could have hired larger models. Some people in the large-size fashion industry were really annoyed about that."

Eileen M. Lefebure (NY), NAAFA's President: "Frankly, I was a little disappointed. Although the models are considerably larger than Vogue's usual sizes, most of the models seemed to be size 14 or smaller. Some of the clothes were lovely, but stopped at size 46. It will take them a while to realize that they have a market for sizes larger than that. I do think it's a good start, though. We should give Vogue encouragement to continue such coverage, and try not to be too critical."

#### COMMENTARY

Yes, some (but not all) of the models were smaller than we believe should be featured in a special ad section devoted to LARGE sizes. But size, like many other things in life, is relative. Perhaps in NAAFA we lean too far in the opposite direction, and forget that when it comes to fashion, sizes 14 through 18 are considered large. Also, we NAAFAn are so used to seeing people in the size range 20-60 that some of us lose our ability to estimate the actual sizes of "plus-figured" models. And we are so angry at our treatment at the hands of the fashion industry all these years that we are quick to criticize, and we forget that most social progress evolves slowly.

We enjoyed the comments of the Editorial Director of the supplement, Hara Estroff Marano, at the beginning of the piece. The sentiments in her introduction are revolutionary, considering Vogue's long-standing opposition to the concept that the ample figure can be fashionably attired! ■

#### REAR MAY BE COMING TO THE FORE

In a short news item on March 2: "Bill Blass on what some fashion mavens see as the tiny beginning of a revolution in favor of fat women: 'The derriere may well become the erotic zone again.'"-- from the Spokesman-Review and Spokane Chronical, submitted by Beverly Hundley (WA).

Well, well. Considering the negativity that Blass has always displayed towards fat in the past, he probably doesn't mean to suggest that LARGE derrieres might become erotic. Anyway, for some of our F.A.'s, derrieres never stopped being erotic. Still, Blass's comment is progress of a sort.--Ed.

#### UPDATE ON JACK LALANNE HEALTH SPA LAWSUIT

The case reported on in the December '85 Newsletter in which NAAFAn Ira Shprintzen (NY) sued the health chain, has progressed to the point where the New York State Human Rights Administration has approved Shprintzen's case to be scheduled for trial shortly. Mr. Shprintzen notes that the spa employees who cancelled his membership because he was too fat, have been fired.

Shprintzen also points out that prior to gastric bypass surgery, he weighed 640 pounds, not "more than 500" as noted in the December article. (He now weighs 280, and says that he intends to lose more 40 pounds in cosmetic surgery.)

#### ACTIVISM REPORT...by Louise Wolfe and Russell Williams, Co-Chairpersons, NAAFA Activism Committee

Tired of watching fat people ridiculed on TV? Don't fume, don't fuss, WRITE! Diane-Jo Moore of Michigan has been kind enough to provide lists of addresses to write to:

President, ABC, 1330 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019  
President, CBS, 51 West 52nd Street, New York, NY 10019  
President, NBC, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10020

As you all know, the airwaves are full of insults to fat people. Diane-Jo, in an article in the Midriff Messenger (bulletin of the Mid-Michigan chapter) titled "Prime Time Bigotry" lists 1/2 page of offenses, and she did not even start with the problem of David Letterman and Joan Rivers.

In hopes of being a more effective letter writer you might try the following: Write a letter of complaint about a CBS show, for example. Write a complimentary letter about an ABC show. Send each company the letter written to them, and also send each company a copy of the letter addressed to the other. Tell CBS you wish they were more like ABC and tell ABC you are glad they are not like CBS.

Please keep such letters going out to those who would deny us jobs and freedom. Politely, kindly, but firmly point out that we will no longer quietly acquiesce to our own dehumanization. The Activism Committee has copies of letters objecting to belittlement that were recently sent to offenders by Nancy Bierlin, Jim Brown and Mary-Jane Grace, June Bailey, Kelly Fennessey, Debbi Brunson, Ruth Boyle, Susan Tenzer, and others.

Remember, all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing! ■

**MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR...**by Nancy Summer

Last year I ran into a rather large, pretty, young woman in my office building. After a number of encounters, I mentioned NAAFA to her, but at the age of 17, she didn't feel that she was interested in becoming involved. I didn't push. I hate to hard-sell NAAFA to people who aren't "ready".

But I saw her the other day and was surprised. Although she is quite bottom-heavy, she was dressed, in a style popular with teens, in form-fitting white jeans and a brightly colored sweater that was tucked into the waist band. (Most of the F.A.'s I know would have been dazzled by the sight!) Although her outfit would have been more commonplace in a NAAFA setting, she was going to work in an office filled with fellow teens!

Then it hit me. This young woman obviously has a different attitude about herself (or at least has a different fashion sense) than I did at her age...maybe than I even have now. Isn't it great! Isn't it great that this young woman is growing up in a totally different atmosphere than I did! Sure, there is a serious epidemic of anorexia and bulimia in her age group...but seventeen years of NAAFA, seven years of BBW, other small "grassroots" groups, books, countless interviews, articles, new retailers, and now magazines like RADIANCE have started to make themselves felt. If you are willing to "see" it, all this really good stuff is out there for fat people. And even more important, even if you aren't willing to "see" it, it is filtering into the fat consciousness anyway! It's just a matter of time.

I'd like to make two comments about other publications this month. First, I'd like to congratulate NAAFA member, Rev. Cheryl Klein, who is featured in an article in the April issue of BBW. Rev. Klein's story can be an inspiration to any fat person who is wishing they could make their own dream come true, and I suggest that you read it.

Secondly, I personally recommend to NAAFA members that they read RADIANCE (Oakland, CA). RADIANCE started out as a "publication", but is now officially a "magazine". It's been looking better and better with each issue. Many NAAFans subscribe to it already. I found more than a few articles in the Winter 1986 issue to be enlightening and interesting, including one by NAAFA Advisory Board Chairman Dr. Paul Ernsberger. But what I find the most interesting is reading concepts, familiar to NAAFans, expressed in new ways or from new perspectives. In my next column, I'm going to expand on one of the issues mentioned in the recent RADIANCE. ■

=====

**COB'S CORNER...**by William J. Fabrey, Chairman of the Board

**ARE LAWSUITS NECESSARY IN THE PURSUIT OF SIZE "ACCEPTANCE"?** - These days, it is increasingly popular to resolve all kinds of grievances in a courtroom. However, I've heard a few NAAFans say that Catherine McDermott should not have sued the Xerox Corp. Some may have similar feelings about Sharon Russell (RI), Lauren Sawicki (AZ), and Ira Shprintzen (NY) with regard to their lawsuits described in this and recent **Newsletters**.

Perhaps you feel that a corporation or an educational institution should be allowed to exercise any judgement they choose in deciding who to hire or who to enroll, and that fat people who encounter discrimination should just get what they want somewhere else...

As someone who has done hiring and firing for employers, I can sympathize with that point of view. Yet corporations and non-profit educational institutions are chartered to exist in society as long as they do not violate public laws, some of which are passed to protect the basic human rights of the people. And, it can be argued that body size and weight should enjoy the same protection as personal characteristics such as age, sex, and ethnic origin, etc.

The trouble is that laws specifically barring size discrimination face serious opposition, and are horrendously difficult to pass. In Ohio, the restaurant association successfully lobbied against proposed size legislation because they didn't want their members to be required to hire fat waitresses!

Lawsuits such as the Xerox case also help to focus public attention on size discrimination. There are those who still find it hard to believe that fat people have problems getting jobs, being admitted to college, or gaining entrance to a health spa. Two years ago, USA TODAY scrapped an editorial page covering job discrimination against the obese, because reporters could not come up with documented proof of such discrimination to the editor's satisfaction, in four hours, even with NAAFA's help!

Well-publicized lawsuits put employers on notice that fat people wish to be considered on merit, without regard to weight. The business press has already printed articles stating that due to various court decisions, a company may be on shaky grounds if it has a policy of refusing to hire the obese.

It seems to me that all of us owe a debt of gratitude to McDermott, Russell, Sawicki, Shprintzen, and others in the past such as Joyce English, who sued the Philadelphia Electric Co., who are willing to focus public attention on their grievances, at the risk of possible defeat and humiliation... ■

## MEDIA AND PUBLICITY WATCH

A series of reports shown on NBC television in New York during the last week of February was well received. NAAFAn Kimm Bonner, and Dr. Paul Ernsberger appeared on the series. Mail is now coming in from the Chocolate Singles article. NAAFAn Janet Schulman, who manufactures Briana lingerie in the plus sizes, appeared on the Sally Jessy Raphael show, seen on various dates in more than 65 cities. Some who saw the show say that it was positive, uplifting, and the sexiest exposure that plus-size fashions and models have ever had on national television. Schulman was asked to use size 12-14 models in the piece, and successfully held out for size 18's and 20's. (One problem resulted from the show: Ms. Schulman is now besieged with phone calls and letters from women who can't get the Briana line in their stores in anything larger than 3X, even though Briana is able to cut 4X and 5X. Stores are afraid to order quantities in those sizes...)

One of the better things to come out of the public's preoccupation with the size of William (The Refrigerator) Perry of the Chicago Bears football team is the Refrigerettes--a team of cheerleaders said to weigh at least 200 pounds each, and who apparently perform at each game in the home stadium located in Chicago.

TIME magazine has responded to the criticisms of Russell F. Williams, Co-chair of the Activism committee. He had criticized portions of their January 20 piece, which had been viewed by many NAAFAn as an ambitious article which at times displayed a shallow understanding of the evidence, and "cutesy" writing which belied their claim to have written a serious article. Although they did reply to Williams, the response did not display any more understanding than did the writers of the original article in the magazine...

An article in the Wall Street Journal (9/27/86) ran the headline, "Fashion Industry Courting Large Women, Offering Stylish Clothes in Big Sizes", and went on to discuss the large-size fashion industry.

A NAAFA group appeared on television on the AM Philadelphia show on Feb. 26. The group consisted of Lynn McAfee, Co-Chairperson of the local chapter there; Bob Bain and Aglaia Koras-Bain (NJ); and NAAFA Board member Paula Dachis and Neil Dachis (MD). The same men who appeared on the Sally Jessy Raphael show nationally in February also appeared on the People Are Talking show in Baltimore. Messrs. Blickenstorfer, Dachis, and Fabrey appeared March 12, representing the fat admirer point of view. They report that the audience and the telephone callers were very enthusiastic and supportive.

NAAFA Chairman Fabrey was quoted in a front page story in the "Style" section of the Washington Post (February 27) titled "The Really Big Story: Fashion and Society are Making a Heavy-Duty Adjustment." (Thanks to Leonard Phillips (DC) for sending a copy of the paper).

**NOW IN PREPARATION...**A series on PBS television called "Body Watch" with a show on weight control, in late March in some areas; originating with award-winning WGBH in Boston...an article in April EBONY magazine...an article in PARADE Sunday supplement magazine quoting Dr. Paul Ernsberger...a book titled Scientific Yearbook '86 that will feature a photo of a a NAAFA group, and the NAAFA philosophy...an article in the Bergen RECORD newspaper (NJ) on surgical weight-loss methods...a Medical Almanac by OMNI magazine in 1986 that will publish NAAFA's name and address as a resource for fat people: The OMNI writer, after studying the subject of "the war on fat", told us: "It looks what fat people really need is a good wardrobe and a good lawyer!"

On March 18, as this **Newsletter** goes to press, the Phil Donahue show aired Nell Carter and a fashion show from the Bloomingdale's department store chain. It seems that Nell spoke well about herself and her current feelings about being a large woman. Not only that, one model was a size 22! However, no lingerie was shown, and there was a hint of a "covering up" fashion attitude present--that fat women should try to wear "slimming" styles, and so forth. Oh, well...■

---

## NEW PROGRAM ESTABLISHES NAAFA "AREA FACILITATORS"

A supplement to NAAFA's system of local chapters is being created. At its meeting on Jan. 18, the Board approved a proposal from the Local Chapters Committee to set up a "Facilitators Committee." That committee is intended to help create a network of NAAFA members authorized to be on a list of "contact persons" in their area, in areas not currently served by active local chapters.

An increasing number of NAAFA members have been writing to ask whether there might be a way that they could get in touch with other NAAFAn in their geographical area, even though no chapter exists nearby. The "Facilitators" program is an attempt to meet that need.

Vicki Dodd (MO) has been selected by the Board to head the new committee. Ms. Dodd is one of the individuals who had pointed out the need for area contacts for NAAFAn. Her initial task is to draft guidelines for the program (rules, application forms, a budget, reporting requirements, and so forth). It is hoped that the new program might get under way in May, 1986. When it is ready, the event will be announced to all NAAFAn.

**WEDDINGS...**We are please to report the following weddings, and offer our congratulations:

- Margie Iannaci and Ernie Schraeter (NY) (met at a New York NAAFA event);
- Marilyn Kastleman and Ray Simpson (CA) (met at 1985 LA chapter event--Ray was a NAAFA member for 16 years before it happened);
- Teresa L. Mitchell and Frank J. Williams III (TX);
- Lisa J. Malacky and Greg Stefaniak (OH);
- Randi McLaren and Bill McCauley (IL);
- Linda McElney (CA) and Wayne K. Gehres (OH) (Linda and Wayne took their vows at an Ohio Regional Gathering.)

**OBITUARIES...**We regret to take note of the passing of the following NAAFans: August Roy, Jr. (CA); David Wayne Sharlow (CA); and Jan Stubbs (TX).

**NAAFans IN THE NEWS...**Susanna L. Worley (TN) has opened her own office for the practice of electrolysis. She graduated recently from the Kree Institute of Electrolysis in New York...Lynn Meletiche has completed requirements for a B.S. in Health Care Administration from St. Joseph's College in New York... Karen Bramnik-Syken has received a Ph.D. in Community Health Education and Counseling from Clayton University in New York, and has set up a private practice...Peter Silver (NY) has graduated from NYU College of Dentistry.

**NEW APPLICATION FORM ADOPTED; FIRST-CLASS MAIL NO LONGER OPTIONAL**

A new application form has been adopted that reflects the recent change to first-class mail for most mailings. Non-profit bulk mailings have presented major problems in the past, including complaints of slow and even non-delivered mail from NAAFA; shoddy treatment by the Postal Service; rejection of sacks of NAAFA bulk mail by a postal employee who expressed a strong dislike of fat people and of NAAFA; constant changes and misinformation about bulk mail requirements; and many other problems.

The first-class mail option used to cost NAAFA members an additional \$6 per year. However, as authorized by the Board of Directors, \$5 has been added to Student, Senior, and Regular membership dues to cover the anticipated cost of first-class mailings; and \$3 has been added to the Limited Income category, reflecting partial subsidy from other NAAFA funds.

According to NAAFA's Printing and Production committee, non-profit bulk mail may still be used for two or three mailings a year, but not for anything of "time-value", such as the **Newsletter**.

**NAAFAdvice...**by June Bailey

Dear NAAFAdvice,

I am a fat woman who really cares about the way she looks. I feel beautiful and I take the time to make sure that I am clean, well-groomed, and well-dressed, despite a limited budget! I just don't understand the many fat women I see who seem not to care about their appearance. It makes me angry thinking that they give all us fat women a bad name. I understand that some of us are fat, but do we need to be sloppy, too?

Signed, Fat and Attractive

Dear Fat and Attractive,

No, fat people don't have to be sloppy! I, too, used to get angry when I saw fat women who didn't seem to care enough to develop their own potential for beauty. But let's look at some of the reasons why these people don't fix themselves up and perhaps I'll be able to convince you not to be so upset with them.

Because of social pressures to be thin, many fat people have lowered feelings of self-worth. They don't think they deserve a more attractive appearance because they can't meet the current standards of beauty/thinness. The "when I lose weight, I'll buy new clothes, get my hair styled" syndrome is the result of the pressure.

Instead of getting angry with our fat sisters and brothers, why don't you help them become more aware that beauty is not reserved "for thin people only". Act as a role model, and show them by example that, with an increased level of confidence and self-worth, they don't have to postpone being attractive until they are thin.■

## RESETTING YOUR SETPOINT--INTRODUCTION

Because of the dangers of the "yo-yo syndrome", it's probably healthier for most obese persons to maintain a stable, high weight, than it is to go through repeated cycles of weight loss and regain. But some people have a problem maintaining a steady weight; even though they've given up crash dieting, their weight still creeps up a little each year. This is a matter for concern since weight gain can be harmful; for example, it's mainly the regaining phase that makes weight fluctuations so dangerous, although how dangerous may depend on how fast the weight is regained, what is eaten during the "refeeding" cycle, and the biochemistry of the particular individual. In any case, weight gain is a risk factor.

Chronic weight gainers probably have a "defective" body weight setpoint--the biological machinery that regulates the storage of fat is somehow askew. Possible causes are 1) heredity, 2) long-term use of amphetamine-like diet pills, and 3) repeated crash dieting.

Other people have gained beyond their natural setpoint weights and wish to return to this lower plateau for reasons of personal comfort and health. Even though weighing 20 or even 50 pounds more than the insurance charts can actually be beneficial, extra weight beyond that poses risks that are all too well-known to readers of diet books and articles. It is true that extra weight stresses the weight-bearing joints, especially the knees, and causes hormonal changes that can lead to uterine cancer. Beyond, say, 300 pounds, the sheer mass of the body begins to tax the heart and lungs. This is especially true for fat people who have gone over their setpoint weight by eating a great deal (more than 3,000 calories every day for women, or 4,000 for men).

When a person is over their setpoint, the body goes into high gear trying to burn off excess calories, forcing the heart and lungs to work hard to provide oxygen and fuel for a blazing metabolic furnace. Only a minority of fat people fall into this category of consistent overeaters, but the many physical problems of these people make them frequent subjects for medical case studies. Healthy fat people with sensible diet and exercise habits receive little attention.

Fat people can stabilize or gradually reduce their weight while greatly improving their health. This can be done by working with your setpoint instead of against it. Crash diets can actually make you fatter by raising your setpoint, and even safe, sensible diets like Weight Watchers have lead millions down the yo-yo trail. A better answer for lifelong health as well as weight control is to lower your setpoint. By a fortunate coincidence, many of the things you can do to lower your body weight setpoint are also good for your health, so that while weight loss or weight stabilization may be slow and gradual, the payoff in improved health and well-being is immediate. These are the steps you can take to lower your setpoint:

- 1) Become more active.
- 2) Eat less fat, especially saturated fat and cholesterol.
- 3) Consume less sugar (and artificial sweeteners), and white flour.
- 4) Eat more fiber.
- 5) Eat more starch (complex carbohydrates).
- 6) Learn to pay attention to your body's hunger signals.

Next month's column will go into more details. In the meantime, I'd like to recommend two books. How to Lower Your Fat Thermostat (by Dennis Remington, M.D., Garth Fisher, Ph.D., and Edward Parent, Ph.D.; Vitality House Int'l., Provo, UT; 1983) is an unusual weight-control book: It opens with references to The Dieter's Dilemma and explains why diets make you fatter. The book is scientifically accurate and health-promoting; the best weight-loss guide I've ever read.

The other essential ingredient to escaping the twin perils of starving and bingeing is the rediscovery of natural and spontaneous eating. Making Peace With Food: A Step-By-Step Guide to Freedom From Diet/Weight Conflict (by Susan Kano; Amity Publishing, Boston, MA; 1985) is a unique attempt to apply new research on setpoint into everyday life. This book will retrain you to listen to your body's internal signals rather than blindly obeying either a rigid diet plan or the whims of appetite. Many chronic dieters and yo-yo'ers may be surprised to find that they lose weight after they learn not to deprive themselves until the build up "demon hunger" that triggers binges. The primary goal of the book is not to promote weight loss but freedom from obsession, guilt, anxiety, and poor self-esteem. ■

=====  
Readers can order the first book mentioned in the above article from their neighborhood bookseller. The second book, by NAAFAn Susan Kano, can be ordered directly from Amity Publishing, Box 933, Allston, MA 02134. While the regular price is \$16.45, a special price of \$12.95 to NAAFA members has been arranged by author Kano, provided that orders are received soon. According to the publisher, members who order at the lower price must identify themselves as NAAFAn in their letter. --Ed.