

# NAAFA

## Newsletter

Volume XVI  
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January 1989

### *Achievement Awards in Review*

NAAFA bestowed Achievement Awards on those who helped to promote the message of fat rights and size acceptance during 1988.

Distinguished Achievement Awards were presented to actress Susan Peretz who appeared on the *L.A. Law* episode about an attorney who was fired because of her weight; and to the writers of that show, David E. Kelly and Terry Louise Fisher.

Advice columnist Abigail Van Buren, of *Dear Abby*, also received a Distinguished Achievement Award for her continuing supportive and sensitive advice on fat issues.

An Achievement Award was given to Hillel Schwartz, for his book on the cultural history of dieting, *Never Satisfied*. [This book is now available from NAAFA's Book Service—see page 8.]

Other Achievement Awards went to the movie *Hairspray*, and to Steve Martin for writing and producing *Roxanne*, which treated individual differences, including weight, with sensitivity.

Finally, an Honorable Mention was awarded to Howard Healy, of the *Albany Times-Union*, whose editorial opposed the Schenectady mayor's policy blocking promotions for "overweight" public service employees. ◊◊

### *Does Obesity Cause Diabetes? New Evidence Suggests Not*

A newly isolated hormone has been discovered in high levels in the pancreases of Type II diabetics. The hormone, named **amylin** by researchers, may play a key role in causing the most common form of diabetes.

According to the Associated Press, Garth Cooper, a New Zealand biochemist working with researchers at Oxford University recently reported that "amylin appears to be *responsible for the obesity* [emphasis ours], reduced insulin secretion, and the reduced effectiveness of insulin observed in Type II diabetes." Up until now, obesity has been considered by many to be a major contributor to the disease rather than a result of it.

This discovery may lead to new treatment of the disease, and may lead to further discoveries that obesity is not the culprit in Type II diabetes, but just another symptom of some other condition. ◊◊

### *Officers Elected*

On January 14th, the Board of Directors elected NAAFA's officers for 1989:

*Chairman of the Board:*

Conrad H. Blickenstorfer (NY)

*President:*

Nancy Summer (VA)

*Vice-President:*

Paula M. Dachis (MD)

*Treasurer:*

Dan Davis (CA)

*Secretary:*

Mary-Jane Grace-Brown (NJ) ◊◊

NAAFA:  
The National Association to  
Advance Fat Acceptance  
formerly  
The National Association  
to Aid Fat Americans

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# Fat People Sue Film Maker

by Neil Dachis, and editorial staff

"They said they were supposed to be part of a wholesome all-American movie about diverse life styles. Instead, the three...members of NAAFA wound up in a sexual satire video," reported Veronica T. Jennings in an article that appeared in the *Washington Post* on Dec. 31, 1987.

Indeed, Paula M. Dachis, NAAFA's Vice President; Russell F. Williams, a member of NAAFA's Board; and Peggy Fox; all members from Maryland, found themselves the brunt of fat jokes in a 1986 video spoofing prime-time newscasts.

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*"I would have never approved of being in something like that. It goes against everything I've worked for for nine years."*

—Paula Dachis

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It all began at the 1979 NAAFA convention. A private film crew requested permission in advance of the convention to film various segments for a documentary. Permission was granted and filming took place throughout the convention weekend with the knowledge and assent of the participants. Subsequently, the documentary was produced and nothing further was heard about the matter. That is, not until December 1986, six years later, when some fellow NAAFA members recognized other NAAFA members appearing in a sleazy, obnoxious video cassette. In a segment entitled Club Fed, their appearances were spliced in from the original film footage shot at the convention, but the original sound track was replaced with one of pig and cow noises and a voice-over telling a series of stereotypical fat jokes.

"I would have never approved of being in something like that," Paula Dachis

told the *Post*. "It goes against everything I've worked for for nine years."

The plaintiffs say that they were portrayed in an "outrageously derogatory and humiliating manner." Dachis told the *Post* that she fears neighbors, co-workers, and friends are laughing behind her back. "I never know when I'm standing in the grocery store and someone is looking at me, if they have seen the movie the night before."

In December 1987, Dachis, Williams, and Fox filed a lawsuit for damages against the film's producer Romano Vanderbes, president of Chase Films; and its distributor Prism Entertainment. The case is still pending.

•••••

Neil Dachis, Esq., a member of NAAFA's Board of Directors, is the attorney handling the suit. The following is Dachis' report on the case:

When initially asked to write an article about this lawsuit, I was concerned that I would have nothing interesting to write about. That is, of course, if one does not find it interesting that a small group of fat people and their supporters have decided to no longer take it on the chin, and to fight back against the terrible bigotry that they face in everyday living.

Needless to say, the members who appeared in that video were deeply shocked and outraged. None of them would have ever consented to being filmed had they known or even suspected that the result would be the total and complete debasement and denigration of fat people.

Since I had a personal relationship with one of the injured parties, I initially decided that it would be better for another attorney to handle the matter. After interviewing several attorneys, a small firm was chosen—not because

the other attorneys were not qualified, but rather because no one else wanted to touch the case! Even the firm initially handling the matter refused to take the case on a contingency basis, and instead billed at an hourly rate. After five months and over a thousand dollars in legal fees out of my pocket, a demand letter was finally produced and sent to the defendant's attorney. The defense attorney promptly rejected the claim. That's when I finally decided that, personal involvement or not, it was time for me to step in. The small law firm was discharged, and shortly thereafter I filed the lawsuit.

Right from the start, I informed my clients that ours was an uphill battle, not because there isn't any law on our side, for there is, but rather because it was one young attorney against an established heavy-hitting law firm! The clients and I decided that, if nothing else happened, we would at least force the defendants to yield up some of their ill-gotten gains in legal fees. What happened subsequent to the filing of the lawsuit was incredible, and far beyond our hopes and expectations.

The *Washington Post* picked up the story and wrote a very empathetic article about our suit. Numerous radio stations clamored for us to do interviews. We were even invited to appear on a local Philadelphia television show! Soon after, a close friend of mine who is also an attorney, agreed to help me on the case, no charge!

At this point, the possible results of the suit are unknown. We have rejected an insultingly-low initial offer of settlement from the defendants, and are prepared to go all the way. It's my opinion that we have already won in some ways, in that we have caused the defendants bad press and have already forced them to spend considerable amounts of money in legal fees.

Hopefully, we'll go to trial and be able to demonstrate in a public manner, once and for all, that fat people are no longer going to quietly tolerate the outrageous bigotry of a thin-oriented society.

## You Can Help...

At the 1988 Convention in Baltimore, attorney Neil Dachis, and the three plaintiffs, Paula M. Dachis, Russell F. Williams, and Peggy Fox, told their story at the Farewell luncheon. Several NAAFA members announced that they wished to help with the finances of the lawsuit, and in an outpouring of empathy (and tears), members donated several hundred dollars to the litigants to help them continue their claim.

But litigation is expensive and more funds are needed, despite the fact that both Maryland attorneys are not charging for their services. If you would like to add your support, and help the three plaintiffs continue their suit, please send what you can. Checks should be made payable to Neil Dachis, Esq., and mailed to him at 5035-4 Green Mountain Circle, Columbia, MD 21044. All donations will be acknowledged. [Please note: this special request for funds is not officially associated with NAAFA, Inc., nor are your donations tax-deductible.] ☐

## NAAFA NEWSLETTER

### NEWSLETTER STAFF

MANAGING EDITOR  
Nancy Summer

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT  
Bill Fabrey

CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE  
Neil Dachis Paula M. Dachis  
Sally E. Smith Frances M. White  
William J. Fabrey

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Articles in this Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official policies of NAAFA, Inc., unless specifically noted. Please contact the NAAFA office about specific NAAFA policies. Commentaries in this Newsletter, unless otherwise noted, were prepared by a member of the editorial staff or the Executive Director. ☐

## Service Awards Presented

Service Awards for 1988 were presented to 33 NAAFA members at the annual Convention in September.

The following NAAFAnS received Pence Service Awards or endorsements for continued committee service, usually one hundred hours or more:

**Conrad H. Blickenstorfer (NY)** - Information Systems  
**Jim Brown (NJ)** - Market and Advertising, Printing and Production  
**Lisbeth Fisher Burns (NY)** - Membership and Area Facilitator  
**Dan Davis (CA)** - Committee Coordinator/ Finance  
**Noel Nyman (WA)** - NAAFA Date  
**Bunny Peckham (NY)** - Fundraising  
**Nancy Summer (VA)** - Publications, Conventions  
**Randi Hertz Suriano (NJ)** - Marketing and Advertising  
**Roz Thomas (MD)** - Convention  
**Elizabeth Williams (NY)** - Pen Pal  
**Peggy Williams (MD)** - Convention  
**Russell F. Williams (MD)** - Activism

Honorable Mentions were presented for committee service to:

**Bob Bain (NJ)** - Resource Development  
**Neil Dachis (MD)** - Legal/Legislative  
**Dolores Foust (MD)** - Teen  
**Mary-Jane Grace-Brown (NJ)** - Fundraising Events, Marketing and Advertising  
**Carrie Hemenway (MA)** - Workbook  
**Aglaiia Koras-Bain (NJ)** - Local Chapters  
**Eileen Lefebure (NY)** - Publicity  
**Lynn Meletiche (NY)** - Regional Event Coordinator  
**Chris Mohan (PA)** - Activism  
**Linda Mossbarger (CA)** - Teen  
**Susan Tenzer (PA)** - Outreach, Name Change  
**Sue Waller (MD)** - Convention Program Assistance  
**Louise Wolfe (CA)** - Activism

and to the other members of Maryland's Convention Host Committee:

**Robert Cox**  
**Byrdie Kane**  
**Palmer Kane**  
**Sandra Kane**  
**Victoria Kane**  
**Lonnie Lynne La Cour**  
**Andrea Miller**  
**Suzanne Schaier** ☐

## NAAFA, Inc.

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Sally E. Smith

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Dept. of Psychiatry,  
University of Cincinnati College of Medicine

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

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

Regular membership in NAAFA is \$25 per year. Other membership categories are available. For more information, contact the Membership Services Office at Box 188620, Sacramento, CA 95818, or call (916) 443-0301.

## *The Melee at Millbrae*

by Frances M. White (CA)

NAAFA's annual conventions are wonderful. They are a time to feel a special kinship with our large brothers and sisters and our admirers. Equally important is the positive self-image we take home. And despite the awesome responsibility, the planners of regional gatherings enjoy knowing they are creating a safe place for all of us to convene, free of the mindless knee-jerk prejudices we face daily.

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*...we realized that  
the battle against  
size discrimination  
is never over.*

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Or so we of the Bay Area chapter thought when we planned Fatworks II. Everyone seemed to be having a great time. Disruptions were handled and we got on with the event. It wasn't until afterwards that we realized that the battle against size discrimination is never over.

The first skirmish in what has become known as the "Melee at Millbrae" was signaled with a salvo fired on a local radio station a month after Fatworks II. Don Bleu, a San Francisco disc jockey, makes practical joke "Bleupper" calls to listeners who have been set up by "friends". In the case of Fatworks II, Bleu had been given information about our contract negotiations by one of the sales managers at the Clarion Hotel, a Diane Travers. Taking our usual NAAFA requests, Bleu modified them and then called Janet Graham, the sales manager with whom we dealt, to pretend to book a conference.

With a background of barnyard animal noises and talking with his mouth full, he identified himself as "Pudge" a member of the "National Association of the Obese" who was planning a confer-

ence. He asked that the kitchen be kept open 24 hours a day. "Because you know how much we fat people eat." He asked that the pool be closed. "The "NAO" wanted to use it because their guests won't want to swim with us. And besides, you can only get two of our members in the pool at a time;" and so forth. The tape of his call was broadcast on two days during commuting hours.

An event organizer verified with our sales manager how the details of our contract were leaked. A wave of anger and outrage swept over us. We were being ridiculed, everyone who attended was being ridiculed, every fat person in the Bay area was being ridiculed. We couldn't stand by and let this attack go unchallenged.

I organized a letter writing campaign with letters that were signed with Louise Wolfe's name, since she had signed the contract with the hotel. Additionally, many of our chapter members wrote in response to an article in our chapter news bulletin.

A letter went to Diane Travers, Clarion Hotel, 401 Millbrae Ave., Millbrae, CA 94030, telling her she had no business being in a job that dealt with the public since she was so insensitive. Ken Buksa, General Manager of the Clarion received a letter: I reported Ms. Travers' behavior, asked that she be reprimanded and copies of these letters be placed in her personnel records. I reminded him, that contrary to stereotypical thinking, fat people do not live in a vacuum; that the people who attended Fatworks II held professional and corporate jobs, belonged to trade associations, and had no end of hobby group memberships. These people would not be recommending the Clarion to any group because of this incident.

Bonny McKnight, San Mateo Convention and Visitors Bureau, 601 Gateway Blvd., South San Francisco, CA 94080 was contacted. I suggested that she might want to think twice about recommending the Clarion again to minority groups, given the attitude of some of its employees.

I wrote Don Bleu and the general manager of KYUU-FM, Terry De Voto, 530 Bush Street, San Francisco, CA 94108 asking for an on-air apology to fat listeners, a written apology to NAAFA, and equal quality time on KYUU to explain about our group to repair the damage to fat people's self-esteem. Since one third of Americans are fat, we also asked if KYUU sponsors were ready for the station to lose as many as one third of its listeners.

I wrote to Dennis Williams, FCC-FM Branch, 1919 M Street N.W.; Washington D.C. 20554 and reported the incident. I pointed out that when KYUU's license comes up for renewal I wanted to be on record as feeling this prank is proof that the station is not responsive to a substantial segment of this community.

I wrote to John Lambert, Aircoa, 4600 S. Ulster Street #1200, Denver, CO 80237. I asked this regional V.P. of the Clarion Hotel chain if it was the policy of hotels in his chain to take money from clients and then expose them to public ridicule. I told him that NAAFA, Inc. normally holds its convention at the Marriott Hotels because unlike the Clarion, Marriott realizes that fat people's money is just as green as thin people's, and their employees have always behaved in a very professional manner towards us.

The theme running through all these letters was, "Can other minority groups expect this kind of treatment by your business?" The attitude that says public bashing of fat people is okay is the same attitude that led white men to stand in the doorways of schools to prevent black students from attending back in the '50's. Is that the viewpoint you wish to put forth to the public about your hotel(s) and radio station?

I was very gratified when Alice Ansfeld of *Radiance* magazine became involved with the campaign. She wrote to Ken Buksa saying she was appalled by this incident and demanded an apology or it would be the subject of an article in the magazine. She felt that her

national readership would join in a boycott of the Clarion Hotels. Buksa's sarcastic response was to tell her that he enjoyed being threatened by the power of the press, that he felt the incident was being blown out of proportion, but that Ms. Travers knows her actions were out of line.

I wish I could report that all of these people were so moved by my words that I received humble apologies from them all. My fantasy is that Diane Travers is no longer in the hotel business, that Ken Buksa has been re-assigned to the Beirut Clarion, that Bonny McKnight's lack of recommendations has closed this particular Clarion, that I was asked to appear on KYUU before Don Bleu was fired and the FCC shut down the station, and the Vice President of the Clarion chain has asked us to hold a Fatworks conference every year at Clarions all around the county at no charge to NAAFA.

Unfortunately, this is the real world. Ken and Barbie...I mean Diane, are still at the Clarion. Bonny McKnight's answer was, "Gee I'm sorry that happened, but I hope you

enjoyed your conference otherwise." Which reminds you of the joke that ends with, "Yes, Mrs. Lincoln, but other than that, how did you enjoy the play?"

Don Bleu has taken on additional responsibilities. You can all see him in syndication on the Gong Show. His general manager at KYUU sent a letter explaining that humor is subjective, and that it's fine that humor is frequently taken from broadly drawn stereotypes.

The folks at the FCC never responded to me.

The regional VP of the Clarion was the most responsive. He said that he investigated the incident, found the facts as we stated them to be true, and explained that this was not typical treatment of the Clarion and that he hoped we would give the chain that all-important second chance.

One important benefit in a letter-writing campaign like this is what it does for the writer. You get to affirm that you won't stand for shabby treatment of yourself or your ideals. Standing up for our cause makes you feel tall in many dimensions.

This campaign had a very beneficial effect on me: It turned a rank and file NAAFA member into an activist. From this incident, I've learned that I must speak out whenever a fat person is trashed. It is no longer acceptable for me to sit back and say, "Oh, good, someone wrote a letter," or "Thank goodness NAAFA has activists who can deal with this affront." And since this campaign, I have had the opportunity to speak out about NAAFA and against size discrimination on radio talk shows and several local television shows including *Night Beat*, *Eyewitness News*, *Two At Noon*, and *Good Morning Bay Area*.

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### Late Breaking News

KYUU has been sold recently and the new call letters are X100. As part of the publicity campaign for our chapter's FatFest, I taped a 30 minute interview for their "Spotlight on a Non-Profit" show. I found out that Don Bleu no longer makes his Bleupper calls. It seems the FCC has a ruling that forbids the recording of a conversation for broadcast unless the person knows they are being recorded, and about six months ago, (which is just about how long ago I wrote my letter) someone "bleu" the whistle on him to the FCC...

—F.M.W.

At the January 14, 1989 meeting, the Board of Directors passed a resolution that NAAFA, Inc., its chapters and special interest groups will refrain from using Clarions, Quality Inns, and Comfort Inns (all parts of the Clarion chain) for our meetings and conferences, until such time as a satisfactory response is received from the Clarion management.

—Editor ∞

# 1988 Publicity in Review

by Sally E. Smith

NAAFA receives an average of three to six calls from the media per week. Most of the publicity we receive from resulting stories and broadcasts is favorable. A typical national television show results in 200 inquiries from potential members for more information about NAAFA, if our address or phone number is shown. Undoubtedly, our work with the media does more to educate the public than other methods we now use.

Following is a summary of some of the highlights of 1988 media appearances:

NAAFA was represented on several national television shows last year. In January (with a rerun in June), Geneva Chapman, Sally Smith, and Nancy Summer appeared on *Sally Jessy Raphael* to talk about fat rights and activism. Neil and Paula Dachis also represented NAAFA in January on *Hour Magazine*, where they spoke about NAAFA and their relationship as a fat admirer and fat woman.

On a June segment of *Nightwatch*, Nancy Summer took on Dick Gregory and his Bahamian Diet. Although Gregory danced around the issues, Summer tackled him head on and asserted NAAFA's positions in a positive manner.

In July, The Dachis' appeared on a *Donahue* episode entitled "Odd Couples". Also included in the show were representatives of the Little People of America and others. This show was particularly positive in tone.

Later in the summer, three NAAFA couples appeared on *Sally Jessy Raphael*. Conrad Blickenstorfer and Ruby Greenwald, Dan and Sharon Davis, and Doug and Dianne Zimmer, along with Konde Wood of the Fatimas belly dancing troupe, talked about the preference of many fat admirers for large women. The show was rerun on December 26th.

NAAFAs once again appeared on *Sally Jessy Raphael* in the fall when Victoria Reed and Carrie Hemenway took on representatives for the "Bloomingdale's Eat Healthy Diet". Reed and Hemenway dealt with a hostile audience and panel members, and argued NAAFA's position with clarity and effectiveness.

NAAFAs also appeared on numerous regional and local shows, such as *People Are Talking* and *Good Morning Bay Area*, where such topics as fat women and sexuality, and fat and health were discussed.

NAAFA's anti-size discrimination balloon rally at the convention in Baltimore generated stories from both AP and UPI, as well as numerous papers, radio stations, and televised news broadcasts.

Also, NAAFA's local chapters generated publicity for themselves and NAAFA, Inc. Notably the San Francisco Bay Area chapter generated much positive coverage for Fatworks II, the

Michigan chapter for the Midwest Conference, and the Cumberland Valley chapter for the Cumberland Valley regional gathering. In addition, many other chapters have developed effective publicity campaigns in their local area.

NAAFA issued several news releases during 1988. The releases discussed many topics including Joseph Gimello's lawsuit against Agency Rental Systems, Dick Gregory's media blitz regarding the Bahamian diet, and Oprah Winfrey's show on her size ten figure as the result of the Optifast diet.

1988 represented a successful year of media appearances for NAAFA. Hopefully, 1989 will bring even more opportunities to spread the word about the work we, and others in the size acceptance movement, are doing. ☺

## Upcoming National Board Meetings

May 28th, Charlottesville, VA  
August 12, Los Angeles, CA

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# Lifestyles

NAAFA's membership has grown by almost 30 percent during 1988. The editorial staff would like to welcome all our new members by adding a new section to the Newsletter: *Lifestyles*.

Many new members are already well-versed in the principles of NAAFA and the "movement." But many other new members have just begun the process of learning about *self*-acceptance through *size* acceptance, the development of self-esteem, confidence, and so forth.

We are delighted that William J. Fabrey, NAAFA's Founder has written our first *Lifestyles* column.

## Making your world fit you!

by Bill Fabrey (VA)

One of the survival tools we learn as children is how to fit into society. It's more comfortable and less threatening to "blend in" with the crowd. Anyone who doesn't look or behave like everyone else risks being regarded as odd or a nonconformist. And when we are fat, it's much harder (if not impossible) to blend in and look like everyone else. And yet, most fat people try anyway—dieting, wearing "slimming" clothes (as if there were such a thing), shrinking into the background, standing behind others in group photographs, avoiding public gatherings that might be painful.

One of the most important things that a fat person can do to get ahead with his or her life is to give up the fruitless attempt to always fit in, to do all the adapting. The most memorable people are those who create their own unique image, whether that refers to their physical appearance, or to their personality, or whatever. After all, you are already a unique person when you are born. In some people, birth carries with it a tendency to be fat, along with countless other traits, the combination of which is truly unique. It's about time that we

recognize and even welcome that diversity. If one of your traits is a large body, make the most of it! Dress in a way you are most comfortable, that you feel is best for you. Hold your head up when you enter a room or walk in public; don't avoid people's stares—look right back at them! Don't slouch, and *don't tell jokes with your size as the butt of your own humor*. Very few can pull it off without pulling themselves down at the same time...

Make your world fit *you*, to the fullest extent possible. Surround yourself with friends who don't care what size you are (perhaps some of your friends can be from a NAAFA chapter or SIG), with books and magazines (like *Radiance*) that speak of size acceptance, with furniture that is comfortable and sturdy. If your present friends don't really accept your size, either educate 'em or get new friends! If your parents or relatives can't handle your larger figure or your newly-found self-confidence, then see them less often, or find a way of calling a truce on the size issue. You say that your books and magazines are all about waiting to live your life until you're smaller? Put them out with the trash! Your furniture (or car) is uncomfortable? Replace it as soon as you can. Never say, "I am *too big* for that dress (or that chair)." Always say, "That dress (or that chair) is *too small* for me!"

Is sexual attraction a problem? Realize that not everyone who finds your size noteworthy does so in a negative sense—especially if you emit vibes of accepting yourself! Date those with whom weight is an asset, or at least, not an obstacle. The sexiest men and women are those who can *feel* sexy, and emit mysterious rays that communicate the fact. In the 1930s, the mysterious quality of being sexy (especially in a woman) was referred to as "it." Those who had "it" were sexy, but nobody really knew why. It has little to do with how "beautiful" you are, or how attractive your clothes are, (although both are helpful). "It" doesn't depend all that much on your precise body size or shape, either. So how do you get "it"? That's a good subject for another article, and another writer...

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to charge your subscription to Visa. Choice or Mastercard (except in West Va.).

Anyway, the important thing is to embrace your individuality, and emphasize your assets. If you're a woman, avoid trying to become a "Cosmo" girl and looking like the cover of that notorious magazine; you know, the one that promotes the idea that all women who look like the usual pouty vixen on their cover can "get their man" and will find health, happiness, multiple orgasms, and their panty hose won't run. Be your own cover girl (or guy). If you're really secure in being yourself, someone will probably notice. If they don't, then you don't need 'em anyway!

Why take my advice? After all, I'm just a slightly-larger-than-average man (semi-portly to most tailors). I've never had to break out of the vicious circle of low self-esteem/underachievement that so many fat people get sucked into in this society. But, in more than 20 years in the size acceptance movement, I've noticed that those fat women and men who get what they want out of life, make *their* world fit *them*. You can do it, too! ☺

