

Winter 1998

NO LOSE NEWS

National Organization for Lesbians Of SizE

**A Support, Social and Networking Group for
Women who identify as Lesbians and who are
fat or fat positive.**

OUR FAT STORIES

This section features stories from our readers about their experiences growing up fat, or living fat in the world. Please send your submissions to us either by mail or email.

A CONGRESS OF FATGIRLS

Louise Rubalow

I have been fat all my life. Like me, you have most likely experienced jeers, taunts, ridicule, derision and abuse all because you weighed more – you were fat. During my adolescence I found the abuse rather unsettling, not because I believed their banter, but because I knew they did not know the real me. I knew I was a great person if they would only give me a chance. I was a great kid with a great sense of humor and had a heart of gold. Unfortunately, before they even met me, they saw fat and all the negative things that agree with this stereotype.

Unfortunately, I did not have the skills or the savvy to ward off these attacks and as a result I became less trusting and more jaded to my situation.

In the Spring before my 14th birthday, my
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LOCAL GROUP HAPPENINGS

Is your local support group doing exciting things you'd like to share with us? Activities, ideas, protests? Please send your submissions to us either by mail or email.

Submitted by Fat is a Lesbian Issue-
New York City

November 21st was the date of the second FLAB getaway. With 16 beautiful fat wimmin in a spacious cabin, we were all set for fun. The weekend was set at the Presbyterian Center in Holmes, New York, near Brewster. We arrived in several different groups on Friday night with wimmin traveling from as far away as Ohio and Pennsylvania and as close as New York. We brought with us a variety of games, music, and snacks to share. Within a short space of time, we had set up our common room with the treasures of our bounty. The common room became a focal point of weekend as wimmin gathered at all hours, sharing good company, great food and music as well as engaging in games of all sorts.
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NOTES FROM THE FOUNDER

It has been an exciting month for NOLOSE. We received a warm reception at SeaFATtle (the West Coast Fat Women's gathering- see article on page 5) and a great deal of support overall from the Fat Acceptance Community. We have links set up with several sites on the Internet, including NAAFA, and our site has received a "Size Wise Award" for its content. We are excited about the implementation of our bulletin board, coming up soon, and our computer exchange program (see announcement this issues for details.) We are also announcing this issue, a new program for creative writing called the NOLOSE Reader.

NOLOSE has been running continuous ads in Lesbian Connection and are receiving heart warming responses from fat lesbians nationwide who have not heard of or who are not connected in any way to the fat acceptance movement at this time. And are they glad we are here!!

I would like to clarify some misconceptions about NOLOSE, however. We are not a "virtual" organization. While we will be using the Web extensively as a tool, our main goal is accessibility to all Lesbians. To accomplish this, **all programs of NOLOSE will be accessible by phone or mail as well.**

A registration form is on the back page of this issue. If you have not yet joined NOLOSE, or even if you can not join at this time, please fill in the registration form and send to us. The forms will enable us to compile data about local support groups around the country for our National Directory.

Fat's the way it is - Dot Turnier

Letters from our Readers

Dear friend,

My name is Vickie. I loved the letter you wrote to Lesbian Connection (*Ed note: Nov/Dec 97 issue*) about fat lesbians. I have been heavy for 20 years and have gotten ridiculed about it. My mother told me I was too fat. She would say "what happened to that skinny, loving kid I used to know?" I had a lover who put me on a diet because she was ashamed of my size. Makes me wonder why she was with me in the first place if she didn't like my size. But then again, she's an alcoholic and skinny thing that she was she always called herself fat and would always diet to try and lose weight. She wanted me caught up in her sickness about her size. I lost weight but I starved the whole time. I was angry and miserable. I hated her for what she was doing to me. Every time I left the house she accused me of eating things.

I have lived most of my life being fat and feeling ashamed. One day I heard a man talking about me at work. I heard him tell his wife "If you ever get that fat I'll beat it off you." I was so humiliated.

Anyway, thanks for writing on such a sore subject. It made me feel so good to know there are other women out there like me, and I don't have to feel bad about my size anymore. Please send information about the National Organization for Lesbians of Size. I am very interested in learning more about them. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, Vickie G.

Dear Fat-lovin' sister,

My name is Katherine. I am Vickie's partner. I too loved the letter in lesbian connection. I love the whole topic, and I was glad all those people got pissed off (continued on page 3)

BELLY SONGS AVAILABLE

A Practical Guide to Successful Living

Fat girls let your shirts ride up
Lie down on the cold spring dirt
and get mud on your fat backs

(from Belly Songs: A Celebration of Fat Women - reprinted with the permission of Susan Stinson)

Belly Songs: In Celebration of Fat Women is back in print. The collections of sensuous, joyous poetry and short fiction by Susan Stinson, who is also the author of the novels Fat Girl Dances with Rocks and Martha Moody, has been reprinted in a limited edition of 500 copies. To order, send \$ 8 per copy, plus \$ 1.50 postage and handling (plus 50 center for each additional copy), to The Fund for Women Artists, 351 Pleasant St., Suite 108, Northampton, MA 01060. Please be sure to note that your order is for Belly Songs.

In conjunction with the announcement about the reprinting of Belly Songs, NOLOSE announces a **New Creative Publication**. Recognizing that there are limited resources for writing by and or about fat lesbians, we will be publishing the NOLOSE Reader (until we receive a better name from our creative writers!). We feel a creative publication will give creative artists a forum that will do justice to their work, while providing access to these writings to a readership who craves them. Susan Stinson writes to us " A place for fat lesbians to read and publish poetry and short fiction about our bodies, lives, stuggles and joys-- what a fabulous idea! I can't wait to read it."

We will begin compiling works immediately so, writers, send us your work (you will, of course, retain all rights to it) and readers, join now to ensure that you do not miss the first issue of the **NOLOSE Reader!!**

Letters from our readers (continued from page 2)

and wrote in about it.

I have been thin most of my life. People used to call me "wiry" when I was little. I can remember as early as fourth grade starting to weigh myself and worrying that I weighed all of seventy pounds!

As a young woman I was built like a brick shit house but still never liked my body. I exercised and dieted constantly and no matter how thin I was all I saw was fat. Finally I read "The Beauty Myth" by Naomi Wolf and it changed my life. I immediately stopped dieting and never looked back. I gained about 15 pounds, then lost 30 and have hovered within 20 or so pounds since then. Mostly I don't notice. I don't own a scale and never weigh myself. I don't watch what I eat. I eat what I want, when I want, as much as I want. I have finally learned to love my body and I think it is beautiful the way it is. The past two years I have gained about 40 pounds and weigh more than ever, but I'm not stressed about it. I eat healthy and I'm active. I just bought bigger clothes and went on with life.

Personally I love heavy women. I think Vickie is beautiful. I hate that people gave her so much crap about her size so now she frets so much about being fat. I love her size and I hope someday she will accept that. I came out of the closet about six years ago and every lover I've had has been fat. I once dated a thin woman. Yeah

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Letters from our Readers

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she looked great in her jeans, but when I got her home and out of her clothes, I was bored. I hated those bones sticking out of her and no tits! Ugh. She looked like a boy! I don't want to be with a boy. I want a woman!

I like a woman who is round and soft. I like pillowy, cushiony women with nice breasts, and a round belly drives me crazy! I like the feel of her weight on top of me. That skinny woman felt like nothing. I could have thrown her through the ceiling. I like putting my arms around a large woman and feeling all of her size.

It feels very powerful to me. I think being fat is the ultimate rebellion. I can hear society screeching at us "How dare you be fat?" It is like the ultimate way of taking control of ourselves as women. We should all be larger and take up more space so they have to notice us. If we stay large they can't overpower us. No man would dare try to overpower Vickie or me. The two of us would squash him to death! I am letting myself grow larger as I grow older. There was a time in history when fat was a sign of wealth. It was a sign of health and prosperity. I think it is a natural process my body is going through as it ages. A very wise friend of mine once said to me "You should eat all you can because someday you might find yourself starving to death and wished you eaten all those wonderful foods".

I recently read "The Body Project" by Joan Jacobs Brumberg. It was sobering to realize how we have internalized weight control. Whale bone corsets were bad enough, but is starvation and self-loathing any better? Check this book out. It's wonderfully affirming.

Thanks for offering such a wonderful resource for and about fat women. I am a

fan of fat women for sure. I don't want women to be ashamed of their size any more. I love you all and I want fat women to be proud of their size and not hide it. Fat women are beautiful. Let's start a revolution!

Sincerely, Katherine A.

Dear NOLOSE:

I would like to share with you a short reflection on the Fall Fat Women's Gathering in Seattle, Nov. 1997

This was my 4th Fat Women's Gathering. One thing that happens every time I go to one of these is that I'm able to lose my self-consciousness and defensiveness about my body. Even though I don't often obsess about my size, it's almost impossible not to be aware, on some level, of the daily negativity that makes up my life as a fat woman in this culture.

Without even realizing I'm doing it, I'm always conscious of my size and shape, the way I sit and stand, how I eat (and what I eat, and how much I eat), what I'm wearing, how my clothes are draping on my body. It's just a little background process that's continuously running, and I don't realize how much noise it makes until it stops.

Suddenly I'm in this place where it's safe to be fat, and everything changes. I can relax, and all the unconscious, involuntary use of my energy, which I need to guard myself against the world's negative attitudes, is given back to me. For those few days, I don't have to wonder if my stomach's hanging out, or if someone's looking at what's on my plate. Instead I can put all my energy into having a great time connecting with other intelligent, thoughtful, gorgeous fat women.

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Letters from our Readers

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This conference had many wonderful workshops - almost too many, as there were quite a few intriguing ones I had to turn down so I wouldn't miss something else, and sometimes those choices were hard.

In general, there was so much to do: workshops, pool parties (one official one and many impromptu ones), shopping, panel discussions, dancing, theatrical entertainment (play, talent show), and impromptu room parties.

There were lots of other wonderful things going on but these are the highlights that stand out in my mind:

- Susan Stinson's "Belly Songs" writing workshop
- Naomi Finkelstein's short story reading during the talent show
- The resolution of the mystery in the play
- Gretchen Glass singing the "I Am" song
- "Chunky-dunking" (as opposed to skinny-dipping) in the pool & hot tub
- The hugging exercise at the closing

Kudos to SeaFATtle for organizing a highly-energetic, creative, well-planned, welcoming and entertaining event with so much warmth and love.

Joyce W.

SeaFattle, West Coast Fat Women's Gathering

ByDot Turnier

SeaFattle, the West Coast Fall Fat Women's Gathering was held in the Seattle/Tacoma area from November 7 through 10. Attended by approximately 80 women, it was a weekend celebrating the origins of the fat acceptance movement, envisioning the future and connecting with friends, old and new.

Workshops ranged from the political, to the sexual, and fat women could be found romping around the pool any time of the day. A murder mystery, written by Miriam Berg and Summer, was presented on Saturday night, with some interesting revelations. We enjoyed the many talents of our own on Sunday night with a talent show with some moving and exciting performances. Prior to the trunk sale, which boasted over 20 vendors, we were treated to a fashion show, again, featuring our own beautiful bodies. For me, as an East Coast newcomer to the West Coast Gathering, it was an exhilarating experience. For information on future Fat Women's Gathering throughout the country, write the Feminist Caucus, a SIG of NAAFA at PO Box 29614, Oakland, CA 94604-9614.

COMPUTER EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Did you receive a new computer or peripherals for the holidays? Would you like to help another Fat Lesbian get on line? Donate your old computers, components and/or your time to another Fat Lesbian through NOLOSE!! Do you need help getting on line? Need technical help or equipment? Contact NOLOSE and we may be able to help you acquire equipment and assist you technically.

REGIONAL NOLOSE MEETINGS!!

Interested in helping to organize regional meetings for NOLOSE? Contact us!!

OUR FAT STORIES-

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parents informed me that they were sending me to diet camp that summer. Mind you, they did not ask me if I wanted to go, they were sending me. They took me to Weight Watchers when I was 10, a diet doctor with speed when I was 11, and counseling when I was 12. Nothing was working. Their daughter was not the thin princess they wanted her to be. They had to once again try something. To use their words, "We just can't let you let yourself go."

Naturally, I was appalled. I did not want to be caged up for a perfectly good summer and I was ashamed that I was in this situation. I always had to try to be better, thinner, smarter and cuter. Many tears and much pleading did not change my parents' minds. I was going. I would love it and to use their words once again, "Think of how much weight you'll lose."

I was not a happy camper. At least until I started getting to know the other girls in my bunk. Girls who were like me and shared the same kind of diet nightmare stories, the ridicule and the shame of not fitting into society's idea of what was normal. We also shared the true joy of eating.

That summer I played sports with wild abandon, loved our silly evening activities, laughed continually and conspired with my sisters on ways to raid the kitchen. My fat contemporaries knew me as the neat kid I was, not the kid who was fat and fat alone.

The Kitchen Caper was way too dangerous, and besides, what would we find in the freezer – chicken, salad, fruit.....We wanted FOOD! So we planned our getaway. With \$ and instructions from our sister campers (who were covering for us) we headed into town to buy bagels, and candy and anything we

could find. We got to town by around 10:30am. We went into a local luncheonette and ordered burgers, fries and milk shakes. I think the waitress thought it strange that we were eating that type of food that early in the day. We hit the bagel bakery and the candy store and with the chutzpah of kids who were living on the edge, we took a cab back to camp, parking just far enough away, so that we could stuff the food in our bra, socks, underwear – you name it. What a rush that trip was. We had such fun. I didn't realize I could have such fun with other girls.

Or did I? That summer I had the most huge crush on the Sports Counselor, (Karen Lundquist aka Swifty, if you are out there, I'm still waiting) I did things only a fool in love would do. Swifty became ill and had to go to the infirmary. I feigned illness so that I too could be with her. I was so lucky. I was in the bed next to her. I stared at her all night. My heart was aflutter – I was in lust! I didn't really know the word for what I was feeling because it felt so natural.

That was the summer I fell in love with my first woman and felt normal around my fat sisters. Today, when I dream about Fat Camp I wake up remembering all the fun I had and wish I could have slept longer to remember more wonderful memories. We were a congress of fatgirls who changed each others' lives.

HOLIDAY/FAMILY STORIES

Do you have a story about your holiday or with your family that is interesting, funny, touching, or anger provoking? Brought a lover home for the first time? Came out as a fat-accepting Lesbian? Ate what you wanted and told your family to bug off? Wanted dealing to but didn't? Please share your story with us at the address listed on the last page.

**LOCAL GROUP HAPPENINGS**

(Continued from page 1)

Saturday night, we were treated to a sumptuous indoor barbecue, prepared by the staff at the Presbyterian Center. We were by ourselves as we dined in the main building of the center where meals are served. After eating, we went off to a living room area, to sit by a fireplace, singing songs and telling tales about ourselves as we played the toilet paper game. (Ed. *Note: everyone rips off the amount of toilet paper they would use and then tells something about themselves for each sheet they rip off.*)

Our last day there, ended with a brunch prepared by the center. As we gathered together for one last time, we discussed our weekend getaway. Everyone was pleased with how the weekend turned out although we felt there were some accessibility issues to work on, such as ramp access to the cabin as well as the wooden bunks. We all look forward to planning a third weekend.

Some personal notes, thank you Gail and Shira for organizing this event. Thank you to all of the wimmin who shared of their time and talent to make this weekend a success: especially Diana for her poker lessons and Michelle for the treats she whipped up: those hot treats she cooked up in the cabin and her beautiful bare breasted wimmin lollipops.

Submitted by Full Bloom Women - Philadelphia

Hello--
Full Bloom Women out of Philadelphia is a group for fat women of all sexualities (lesbian, bi-sexual and straight) and all sizes of large who are on the path towards self-acceptance. We are not a group

focused on weight loss. We believe in leading full productive and enjoyable lives, no matter what our size. We meet together as women to share support, have fun, network, put forth a positive size acceptance message and to change the world. We've been meeting formally since May of '97. This past month Au Courant, a local paper in Philadelphia did a piece on living large. We got a lot of great press. In our growth process we'd like to investigate/consider the development of policies and procedures, planning structure, dues, fund raising, educational and social programming and other assorted issues. If you could send us anything you have that's written down that relates to these issues we'd appreciate it very much. Looking at how other successful organizations have done things will help us make some decisions. You can send the information to wheezles@aol.com. If you can send hard copy by snail mail, please email me personally and I will send out my home address. (Ed note: Or send to NOLOSE and we will forward) Thanks so much for your help.

To contact NOLOSE:**NOLOSE****245 Eighth Ave. # 107****New York, NY 10011****Tel: (201) 843-4629****Web Site: www.breakinc.com/nolose****E mail: NOLOSEE@aol.com****Membership: \$ 20 annually***Limited scholarships and work exchange available.*

Whether you are joining at this time or not, please fill out and send in registration form that is on the back page!!

National Organization for Lesbians of Size

Registration Form

Please note all information will remain confidential and is optional. *Even if you do not wish to join at this time, please fill in form for our census.*

Do you wish to join? _____ (check if yes)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone No. _____

Email address: _____

Do you want to be put on our mailing list? _____ (check if yes)

or do you want to access us on line only? _____ (check if yes)

or both? _____ (check if yes)

How did you hear about NOLOSE?

Have you looked at our web site? _____ (check if yes)

Any feedback?

Do you have a local size acceptance support group? _____ (check if yes)

Is it women only, Lesbian only, Lesbian friendly (circle all that apply)

Name and address and phone number of local group (for our mailing list and directory)

If you wish to join, enclose a \$ 20 check payable to NOLOSE and mail to 245 Eighth Ave. # 107, NY, NY 10021. Your membership fees go to support NOLOSE programs.

For more information, you can visit our web site at www.breakinc.com/nolose, email us at nolose@aol.com or call us at (201)843-4629.