

Letters

Like the finest chocolate!

Dear Divine Max Airborne and celestial staffers of the totally faboo *Fat Girl*: Thanks for the tres kind review/write-up of *Living Large* you ran in issue #2. It was unexpected, and most appreciated! I've even gotten a response to it; it was from a male porn collector who thought it might be similar material to your own groovy zine. So sorry to have disappointed him (yeah, right). Was totally blown away by issue deux of yr zine. Most zines usually blow out the jams on issue 1 and subsequently go downhill at varying rates of speed. You not only exceeded the initial promise of your premiere but have set a new standard for yourselves. I was able to devour #1 in one glorious sitting; I find #2 is so dense and intense that I'm having to merely nibble a bit at a time, like the finest chocolate. Will definitely have to get busy with some butt photos for y'all. Thanks again, for the review, and for your dedication to Fat Girls everywhere!

KM

Sisterspirit responds

Dear *Fat Girl*:

This letter is in response to the "No Armless Chairs? Saw them off!" article about Sisterspirit Bookstore in Issue #2. We were very disappointed to see something such as this written about us, since this was the first we had heard of the issue. We have both armless chairs and chairs with arms (for volunteers and for customers), as well as a large bench in our store. There is a coffee cart and a lounge area in the community center that we are located in, but I can only speak for our store.

We are a co-op run, 100% volunteer women's bookstore, and at any time someone is free to attend our monthly open meetings to bring up an issue, or write a letter, etc. No one has mentioned a request for bigger/different chairs until this article, and therefore we have never "refused" to provide them. We would have gladly accommodated a request, had it been made. We have since then received suggestions from women in our community as to the kinds of chairs they prefer, and we are working to solve the "problem."

Sisterspirit welcomes women of all ages, nationalities, sexual orientations, disabilities, sizes, etc. If we are doing something that is not "right," we invite our community to let us know so we can do something to change it. Please help us improve by giving us feedback and suggestions, and not just accusatory statements that may or may not be true.

DM

A member of the Sisterspirit collective (and also a proud fat dyke)

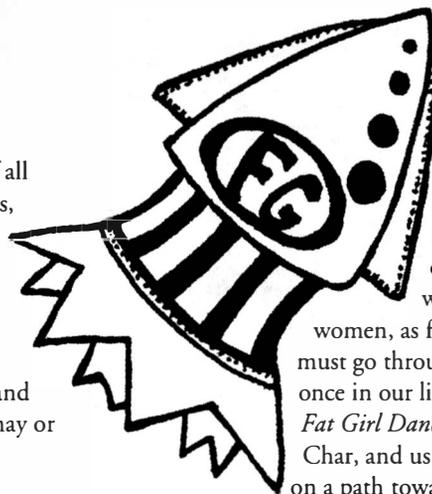
Reviews: *Fat Girl Dances With Rocks*

Dear *Fat Girl*,

Wow—I had such a different reaction to *Fat Girl Dances With Rocks* [by Susan Stinson, Spinster's Ink] than Selena that I felt like she and I read different books! I *loved* *Fat Girl Dances*, so I'm writing to give *Fat Girl's* readers another perspective on this book. *Fat Girl Dances* is a small story but an important one. Char, the main character, is the 17-year old fat daughter of a fat mother. Like many of us who grew up fat, Char's life is full of regular humiliations both large and small, daily weight checks with mom, and unceasing pressure to achieve the ever-elusive but all-important goal—becoming thin. Only then is Char supposed to feel all right about herself.

But Char is more than the sum of her fat oppressions, and *Fat Girl Dances* is larger than its simple story line. *Fat Girl Dances* portrays the quiet moments when Char creeps towards self-acceptance. The novel beautifully shares the small steps Char takes towards loving herself. But in *Fat Girl Dances*, Susan Stinson gives us a heroine brave and true, capable also of making giant leaps into moments of utter freedom. The first time Char eats alone in a restaurant, *ordering exactly what she wants to eat,* is such a leap—the type of small, usually invisible heroics that fill the lives of women everywhere. During the summer of *Fat Girl Dances*, Char begins to stop participating in her own fat oppression.

Even though *Fat Girl Dances* is the story of a young woman's transformation, don't be put off by the heroine's youth. Char's changes, begun but not completed in



Fat Girl Dances, are changes each of us—as women, as fat women, as fat lesbians—must go through at least once in our lives. Really, *Fat Girl Dances* starts Char, and us beside her, on a path towards self-dis-

covery and self-love that we will continue throughout our lives.

So that's the story, sort of, and then there's the language of *Fat Girl Dances*. Susan Stinson bathes us in language both precise and extravagant, filled with details that make real just how it feels to live inside every curve, fold and bend of Char's fat body, and of our own. *Fat Girl Dances* is rich with description, evoking every sense as we learn, along with Char, just how our fat bodies really feel. With Char, we expand from a reality squeezed too tight outward to the very edges of our skin. *Fat Girl Dances* is a journey, a boat rocking on language so smooth and perfect that it seems utterly effortless, with images so clear and strong that we may think we've always seen them. And that's the brilliance of *Fat Girl Dances*—Susan Stinson takes a reality usually hidden in this fat-hating world, and exposes it, sharp edges and soft, to our view. *Fat Girl Dances* is a story some of us have lived and all of us should know. Sumptuous and musical in its images, abundantly—no, fatly full of life, *Fat Girl Dances* is a treasure to be shared by every woman on the journey to self-love.

XXXXL,

Judith Stein

Reviews: *Women En Large*

Dear Fat Girls:

Language, words are the tools of a writer's trade, and everyone who writes uses those tools to the best of her ability, the best of her awareness of connotation, shades of meaning, points of reference. But none of us are exempt from the mistakes caused by the human tendency to hear our own voices saying our words, to believe that our own complex understanding of our intentions is iden-

tical to the simpler (and sometimes wrong) words we choose. I want to thank Candida for pointing out two serious errors of that kind in my work.

When I wrote the text for *Women En Large*, I knew some important things that the reader has no way to know. I knew that I intended the sentence immediately following Queen T'hisha's piece to refer to the entire preceding long essay, not to Queen T'hisha's words specifically. I knew that so well that I (and approximately ten other people who read the text before publication) missed the point that Candida accurately brings out: that sentence can be read as a misrepresentation of the very important things she has to say.

Similarly, I know what the word "outrageous" means to me. I tend to use it with more than a bit of envy for the flair and style (and courage) I associate with it. Nonetheless, it's my job as writer to be aware that this is not mainstream discourse (just as using "fat" as a compliment, or "girl" as an empowering word, is not mainstream discourse). By failing to take that into account, I made a bad choice. "Courageous" would have been a better word; certainly, its connotations would have been more in keeping with what I meant. I am deeply sorry that April Miller found her experience was tainted and her words dismissed. I take this opportunity to extend a personal apology to her for that experience. Nonetheless, I believe that her words are strong and memorable, and that readers will not find her empowering statements easy to dismiss.

If *Women En Large* goes into a second printing, "courageous" will replace "outrageous" and appropriate changes will be made in the text following Queen T'hisha's comments.

I am sorry that these two errors were sufficient reason for Candida to dismiss the entire text. Our experiences over the past six months confirm that *Women En Large* is serving its purpose as a successful life-changing phenomenon for many women of a wide variety of sizes, ethnicities, and life experiences, and we have every reason to believe it will continue to do so. I hope that the readers of *Fat Girl* will

choose, as Candida recommends, to taste the text (and the universally acclaimed photographs) for themselves, bearing in mind that no writer is perfect, and that an imperfect text is not the same as one with no merit.

Your magazine is terrific!

Abundantly yours,
Debbie Notkin
author/editor
Women En Large: Images of Fat Nudes

Fat bi visibility

Dear Fat Girlies:
Howdy! Thank you very much for the review of *Pasty* in *Fat Girl* #2!!! I was SO surprised and flattered to be on the same page with Nomy (*I'm So Fucking Beautiful*) and Marilyn (*Fat!So?*). I can't wait to hear from other fat girls who read your magazine!!!

One leetle correction: I'm not a dyke, I'm a proud BI chick! Yee-HA! I love being fat AND bi, too—sometimes I feel like I could take over the world!!! YAY for fat bi visibility!

Comments on *Fat Girl* #2: tres steamy, especially the pictures of Dina and Candida. I wanna see more from these two babes! I also loved the article on the book *Women: En Large ...* that comment about April being "outrageous" made my blood fucking boil. April, you're not outrageous, except for being outrageously sexy! Your words about self-esteem and pride were so true and beautiful, and reflected the way I feel about MY lovely shape. You just GO, girl!

Take care all you gorgeous vixens, and I can't wait to get *Fat Girl* #3! Big wet steamy kisses,
SK

Starved

I would love to receive at least one issue of *Fat Girl*. I read about you both in *Deneuve* and *Girlfriends*. I am a short, round dyke who is starved for seeing more fat women, women who are fat and unashamed. I was thrilled from head to toes to see that such a publication exists. I would like to subscribe, for starters.

ed. reply: Please also let the editors of the publications you mentioned (and others you read) know that you are a fat dyke and would like to see images of fat dykes in their pages, too.—FG

continued...

FAT GIRL

Fat Girl is a zine for and about fat dykes. Fat Girl seeks to create a broad-based dialogue that both challenges and informs our notions of fat dyke identity. We encourage dialogue based on our lived experiences as fat dykes, recognizing that our lives are various and multifaceted. Fat Girl is produced by an eclectic collective of fat dykes. We come in all shapes and sizes; from diverse ethnic cultures and different class backgrounds. Fat Girl is a political act; we want your participation.

Fat Girl collective members: April Miller, Barbarism, Bertha Pearl, Candida Albicans, Max Airborne, Oso and Selena.

Staff photographer: Laura Johnston.

Layout: April, Barb, Max and Selena.

Business caca: Max

Editorial/Photo caca: Barb

Transcription/copy edit queens: Candida & Max

Ad sales: Bertha

Logo by Fish.

Other contributors to this issue: Amiee Ross, Betty Rose Dudley, Cath Thompson, Charlotte Cooper, Christine, Crystal Mason, Dana Blumrosen, Dorothy Allison, Jill Posener, Karen Stimson, Laura Winton, Lea Arellano, Lila Sophia Robinwood, Lori Ann Selke, Maria Cimino, Marian Bailey, Michele G, Sisters of Size, Sondra Solo, Steph, Syndee Branton, Tristan Nathe, Val, Vicki Hodges, Wolfie.

Cover photo: Crystal Mason by Laura Johnston.

Back cover photo: Barbarism

Thanks to our devoted readers and contributors, the friends who never tire of hearing our Fat Girl sagas, and the generous souls who see fit to send us extra money (we always need it). Special thanks to Meridith Lawrence & Judith Stein (Pumpke and Tubby) for lighting the way.

Subscriptions: Send \$20/4 issues, \$5/sample along with a signed age statement to the address below.

Stores: Our terms are 60/40, you pay shipping.

Ads: Business cards: \$40, quarter page: \$75, half page: \$150. Send your ads ready to scan. We can shrink to fit. Ad design is available for an additional fee.

Submissions: We accept original work by women that's relevant to fat dykes. Please include a S.A.S.E. with your stuff. We like written submissions that are typed & in a simple font (so we can scan it). We are always on the lookout for art!!! Don't ever send us your original copy of anything. Please include a brief bio with your stuff and model releases for your photos (we can send you these if you don't have them).

Next deadline is August 15, 1995.

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is a political act

Worth the wait

It's very exciting that you're doing a Web page! Our email address: 75773.717@compuserve.com—thanks for including us! I also want to thank you for the wonderful things you said about Largesse in *Fat Girl 2*.

Calling Largesse “our friendly neighborhood fat archivist” is just about the nicest thing anyone's ever said about us! We've gotten several orders for the sourcebook and other stuff which I'm sure resulted directly from your listings. And while I'm writing this I want you to know how much I LOVE your zine...the second issue is even better than the first and really inclusive of the community you serve. It's ironic that the segment of the movement that pioneered fat liberation—radical fat dykes and bykes—has had to wait nearly a quarter century to get its own magazine, but *Fat Girl* was worth the wait! I expect (even) great(er) things to come of you! Keep in touch—Big hugs to all.
Karen Stimson, Largesse

Giant Ass speaks

It might seem obvious to some but it should not go unsaid—I must tell all you “phAt fat girls” that your zine is most excellent and extraordinary! It's been a long time coming that the voice of fat girls be heard!—So keep on gettin down and serious with your groovicious publication. I'll spread the word locally. Stay with it—the universe needs *Fat Girl*!

xo stacy sheehan

Giant Ass Publishing

Yippie!

You all rule! I've been a fat activist for almost ten years (was stuck in diet hell for eight years before that) and am so excited to see your zine! You go girly.

Trapped in a cuddly prison

Hello, “Fat Girls”,

I just received the second issue of *Fat Girl* (which is the first issue I have seen.) I loved it tremendously. Looking at the photographs made me realize how unaccustomed we are to seeing fat people in pictures, unless it's someone's idea of comic relief or “grotesque.” I am so, so happy to see serious and beautiful pictures of fat women. Like another reader whose letter you published, I have been calling myself “fat” with pride. Many people misunderstand and think that I am putting myself down, as if being fat could only mean something negative. I love to eat and I still struggle with the idea of “eating too much,” meaning eating more than my

share, as well as/besides “overeating.”

Women in this culture seem to be socialized toward thinking restraint toward food is “feminine” and that it is polite to go hungry rather than to eat one's fill.

I am not even sure that I am, in fact, “fat,” though (as my mother is sure to remind me) I am certainly “overweight” (whatever that means). I have stopped looking at the scales long ago, since I never diet and I dislike going along with this game of “checking up on” my weight, as if it makes any difference. I am short and have a belly, and rather than being perceived as “scary” as some of your contributors noted, I seem to be trapped in the prison of “cuddly,” as in “innocent and childlike,” not as in “sexy.” This is frustrating, as I feel that I cannot define me as I wish to define myself, but am defined by my body-type (and probably by the additional condition of having a physical disability). It is on this ground that I very strongly relate to so much of what is being said in *Fat Girl*. People claim that “you can't judge a book by its cover,” but people seem to make a whole host of unfounded assumptions when they look at fat people.

I can't wait to see subsequent issues and may yet contribute to one of them. My only reservation concerns the breadth of sexual experience explored within *Fat Girl*. It's not that I am among that class of prudes who cannot even bear to hear about S/M practices, let alone look at them. Rather, I think our sexual vision can be wider than this, can be wider even than the supposed polarities of “vanilla” vs. “S/M” stories. Surely there is more to life than this? Also, I hope that you continue with the useful practical tips you offer, including the resource guides, and the personal experiences. Those are a joy to read.

Bountifully,

I J

Manhattan visitor's bureau

Dear *Fat Girl*,

The staff of this zine deserves great praise from all fat girls. I am a completely hunky dyke who lives in Manhattan, NYC and I adore your magazine. Yes, I am fat, but I am a brilliant bohemian she-goddess who can make the little girls swoon when I care to. If any of the *Fat Girl* staff visit Manhattan, I would be honored to show them the town. I now remove my hat, place it on my heart and sing your praises.

Retropixie

Readers and Writers II

Dear *Fat Girl*,

Thank you so much for existing. I had gotten to a place in my life where I could accept being fat, but until I read your magazine (issues 1 & 2), I had no clue that being a fat girl could be celebrated. I was lucky enough last year to run into another large woman who was so sensuous she broke through all my fat-phobia. I'll always be grateful to her for showing me the pleasure of loving a large woman. It took reading *Fat Girl* for me to accept that all large women, myself included, are worthy of being visible, worshipped, and paid attention to. As a writer and an artist I have decided to include large women in my work. They might not always be the main focus but they will be there. No more so-called perfect worlds where everyone is thin and that is the only standard of beauty.

At Readers and Writers II, the conference put on by A Different Light bookstore, there was a panel called “The Boy/Girl Next Door Need Not Apply.” I would like to tell you what the panel was supposed to be discussing, but it wasn't clear to the audience, the panelists, or the moderator. The panel consisted of Max Airborne (because of *Fat Girl*?), Anne Ogborn (because she is transgender?), and Julia Dolphin Trahan (because she is a performance artist, because she uses a crutch?). The moderator was Joan Jett Black. All of these people are the boy/girl next door. You might not think so because of media invisibility. By media I mean most writers. Until we all start writing about ourselves and others, there will continue to be the perception that we are fringe elements. That there are not enough of us to pay attention to. I read books and stories about lesbians because I want to see that part of my life reflected. I want to know I am not alone. For the same reasons, I want to read *Fat Girl*. I also read to find out about other kinds of people. Is it too much to ask that other writers consider the wide range of flavors that people come in and try to include some of them? I'm not asking for a PC, one-of-everything story, just that more than a narrow few be included.

The panel was scheduled at the same time as two other very popular panels, which was a pity because it just made sure we would remain “on the fringe” and that the writers that really needed to hear us probably wouldn't. I want to thank Max Airborne and her fellow *Fat Girl* editor for showing up and staying, even when it looked like there would only be five audience members.

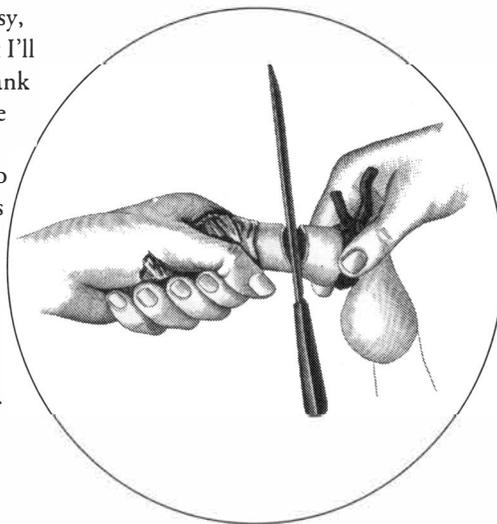
And thank you all for encouraging fat dykes to be visible and verbal. You give me hope.
LR

Fat dykes in Japan

Dear *Fat Girl* Dykes,
I want to tell you what a huge effect your zine has had on my life, but I hardly know where to start! I'm no stranger to Fat Liberation—I was organizing Fat Dyke workshops at Michigan Womyn's Music Festival 1986-88, but I tell you, that stuff needs doing over and over again. Or needs constant reinforcement, or something. I was truly overwhelmed by the photos—I don't think I've ever seen such frank pictures of fat dykes. And you came along just when I needed you, just that week I'd been working with my therapist on "choosing to see my own beauty"—not easy when you are the only fat dyke around. Not only that, practically the only fat woman. I never see a dyke whose weight could possibly be within a hundred pounds of mine (not sure what, but I'm probably 300). And that makes it hard to appreciate that I could be beautiful. I also got to talk to my lover about some things around sex I was finding it hard to express,

using *Fat Girl* as a starting point. Not easy, but necessary. Lots more I could say, but I'll suffice with Thank you, Thank you, Thank you, you are bodacious dykes, and I hope you'll get enough \$ to go on producing your fabulous zine. I'm enclosing a photo—well, I know what you look like, so it's only fair. I don't have any less-clothed ones, and even if I did I wonder if I'd have the nerve to send one. This internalized fat oppression stuff sure is pervasive, thank the Goddess you've come along to shake us all into **dealing** with it. NOW!

Lesbially,
AH
Tokyo, Japan



FAT GIRL letters policy

We love receiving letters from our women readers. Consent to publish your letter is assumed unless you specify otherwise. Send letters, art, submissions, gifts and money to: *Fat Girl*, 2215-R Market St. #193, San Francisco, CA 94114. And don't forget, you can also send us email at airborne@sirius.com.

We do not print letters or submissions from men. Please remember: *Fat Girl* is a zine for fat dykes and the women who want them. ★

Things to do on a

