

Southern

Hospitality...

A TRIP TO THE SAN DIEGO PRIDE PARADE

by M.G. Cimino

When my girlfriend's mom extended an open invitation for us to come visit her in her beach house in

San Diego this summer, we decided that the pride parade, held two weeks after San Francisco's, was the perfect excuse. With enthusiasm, I tossed my *FaT GiRL* t-shirt into my luggage. Sondra warned me that we were going to the city that prided itself on being home to the Jenny Craig World Headquarters.

"Haven't you looked around?" I scoffed "The world is ready to confront its fat phobia. Fat politics is here to stay."

The first thing I noticed when we arrived, as we sat looking at the late-afternoon beach crowd, was there were no fat people. I'm not kidding. We sat and watched people go up and down the walk for hours. There were joggers, power walkers, roller bladers, and cyclists, but no casual walkers, no one strolling, enjoying the sunset over the ocean.

"Fat people don't go to the beach here," Sondra's mom said. When I asked why, she just shrugged. I decided they'd all been mowed down by the blondes zipping past in their frenzied athleticism.

The next morning, we donned our parade gear, including my *FaT GiRL* t-shirt. I have to admit I was a little hesitant, but I'd gotten such a great reaction wearing it proudly in S.F., that I figured I might be pleasantly surprised. I was wrong.

Once we'd staked out our spot on the parade route, I went in search of coffee. As I walked, my chest never attracted so much attention in my life. Two separate people outside a juice bar read my shirt, avoided eye contact and said, loud enough for me to hear, "No kidding!" I hadn't had to deal with such blatant fat phobia in years. There were snickers, whispers, and averted eyes. One person, ONE, a gay man, said he liked my shirt. The fat women who saw my shirt seemed embarrassed. I was stunned.

When I returned to the parade route, I could tell my experiences drew some skepticism from my companion. As we waited for the parade, it was easy to keep track of the reaction my *FaT GiRL* shirt drew from passing people. None. It was as if as soon as they read my shirt, I was invisible, with the exception of two queens who strolled by; both complimented me on it and said it was great. Are we keeping

track, girls? I've now had three gay men cheer me on and not one woman even comment.

My girlfriend took matters into her own hands and took some sidewalk chalk. "Fat Girls Rule," she wrote in the street. Our space was being staked out. This was turning into a war. If we were going to be the only fat dykes proud of our size, then so be it. It was time to make some noise and kick some skinny ass.

The parade passed uneventfully. We screamed. We yelled, "Fat Girls Rule!" We were virtually ignored. Not one thumbs up. Not one cheer back. There was no reaction. Zip. Nada. Zilch. The thin people looked through us and the fat people looked away.

The largest group in the parade was the "Gay San Diego Athletes"

contingent. If you tacked on the separate swimming and surfing organizations, half the parade was there because of their physical fitness connection. It was weird.

Finally, from out of the crowd appeared two overweight lesbians. The larger one pointed to her girlfriend's t-shirt that said, "Out and Fat." We're so cool, they exclaimed. She asked about my t-shirt.

"It's the name of a 'zine in San Francisco." I replied.

"What's a 'zine?" she asked.

They then sat down right on our Fat Girls Rule sign and had to be dealt with severely. So much for

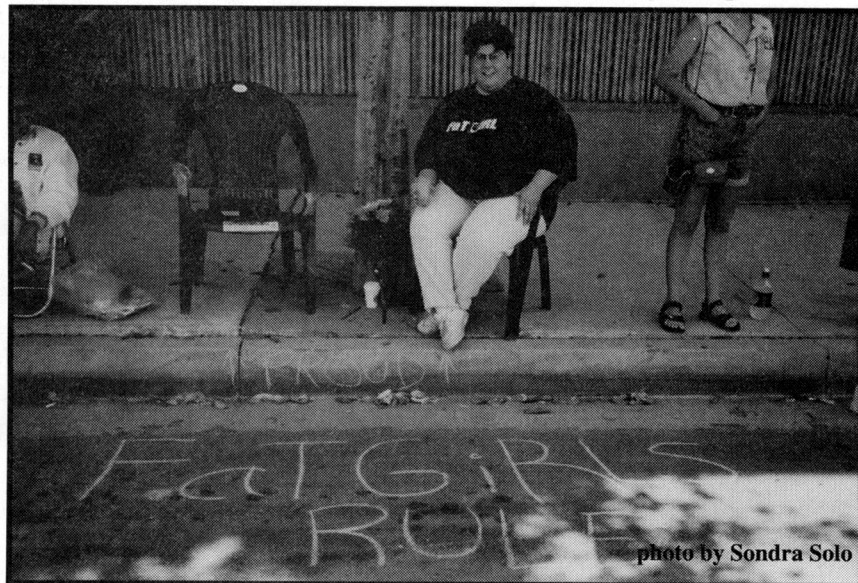


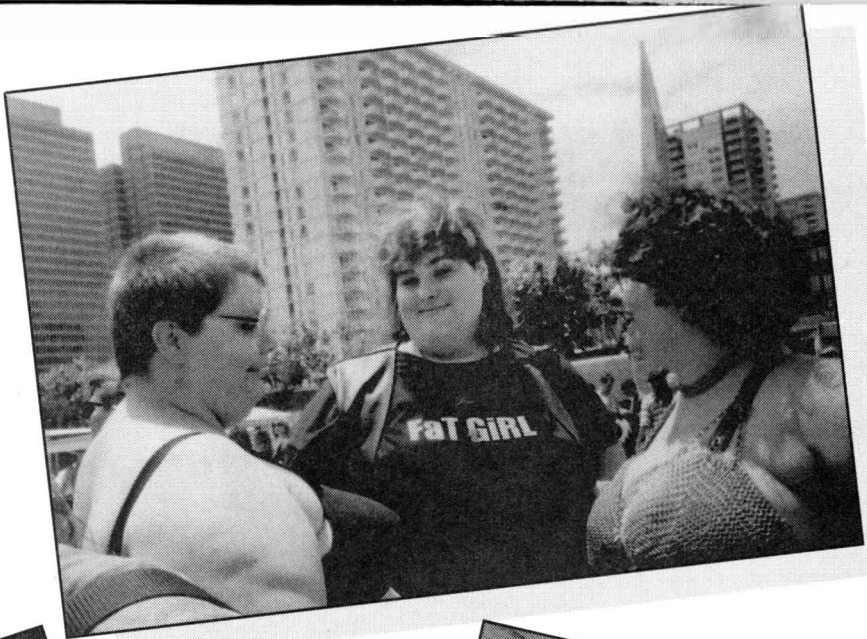
photo by Sondra Solo

bonding with our southern fat sisters.

After the parade, I was depressed. Sondra had warned me there weren't fat people in San Diego. And if they dare leave their house, they're not tolerated. She told me of the day she sat on her porch, looking at the beach when a cyclist rode by. The blonde, thin woman looked over her shoulder as she whizzed past and yelled, "Jenny Craig is open on Saturdays." Her friends laughed hysterically as they pedalled on.

San Diego may be a beautiful vacation spot. The weather may be gorgeous. But the tan and fit blondes who fill the city are some of the ugliest people I've ever seen. ✨

The FaTGIRL booth at the SF Queer Pride Parade (no, that's not the official name) was loads of fun. Candida, Bertha and Barb fed girls strawberries for \$1 (such a deal!), and we all sold T-shirts, stickers, and zines while hanging with old friends, meeting new people, and trying to keep the booth from blowing over.★



...and Northern Exposure

