

Surfer Girls

[RETURN] [PAUSE] [HELP] [ESC] by Laurel Gilbert and Crystal Kile [CONTROL] [OPTION]

Do you cringe when you hear the words “information superhighway?” Did you take the first exit after encountering the frenzied mob of flammers and lurkers? I know that my early enchantment with the internet ended when I posted to the group Rec.gambling and my mailbox was flooded with vicious e-mails from guys who didn’t have the balls to disagree with me in the public forum of the newsgroup discussion. Even the luster of checking my e-mail every three hours wore off. And now, with the exception of specific chores, the internet holds little attraction for me.

But, I have to admit that *Surfer Girls* got me to dust off my surfboard and go for a quick sail around the web. I had been a computer science major for two years, way back when, but this book taught me more about women and computers than four years at an Ivy League school. For me, the story of Augusta Ada Byron, daughter of Lord Byron, was enough to make the book worth reading. Playing an early role in the development of a “counting engine,” Augusta, known as Ada, proposed a method for the engine to create music by having the user give specific instructions to the machine. Over 100 years later, the first programming language was developed and name “ADA” in her honor. The chapter goes on to name more women and their impressive list of contributions. Anyone interested in putting women back into history should pick up a copy and peruse the chapter.

After the first 50 pages of personal history and background, the gals get down to the nitty gritty. From memory needs to anti-virus programs, the novice can get a good overview of computer requirements. There’s even a couple of pages devoted to discussion

of possible health risks from surfing the web that experienced users may benefit from. Along with a brief overview on the effects of bad posture, symptoms of carpal tunnel, and possible effects of monitor emissions are websites a stricken user can go to for more information.

Probably some of the biggest strengths of the book are the addresses and resources sprinkled throughout the book that can be reached on-line. The biggest drawback is that the material is dry and much of the technical stuff is passed on in a dictionary style format of here-is-the-word-now-memorize-the-meaning, but I’m not sure that there’s a more pleasant way to present the information.

The book goes on to discuss how to choose an internet provider, how to get on the web and even what a newbie grrl can expect to find there. There’s even a nice political cry to take back the newsgroup alt.feminism from the men who dominate its discussions. The book then closes with some interviews with some women who work the web to the max, but I found them rather boring.

Overall though, this is a good to great book. Especially for anyone who isn’t sure yet what all the fuss is about, it’s a good way to get started and decide if the internet is a place you want to add to your life’s itinerary. More experienced users will find some parts unnecessary or dry, but my guess is that almost everyone who flips through it will find at least a few tidbits to their interest. And the authors have a great point when they point out that the obvious solution to a creepy, geek guy male dominated internet is to get more women online. Surf’s up grrls, lets take over the world. The internet is a great place to start.

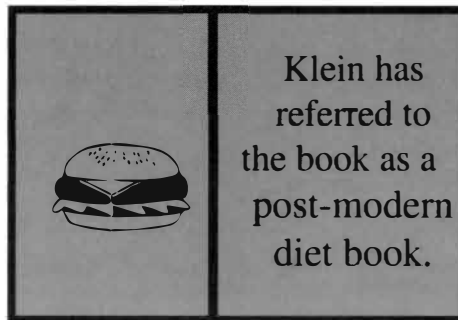
Eat Fat

by Richard Klein

I found *Eat Fat* a strange book to review. Of course, I made the mistake of reading the introduction before the body of the book which the author specifically warns against doing. Silly me, I thought the introduction might tell me what the book was about. Instead, it made me less sure what the book was about.

It seems to boil down to Klein’s argument that eating fat, and being less concerned with how we look will cause us to be healthier. In fact he says, we may even lose weight. It is not a new argument, but even still, it is a supposition which shocks the mainstream. No less than “Utne Reader” disputes it as kook science and asks “What’s next ‘Handguns are Harmless’?” (Utne Reader, Nov-Dec, 1996, page 92) I guess it still surprises me that people find the idea of eating how and whatever we want to be blasphemous.

Klein spends pages pointing out that many cultures and people find fat attractive. And, hey, guess what? Being fat isn’t as unhealthy as we think. He even pulled



a major amount of material from FaT GiRL. On the surface, you’d think a fat activist would love this stuff, but Klein trips over himself.

In arguing that eating rich meals that satisfy will, in the long run, be healthier

than eating more of less delicious food, he points to the rich diet of the French and how they approach meal time. He then points out that as a country the French are overall thinner than Americans. And that is a major problem. In one breath he says that being fat is no sin, being fat doesn’t mean being unhealthy, but then goes on to equate thinness with health and wellbeing. In fact, Klein’s goal in writing this book is to lose the 20 to 30 lbs he’s been trying to take off for years. Klein has even referred to the book as a ‘post-modern diet book’. And that is why every argument he tries to make loses its validity. And that is why Mr. Klein is a ‘shock jock’ trying to make a buck off the fat acceptance movement. And that is why I recommend you give this book a wide berth and don’t dare put another penny in Mr. Klein’s pocket.