

HER VIEW: Gender inequity comes in all forms

By Jean Wardwell

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When did sizes 12-14 become "plus sizes?"

I have worn size 14 most of my life. Even in high school when I was 112 pounds at 5'8" I wore a size 14. I had to. I'm built like linebacker with huge shoulders and big bones. My shoulders were a size 16 or 18. My bust line was a size 8 and my hips were size 10-12. There is no such size for those measurements. The best I could do was a size 14. My hipbones in those days rivaled Cher's. She could have envied me I had so little padding on my bones.

There are lots of women out there today wearing size 12 or 14 who are not overweight. Their build demands that size. Not everyone is going to fit in a size 4.

I was moderately overweight until the Body Mass Index came along. Then I became obese. I didn't gain any weight. In point of fact I weight 22 pounds less than I used to. Now however with the new BMI, I am obese.

There are all kinds of reports in the media of how large a percentage of our society is obese these days. On TV these stories are shown with people having thunder thighs, huge hips and enormous abdomens. This doesn't do anything for the average person who doesn't look like that. They can't be obese. None of us qualify for a Rubens painting. We

still are obese. When the bar for obesity was lowered then of course there are more obese people.

It does the general population no good to show the truly obese people as a general rule. I don't argue that there are far too many people who are obese today. We need a better dialog on this issue as we do other things in our society.

The real concern is with the school-age children who are obese. That is a scary future for those children when they grow to adulthood. One article I read in the last year said women should weigh five pounds less than they did in high school after age 30. This article assumed that every women reading it had been height and weight proportional. It does nothing for those of us who had an eating disorder (undiagnosed lactose intolerance), or all the students who are overweight or obese in high school these days.

The medical profession is now in love with the Body Mass Index. It is more about height and weight proportionality. It unfortunately says nothing about us female linebackers who have truly large bones.

I worry what this drive to have all girls under size 10 is going to do to the young ladies who are never going to be able to get into a size 10 because of their bone structure. Girls' and women's clothing isn't sized for different body types. I know. I have orangutan arms, in length. The difference in sleeve length between a size 8 and a size 22 blouse is less than half an inch.

My favorite sweater, I found at a yard sale. It is a men's size medium. However, it has orangutan arms in it. Even when I unroll the cuffs and let it hang, the ends of the sleeves come down to my fingertips. No wonder the poor gentleman who received it never wore it.

I used to say I wouldn't believe in women's lib until blouses were sized for women the way men's shirts are. Since women still are not given equal pay for the same work as men, women's lib hasn't truly worked yet. This should concern men as much as it does women. Eighty percent of those losing their jobs in this economic downturn are men. Women are left trying to support their families not on half of the previous family take-home pay but on 35 percent to 40 percent of what it was.

Our society has lots of work to do before we have Lincoln's more perfect union. Shouting down people with opposing views will not get it done.

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