

# DISTORTED IMAGE

By Lenore D. Kaiser

Being in the fitness world for over ten years, you see all walks of life - over-weight, under-weight, big-bottom, top heavy, muscle-heads...you name it, you will find it at your local fitness gym. As I rushed in one day to teach an athletic conditioning class, a young lady caught my eye. She was waffle thin. She looked like a skeleton with skin—no muscle mass to speak of, just bones with clothes on. It stopped me in my tracks and I was sure that I was gawking her like every other person around her was. It brought back old memories of a person I once knew twelve or more years ago, a person I almost let myself forget. I was uncomfortably awe struck by this abnormally thin image in front of me as I passed her by and realized that my mission that day was to not let my past memory be forgotten.

I shuffled into the aerobic room to find fifty or more members of the club waiting on me. Once I got situated, I told the class we would be ending the class a little earlier than normal because I wanted to share a story with them at the end of the class during stretching. As I went through my gruesome heart-bounding conditioning class with the members, I could see through the glass doors leading into the aerobic room. The waffle thin young lady was on the outside looking in. It was difficult to look at her or even make eye contact, but I did.

She looked right back at me. I managed to smile and made a waving suggestion to encourage her to join in. Hesitantly, she did.

When the music slowed down and the stretching session started, I began my story: "Class, about twelve or so years ago, I knew a girl who had everything. She was in sports, cheer-leading, had lots of friends, and one day something changed. She began being distant with people, her eating habits were scarce, and over the next few years, I saw this girl go from a 115-pound athletic person to a barely 60-pounds." As I went on with my story, I walked the room looking

at each member in the eye as they sat looking back at me and then my eyes met the waffle thin young lady. "There came a day," I continued, "when this girl I knew had done so much damage to her body she was seeing a doctor because her heart was beating abnormally. At this point, this person I knew back then had hair so dry due to lack of nutrition that if she brushed it, clumps would fall out. Her face was so bloated from forcing herself to throw up, she had dark circles under her eyes, and unhealthy looking teeth due to not getting the nourishment she needed. And, on her left upper side of her hand she had a permanent scar from her upper teeth rubbing against her skin when she was throwing up." I looked back at the waffle thin lady at that moment, "That scar is still on

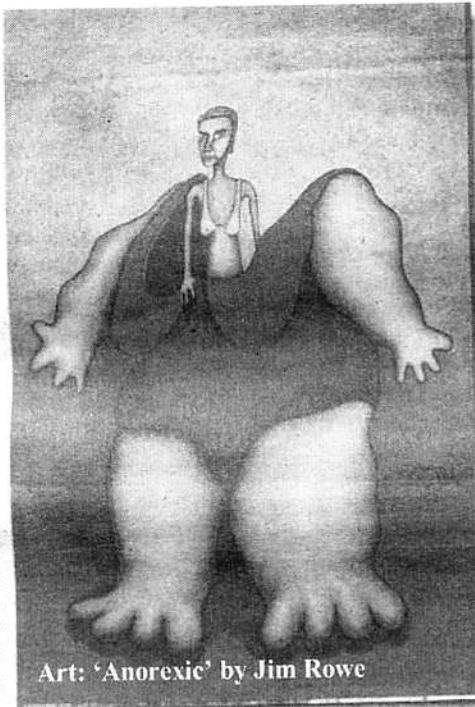
her hand..." I raised my left hand to the class still looking at the frail lady looking back at me, "Because that scar belongs to me." The room was deathly silent as I continued to tell my class my triumph over the years to overcome my personal demons, but I knew I needed to share it with them. If it was only for one reason - to strike a cord and make a change in the waffle thin lady who came into my life that day.

I got many members coming up to me after class amazed that I went through such an ordeal. Many of them thought I was this perfect body who never had such problems. The waffle thin lady kept her distant after class, but made eye contact with me one last time before leaving and gave me a faint smile before exiting the door. I didn't know if I would ever see her again and for some time I didn't. One day a couple of years later, I ran into the fitness gym like any other day to teach a class and she caught my eye again. She didn't see me, but what mattered is I saw her. The waffle thin lady no longer looked so waffle thin. She filled out a little. She was still thin, but not abnormally thin as I remembered her. I just smiled to myself and continued on to my class. *WM*

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