

MAKING LOVE, NOT WAR, ON OBESITY

Author Pat Ballard, the Queen of Rubenesque Romances, and her publisher, Pearlsong Press's Peggy Elam, Ph.D., respond to the "war on obesity" with a call for self acceptance and healthy living instead of a focus on weight loss.

NASHVILLE, TN—As media and medical professionals declare war on obesity and increase the pressure on Americans to engage in weight-loss efforts that are often unsuccessful and even counterproductive in the long run, author Pat Ballard and her publisher, Pearlsong Press, are recommending a different approach for women of all sizes: Make love, not war, on your body.

Ballard's short stories and romance novels featuring plus-sized heroines provide a healthy dose of self-acceptance as well as entertainment, coupled with the message that eating well, exercising regularly, and living a good life without trying to lose weight will pay off in better physical and emotional health than trying to shape one's body to fit others' ideals.

"But these books aren't just for larger women," Ballard says. "They're for women of all sizes to learn to accept themselves for the wonderful, one-of-a-kind creation they are, and stop trying to look like or be someone they were never genetically programmed to be."

Ballard speaks—and writes—from personal experience. She dieted to control her weight from the time she was 11 years old until she was 33, almost destroying her health and losing her life in the process.

When she finally said "no more" to efforts to keep her body in line with societal and medical ideals, Ballard determined to eat healthily, exercise moderately, and accept the body

that resulted. She vowed to never again stand in front of a mirror and point out the bad things she saw, but instead to find and concentrate on the positive.

As her self-acceptance—and overall happiness—grew, Ballard became more aware of how many women aren't happy with who they are no matter what their size. Part of the problem, as she saw it, was the lack of positive plus-size role models in the media—television, movies, magazines, and books. So she set about writing motivational romance novels featuring ample heroines.

Ballard self-published four romance novels (*Wanted: One Groom*, *Nobody's Perfect*, *His Brother's Child*, and *A Worthy Heir*) through iUniverse.com and was working on a collection of short stories, *Dangerous Curves Ahead*, when her work came to the attention of Nashville, TN psychologist and journalist Peggy Elam, Ph.D.

Elam was founding Pearlsong Press, Inc. to publish and promote works fostering self-acceptance, personal empowerment, and Health At Every Size, a holistic approach to health and wellness encouraging acceptance of natural diversity in body size and a focus on healthy behaviors rather than weight loss. She saw Ballard's light romances as both fun and motivational, filling a need for women hungry for heroines with whom they could identify.

As a therapist experienced in eating disorders and body image issues, and as a middle-aged, Rubenesque woman who had approached puberty when the emaciated model Twiggy was the feminine beauty ideal, Elam was professionally and personally familiar with the fallout from the pursuit of thinness.

“Not only do almost all people who lose weight through dieting or other artificial means eventually regain what they lose, many end up fatter than they were pre-diet because

of their bodies' adjustment to the state of semi-starvation," Elam says. "And that yo-yo weight loss/weight gain carries health risks of its own."

She adds, "To continue encouraging people to try to lose weight or to keep their bodies in line with societal or medical ideals when there is no way to do that successfully long-term without seriously affecting their health and quality of life is not only illogical, it's cruel."

In contrast, Elam and Ballard say, focusing on accepting and loving one's body and treating the person as a whole with the care and respect one deserves is a win-win situation.

"We take better care of what we love than what we hate," Elam says.

Dangerous Curves Ahead: Short Stories (Pearlson Press, May 2004, ISBN 0-9713247-2-7, LCCN 20044102276) is available in trade paperback (\$13.95) and eBook (\$4.95) format. The short story collection is followed by Pearlson Press publication of *Wanted: One Groom* (June 2004, ISBN 0-9713247-0-0, LCCN 2004104466), *Nobody's Perfect* (July 2004, ISBN 0-9713247-9-4, LCCN 2004104467), *His Brother's Child* (August 2004, ISBN 0-9713247-7-8, LCCN 2004104468), and *A Worthy Heir* (September 2004, ISBN 0-9713247-8-6, LCCN 2004104469), all available in trade paperback (\$13.95) and eBook (\$4.95; Adobe Reader, Microsoft Reader, and Palm Reader) format.

The books and eBooks can be obtained through local bookstores, online booksellers, Ingram Book Group wholesalers, and directly from Pearlson Press at www.pearlson.com, P.O. Box 58065, Nashville, TN 37205, (615) 356-5188.

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