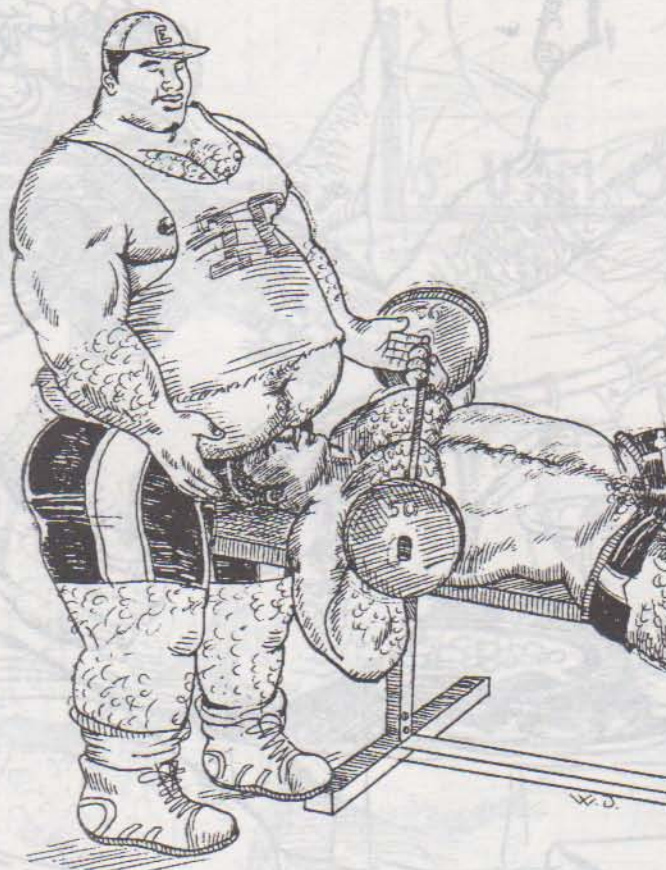


Warren's Winning Ways

In a railroad flat, in the East Village of Manhattan, sits a young man drawing pictures of chubby men. Warren Davis, who is in his mid-thirties (he refused to tell me more), has been cartooning since he was a young man. By day he works for a major magazine publisher, by night he draws the big men that have enriched the newsletter for the past few years. The words to describe Warren are affable, and intelligent, with a challenging edge. I felt that everyone should know a little better this talented artist who has contributed so much to Encouragement.



Ben: So, how long have you been drawing chubby men?

Warren: I've been drawing ever since high school. In fact I used to construct entire comic book scenes in high school. While in college I put together a comic strip involving chubby guys, which I tried to sell to the New York University paper, but they weren't having it at the time. I don't think that in my mind I was making the connection yet. They were guys who were fun who just happened to be big. I don't think I was making the connection between my drawings and any sexual content. That came later.

Ben: Did you go to art school?

Warren: No, I never did, but I always cartooned. Back in D.C., when I was 16, I actually had my own comic strip, which I sold to the city. It was called "Sherwood". It got to the point where I was doing posters for the city with this



character. The strip was eventually sold to a bunch of local newspapers. It even appeared in a paper that had a circulation of 40,000. That strip wasn't a chubby thing though. So cartooning is something I've always enjoyed doing.

Ben: So were you fabulously wealthy from this work?

Warren: (Laughing) Depends on what you mean by wealthy. I have never made dime one. Drawing has never been something I wanted to do for money. It's always been something I do for fun.

Ben: How long does it take you to do a drawing?

Warren: Each drawing takes about two to three hours. I sketch them out first before I ink them in. I sometimes do several version of a drawing before I'm content with one I like. It's the weeding out process that can take the most time.



Ben: When did you make the sexual connection?

Warren: Probably around junior year in college. Before that I was identifying as a straight man who had gay feelings. Actually it took my art to bring me out. When I finally realized the things I was doing, weren't just pictures but something I was using to get off. That, in a way, helped to pull me out of the closet. Once I made the connection, drawing became a very private and secret

thing. Suddenly what I was doing became covered with a cloak of not shame, but repression.

Ben: When something becomes sexualized people have a very different reaction to it. I have a friend who says that it's very difficult for him to eat in public because it is an erotic experience for him.

Warren: It's so true. It's like when you're with straight men who have big bellies and they walk around and make jokes about it. They pat their stomachs, and they talk about it, but it doesn't have any sexual overtones for them. However if I am with Gainers, small gestures suddenly take on importance of a sexualized content, which totally transforms them.

Ben: Sexualized Erectile Content! (They both laugh) What are your favorite types of guys to draw.

Warren: Within this genre there's a real lack of images of people of color, and not just African-Americans, but also Asians and Latino men. I think these men are very attractive.



The guys I draw tend to be working class. Working class guys tend to be less self-conscious about themselves. One of the things I find appealing about a man of size is when he's not self conscious about it. It's not something he thinks about.

When you're comfortable with your body, no matter what shape or size, you come across as being even more appealing. It's a really sexy thing.

Ben: When a person likes themselves it shows.

Warren: I think that comes out a lot in my art.

Ben: How do you find subjects for your work.

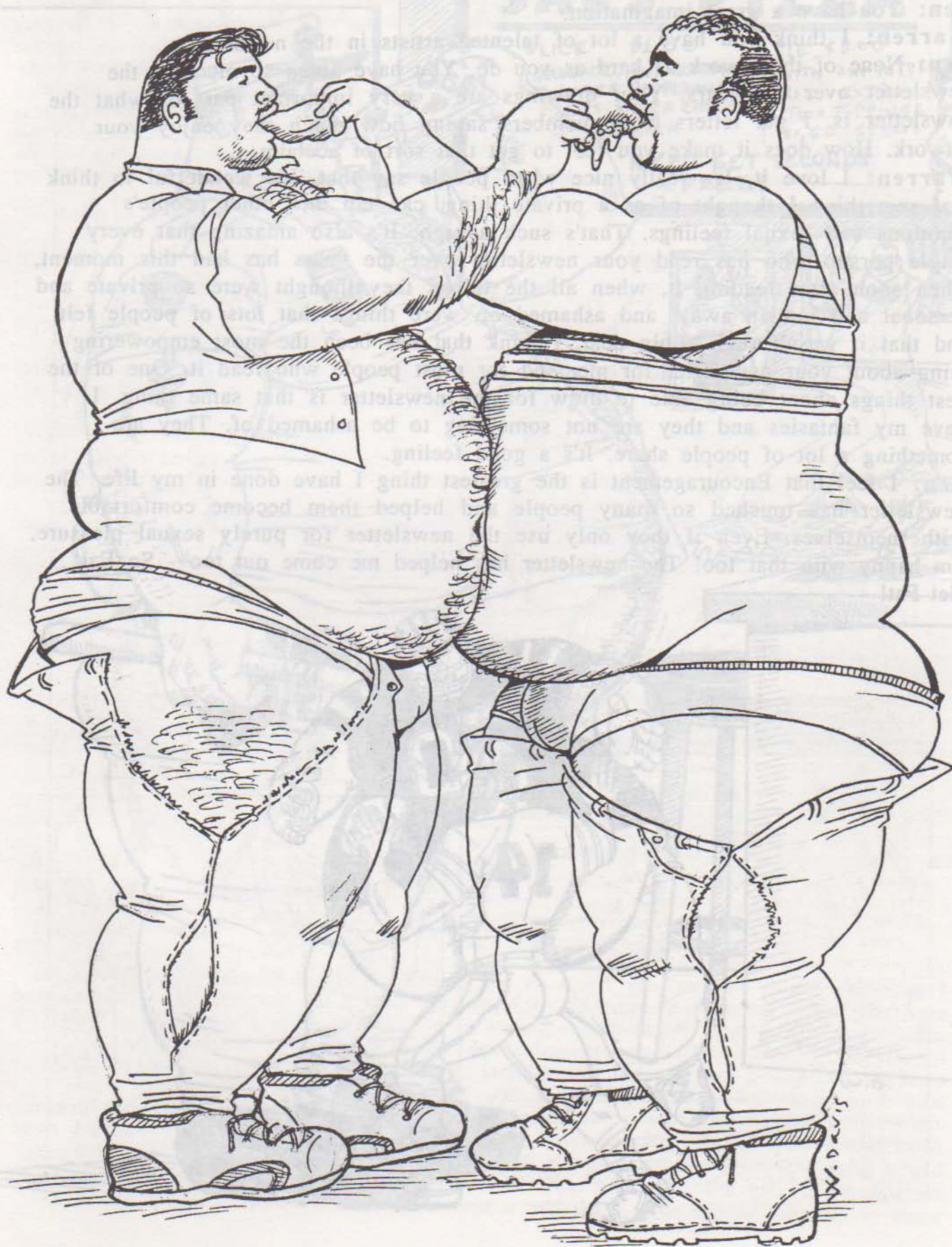
Warren: Well, we live in new York and there are more sexy big guys here than in any other city I have visited in

the world. I thought when I went to Italy, it would be crawling with hot fat men, but that wasn't true. There's a great variety of types here. The chubs come in all colors, all shapes, and all sizes. Everyone should come to New York.

Ben: Chicago's not so bad.

Warren: In New York you can find the big, Latino guys who go to the park on summer days, and hang out with their family and friends. They drink a lot of beer. They have their shirts half off, and they are totally comfortable with themselves. Images like that you never see anywhere else.

Ben: Have you ever done a drawing from a live subject?



Warren: Never. I'd love to.

Ben: You have a great imagination.

Warren: I think you have a lot of talented artists in the newsletter.

Ben: None of them work as hard as you do. You have given so much to the newsletter over the years. Your drawings are a very important part of what the newsletter is. I get letters from members saying how much they enjoy your artwork. How does it make you feel to get that sort of acclaim.

Warren: I love it. It's really nice when people say that. It's wonderful to think that something I thought of as a private thing, can tap into other people's emotions and sexual feelings. That's such a high. It's also amazing that every single person who has read your newsletter over the years has had this moment, when soon after reading it, when all the things they thought were so private and personal and hidden away, and ashamed of, were things that lots of people felt, and that it wasn't such a big deal. I think that has been the most empowering thing about your newsletter for me, and for most people who read it. One of the best things about being able to draw for the newsletter is that same thing. I have my fantasies and they are not something to be ashamed of. They are something a lot of people share. It's a good feeling.

Ben: I feel that Encouragement is the greatest thing I have done in my life. The newsletter has touched so many people and helped them become comfortable with themselves. Even if they only use the newsletter for purely sexual pleasure, I'm happy with that too! The newsletter has helped me come out too - So Eat! Get Fat!

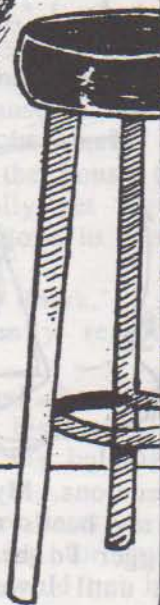


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