



# BROOKLYN\_BORN

 Change Banner Image

**154,986**  
SparkPoints



-  Info
-  Photos
-  Feed
-  Blogs
-  Awards
- More 

## Does Ethel Mertz look fat to you? How about Ralph Cramden?

Thursday, November 29, 2012

This is related to my blog entry yesterday. I love the old TV shows, the ones that remind me of my youth. Today I woke up at 5 am, a bit too early for me. While I drank my coffee, I turned on the TV to find an episode of "I Love Lucy."

Remember Ethel? - Lucy's sidekick? Ethel's weight was a running joke on the show. Looking at her today, she's positively slim!

Lucy was followed this morning by "The Honeymooners" – the classic spin-off from the Jackie Gleason show. Now Jackie was definitely obese. Back then though, his weight was considered so extreme it was always mentioned in the scripts. Being paired with the extremely slim Art Carney emphasized the theme. According to his biography at 5'10" he occasionally dieted to 180 lbs, but his top weight "approached 300." He would be a good candidate for SP, but he also would have lots of company. He wouldn't even be our "biggest loser."

Neither of these actors would even get a second glance on the street today, at least not for their weight.

Checking further, I learned that Lucille Ball was reported to be a "perfect size 12" according to her studio. That's equivalent to a size 4 in today's world of vanity sizing. She was 5'7" with weight varying from 115 to 132 lbs. Ethel (Vivian Vance) was 10-15 lbs heavier. It isn't true that she was contractually obligated to maintain that difference.

Two recent articles (msn and huffington post) report that seeing larger people make us feel better about ourselves. The fashion industry entices us to buy more by slapping smaller sizes on ever larger clothes.

I believe in a positive self image. I have many qualities of which I'm proud that have nothing to do with my height, weight, body type or degree of attractiveness. However, Lucy, Ethel and I would have worn the same size. Calling me a size 6 instead of a 12-14 is just an attempt at false self esteem.

[Edit Blog Entry](#) | [Delete Blog Entry](#)

Share This Post With Others

[Report Inappropriate Blog](#)

 [Add a Blog Entry](#)

See Today's Featured Member Blog Posts

### More Blogs by BROOKLYN\_BORN

[Now I can add one more event to my "Anniversary Dates" to forget - 6/7/2021](#)

[Avoiding Our Wedding Anniversary - 6/4/2021](#)

[Multitasking for Safety – Plus Remembrance and Reflection - 6/1/2021](#)

[Taps Across America – The National Moment of Remembrance - Monday 5/31/21 3PM - 5/30/2021](#)

[View All >](#)

### Member Comments About This Blog Post

**JOYNEW**

Such an interesting observation. I wish clothing manufacturers used universal sizing. I just had a lesson in extreme vanity sizing when I needed a size 6 in a skirt I had my eye on..... I've never





worn a 6 in my life, and I don't now either! If I had bought it, I'd have from 6 to 12s in my closet -- how crazy is that? I understand a slight variation in brand sizing, but 6-12?! That's nuts!  
3116 days ago



#### MOMMACASSEY



I remember seeing something about how Marilyn Monroe, who is considered to be physically perfect by so many people, wore a size 12. I don't know if that is relatively modern 12, or the 12 of her era, now... I know that looking at pictures of her and looking at pictures of myself when I wore a size 12 (which was, admittedly, a number of years and pounds ago) she looks much more slender. I wonder what her size would be, now.

I love those early-morning Lucy episodes. I've seen many of them, lately, being awake at that hour feeding my little one. I never realized there was much worthwhile difference between their sizes. I remember watching the show as a kid, and wondering what Fred's problem was, talking about how much Ethel ate, when he clearly could stand to push away from the table a little sooner, himself. To me, the clearest difference between the couples was their ages, and I think that has more to do with the Mertz's experience in burlesque, and with Fred... I never thought Vivian Vance looked old enough to be his wife.

3119 days ago



#### -POLEDANCEGIRL-



Calling me a size 6 instead of a 12-14 is just an attempt at false self esteem - I like that a lot!

No, neither one of them were fat. But, I completely understand what you are saying here. It is really sad what society is doing  
3119 days ago



#### BOILHAM



Not only are sizes changing to fit our egos. Our attitudes about what is healthy and attractive are being changed to suit our egos too. Overweight people who are famous are constantly encouraging us to not worry about weight and be happy for what we are. I respectfully disagree with all of them. It's not attractive to me, and certainly not healthy.

3119 days ago



#### CD8467616



Have you ever seen Lucy's old movies (before she was on TV)? She was a gorgeous, slender glamor-girl. On TV she was already in her 40s (that was OLD, then!). I'm sure Vivian Vance was cast because she made Lucy look good, and as someone else wrote here, her clothes were frumpier, and her husband was certainly frumpier! And it is true that "the camera adds ten pounds." So today, in order to look thin on camera, actresses are positively scrawny in real life.

This self-image thing with the sizes is the same thing as the pervasive cosmetic surgery I see around me all the time. There are little tiny women in their 50s-60s-70s whose faces look totally weird because nothing moves. They dress beautifully, in very small sizes, but their self-esteem is dependent on what they think is a youthful image. It's a matter of choice whether or not to have cosmetic surgery, but it is also wrapped up in issues of confidence, relevance, and environment.

3119 days ago



#### GLADGAD



I'm glad you pointed this out, because I oftentimes see old shows and it strikes me at how not fat those actors are compared to today's body sizes. When I was in high school in the mid 70s, I wore a size 5. I was 5'2" and weighed about 95 lbs. Today I am 5'3" and weigh around 123 lbs and take a size 6. I laugh because I know it's only because the industry has changed the sizes; I just wonder what 1976 size I would be in 2012.

3119 days ago



#### LINDAKAY228



Yeah, remember the super model of years ago Twiggy? As for clothes, I have to try them on because one brand a size can be a whole lot different than another brand. I will be happy when I get down to 145 to 150! That's where my dr says I should be.

3119 days ago



#### LOLATURTLE



I had to go look at some pictures of Ethel to remind me. I wasn't picturing her as "fat", and what do you know! She isn't! It just looks to me like she naturally has a slightly rounder face than Lucy, and they dressed her in a slightly more "frumpy" style.

If you're interested in how sizes are created look for some articles about "fit models." It's pretty interesting actually.

If you look at clothes in different sizes, or have been a variety of sizes in your life, you can see some pretty eye opening clues as to the assumptions made by clothing manufacturers. Most "regular" women's sizes (~8) assume an hourglass body shape, but not an extreme one - waist slightly smaller than both hips and bust. They assume a "straight" shape for small sizes, 00 to 2 or 4 (I have friends in this size range who are either hippy or busty and they have just as much trouble finding clothes that fit as I do.). For plus sizes they assume an "apple" shape - big stomach smaller bust. This is a problem for me because I'm the opposite - big bust small stomach (well, relatively anyway). So I can usually find pants (though sometimes ones that fit in the hips gap at the waist), and stretchy tops, but dresses and fitted tops are a huge problem. I haven't worn a button down shirt... ever, actually. If I ever want one I'll probably have to get it custom made.

There may be some interesting developments in sizing/shaping of clothes in the future, possibly moving towards universal sizes. Check out the NYT article "One Size Fits Nobody: Seeking a Steady 4 or a 10." Interesting stuff!  
3119 days ago



**CD12557708**

I remember those jokes about Ethel's weight! I never understood them, she looked normal to me.

3119 days ago



**SUZYMOBILE**

You're right! I think of Ethel as "normal" and Lucy as being the glamour girl, model type.

3119 days ago



**CELIAMINER**

Wow, love these facts! I can picture Ethel in my mind and envision the difference between her weight and Lucy's, but I wouldn't have called Ethel fat. Funny that if she was 10 pounds heavier than Lucy, Ethel and I would weigh the same in the low 140s, and I am at a healthy BMI. I recall when Farrah Fawcett came into fame and was 5'7" and 110 pounds. She looked so bony and even painfully thin, but she was considered an ideal.

3119 days ago



**WILSONWR**

I wonder if the same is true in men's sizing? I'll have to get my tape measure out...

3119 days ago



**1935MARY**

I love old shows too. When you watch TV then you didn't think about if they were fat. Today we are judged on so many things, weight, looks, money, color etc. Now if you are 5'7 and don't weight 100 lbs. you are fat. Why do people want to look like they are starved to death. I think being to thin ,looks bad and makes you aged. I guess I am being judgmental. I think size of clothes vary with who ever designed them.

3119 days ago



## Add Your Comment to the Blog Post

Leave encouragement, a question, or anything else relevant to this post. All blog comments must abide by SparkPeople's [Community Guidelines](#).

Subscribe to this blog

ADD AN EMOTICON

SPELL CHECK

Post Comment

Disclaimer: Weight loss results will vary from person to person. No individual result should be seen as a typical result of following the SparkPeople program.