

Diminished Capacity

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary to dissolve the bands of years of gluttony, some of us bargain with the forces of commitment.

In the beginning I committed myself to keeping track of what I ate - *in the back of my mind*.

In the beginning, I committed myself to taking 10 minute walks - *from my front door to the Godiva Chocolate kiosk at the mall*.

Gaining weight means never having to say "I'm full." Losing weight means never having to say, "thank you, may I have another?" My weight loss reminds me of the "Little Engine That Could." I think I can, I think I can, I think I can, therefore I can.

Mr. Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters, members and guests, you see before you the product of multiple failures, Today, I am the very model of a modern major loser. Where once I was able to lift 350 pounds - just by standing up- I have now lost nearly 150 pounds —Again. Yes, the bad news is that I have lost more than 100 pounds four times in my life.

One day, I'm afraid; the forces of Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, and Nutri-Systems will come together and perform an intervention for my weight loss addiction. There are words to describe losing more than a 100 pounds and gaining it all back and more. In the criminal justice system the words are "repeat offender." In Weight Watchers the words are "welcome back!"

This time, however, I have lost my appetite for weight gain. When it comes time to lose, it's not as much fun as it was in those days when I could shoot myself full of horse urine, eat 500 calories worth of dental floss, and marinate the occasional celery stick. No, today we must carefully inspect the sides of cereal boxes to discover "nutritional information," like carbohydrates, protein, and wax paper. It takes some of us a while to discover that "serving size" does not necessarily mean the entire box.

Losing a lot of weight ensures that you will be challenged by infinite theoretical apparitions that dance wickedly on your road to progress. Portion size triage is only the beginning of the struggle. Imagine the nanny state attitude of an organization that insists you "write everything down."

Weight Watchers commands the constant Facebook-style "status update." They call it "tracking," I call it enquiring government agents want to know." Someday, I know I will wind up in a Vegan PETA court charged with consuming kilos of poultry, and washing it down with cow juice. My record of consumption in my Weight Watcher diary will solidify the evidence culled from my Safeway card. Resistance will be futile as I face a jury of my fears. Still, after dropping 150 pounds, perhaps I can plea diminished capacity.

Fear can be a force for good. Faced with a loaded weapon, most of us believe that we can outrun a speeding bullet - especially if it is laced with a doctor-ordered prescription for potential ill health. My

challenge began when my doctor advised me that I had to lose at least 20 pounds immediately if I didn't want to go on insulin therapy. I know that I would rather run a four-minute, err, four-day mile than shoot myself full of insulin. That is why I chose to give my legs the kind of workout that I once reserved for my fingers on a keyboard. Now, four years later, the threat of Type II diabetes is back to being one of those monsters that hide underneath my bed.

I have strengthened my resistance to the remaining non-nutritional apparitions in my life. I created new rules to govern my demand for certain treats. As a German, I love the carbohydrate-rich soft pretzels of my childhood. Today, if I want one, I have to travel to Philadelphia to buy one from a street vendor. That's the rule. I also am passionate about Black Forest Cherry Cake, or as we Germans call it, "*Schwartzwalderkirschkuchen*." I have decided that the only way I can have a piece is if I'm in the Black Forest. Finally, the only way I can determine if I'm hungry is if my picture is on the cover of National Geographic.

I may be the very model of a modern major loser, but I can't look back at the waste I left behind. As the great baseball pitcher Satchel Paige once said, "Don't look back. Something might be gaining on you."