A Positive Approach

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Deep down inside there has been a fear that the luxury of sedentary life in semi-retirement would catch up with me, and that it did. For the first time in my life, this summer I found myself confronted with excess pounds and inches in wrong places.

Being a scientific-minded person, I decided to go about my remodeling job with intelligence. Always my first step in solving a perplexing situation is to investigate the various procedures. The encyclopedia is always my first reference. Its information concerning weight control sounded simple enough.

A 150-pound person could limit his food intake to 2,000 calories daily and lose two pounds a week safely. This same individual could use up 502 of these calories by walking three and one-half miles daily. Having developed a taste for laziness that did not include a three-mile stroll, I suggested to myself why not reduce food intake to 1,500 calories and all would take care of itself. I would lose my eight pounds of unnecessary baggage in four weeks. That would allow plenty of time for me to trim down and squeeze into my old winter woolens.

For six weeks I clung to the 1,500-calorie diet except for a few steak dinner binges. Results: zero pounds and zero inches lost. Something was drastically wrong. Perhaps my middle-age metabolism was becoming ineffective.

I renewed by vices. Evidently wheat germ and gourmet cheeses were not appropriate substitutes for hamburgers and fries. I had really indulged myself in nothing except heaping platters of lime sherbet. Perhaps this appetizing filler would have to go the way of hamburgers. Worse yet, I might have to resort to lettuce and cottage cheese before I won the battle.

Worriedly, I reviewed the material in the encyclopedia. I could exercise away a 500-calorie malted milkshake during a 97-minute walk or a 61-minute bicycle ride or a 26-minute jog. These figures were precisely recommended for a 150-pound person. Anyone weighing 75 pounds would need to exercise twice that time. I became desperate since my poundage fell between the two examples.

Being a former rancher and farmer, the thought of walking or jogging was beneath my dignity. No self-respecting tractor driver or cowboy ever walked when he could transport himself on four wheels. Most certainly I did not intend to become one of the endangered species and ride a bicycle on the bumpy brick street in front of my home. Besides, I had no bicycle.

Evidently I would have to resort to outside assistance if I were able to enjoy my old clothes another season. Luckily an interesting sounding exercise center advertised for new members. A friend and I consulted with each other and decided to become dedicated to the organization.

Both of us were accepted by the club and entered our first day of class wearing beautiful purple leotards and tights that daringly accentuated our every bulge and sag. Our teacher looked at us as if we could be her slowest learners and least responsive to her guidance.

We would show her, we thought. At that moment we looked like little E.T. who was so drastically afflicted by Earth's gravitational forces. Nevertheless, we intended to prove to our teacher and to ourselves that our tenacity was iron-clad.

That first week we discovered that our muscles were completely atrophied with all elasticity evidently on a permanent leave of absence. The young ones, our delightful classmates, showed gracefulness and agility which we so sadly lacked during rhythmic exercises. I soon found that one-half mile on the stationary bicycle was the limit of my travels for one day.

However, my friend and I excelled in shaking and quivering when we took our turns with belts and rollers. Best of all, we were at the head of our class each day when it came time to race for the sauna. In that steamy enclosure we restored our egos as we basked our weary bodies in its soothing atmosphere.

Results of that first week proved successful. I removed one pound of baggage and nine inches of flab. We planned a delectable celebration with a ten-ounce Kansas City strip and all the trimmings.