

Facing the Problem

By Pete Clark

When I was very young my family traveled to Torrington, Wyoming to visit my great uncle Julius, his wife and their children who were a bit older than me and my brother. They lived on what seemed to me, at the time, a huge farm, with vast fields of peas and sugar beets, along with alfalfa for their dairy cattle. It was particularly fun to watch the boys milk the cows because occasionally they deliberately missed the bucket with the milk and instead, squirted a stream of fresh warm milk at a barn cat, who opened its mouth, caught the stream of milk and effortlessly swallowed it. At lunch while we were there, one of the older members of Julius's family made the comment that I was a big eater. Being somewhat lame brained, I thought, "I'm a big eater! That makes me special," and the pounds began piling on.

I was the fat kid in grade school. During the grade school Christmas program in 1948, I was the kid in the crowd on stage who had to yell, "I'm hungry." The onset of teasing and bullying did not come until the later years of elementary school. Fortunately by the time I was in Eight Grade I had grown enough that the local bullies thought twice before giving me a hard time and life was much easier, but there was still one kid who liked to shoot off his mouth and run, knowing I couldn't catch him. One day a member of the high school track team ran him down and held him in place until I could have a physical discussion with that obnoxious brat about his perverse ways.

When I began the journey through high school, the scales registered one hundred ninety-six pounds and stayed close to that except for the last two years, when I wrestled and had to make weight. My weight stayed around two hundred pounds through college and my military years. About six months into my tenure with a big box department store my weight began to increase and I grew out of my shirts and pants just like a rambunctious teenager. Fad diets abounded, but while working in retail management, I had no time to worry about my weight. After I left retail, I tried most of the popular diets and gained weight.

In 2009 I noticed that overweight people my age were developing diabetes, which scared me. I have an insane, unjustified fear of needles. I might die before I could give myself a shot. Backed into a corner, I created my own weight loss program. First I gave up candy, soft drinks and desserts, losing forty pounds. Next I went on the burrito, cheese and summer sausage diet. Once a week or so, I would go out for breakfast or dinner to avoid developing a monotonous routine, while dropping another fifty-five pounds. I ended this diet a few years ago, having dropped from two hundred sixty-five pounds to one hundred seventy pounds. I'm happy with that.