

fitness

Barry Franklin



Obesity: Many fat cells vs. large fat cells

Question: Is it true that a child's physical activity and eating habits may influence his fat cell development and potential for obesity? Please explain.

—J.K., Southfield

Recent techniques for counting and sizing fat cells have permitted researchers to better define the cellular composition of body fat stores.

These findings have led to the "fat cell theory" of obesity. Research findings to date suggest:

- 1) Fat cells are specialized fat storage cells that may increase in size and number by overfeeding and/or underexercising.
- 2) The number of fat cells in the body is estab-

lished primarily during periods of rapid growth, e.g., during the first year of infancy and adolescence.

3) Once established, the number of fat cells remains fixed, though their size decreases with weight loss. These cells remain for life and may exert an influence on the appetite when they are not filled.

4) A comparison of grossly obese and normal adults reveals that, in the obese, while fat cell size is slightly increased, cell number is considerably greater. Hence, the obese person's excess body fat is predominantly the result of a large increase in fat cell numbers.

THESE RESEARCH findings suggest this cautious conclusion:

Gross obesity (typically of childhood onset) is the result of abnormally large numbers of fat cells formed during growth. In contrast, recent weight gain (adult onset obesity) would appear to be due to increased fat cell size.

The fundamental question remaining is: To what extent can gross obesity (the increase in fat cell numbers) be altered before adulthood, or is overfatness predetermined by genetic code?

Animal studies indicate that caloric restriction and/or exercise early in life can lead to a permanent reduction in the adult body weight and fat cell number. If the same methods hold true in humans,

it would seem possible to prevent the formation of excess numbers of fat cells during the early years.

Despite the countless weight reduction methods currently available, no major impact has been made in our current culture on the long-term control of gross obesity. Of the possibilities available, prevention of obesity in childhood may offer the greatest potential.

The writer, a resident of Farmington Hills, is co-director of cardiac rehabilitation and physical fitness at Sinai Hospital and assistant professor of physiology at Wayne State University School of Medicine. Send your questions to him in care of this newspaper.



Tom Riordan

Executive Editor

Come back, alumni told—and they do

If you need an expert on high school class reunions, just call me.

In the past month, I have been enrolled in two. First there was my own, the Class of 1940 from University of Detroit High School. Then during the past weekend it was the Class of 1945 of East Lansing, my wife Marilyn's bunch.

Both reunions covered two days - can you believe that? And both were marvelous experiences, jammed with excited conversation, old school tales and pictures of grandchildren.

From that, you might guess that I've concluded all high school reunions are laced with so many similarities you can hardly tell where one leaves off and the other begins. And you'd be correct.

IN THE LATE SUMMER, as the '40 committee chugged through all the preparation work for our weekend at St. Clair Inn (strictly stag), I kept telling Marilyn there was something distinctively different about our class.

"There's a closeness, an affinity that sets us apart," I'd tell Marilyn after returning home from one of our laugh-filled planning sessions. And I firmly believed what I was saying.

But that theory sort of went down the drain Saturday and Sunday as I became part of ELHS '45. Like the U. of D. High reunion, the East Lansing affair drew folks from all around the country, including a cluster from Florida.

There was some conversation during Sunday's get-away brunch at the East Lansing Albert Pick that the next reunion ought to be held in the Everglades State. That same sort of talk popped up at the U. of D. High reunion.

A LOT OF FUN THINGS happened at both reunions, but I think the softball game staged by members of the Class of '40 topped everything.

It pitted old homers against one another. Unfortunately, the Brains, the guys who took Latin and Greek en route to classical degrees, beat the less academically-minded Dreamers, 11-3.

For the record, an official protest is being filed with the baseball commissioner's office on the basis of too many men on the field.

When you watch 58-year-old men trying to look lithe and lively, well, you've seen it all.

IN POST-GAME CREDITS handed out to outstanding players, Tom Montgomery, a builder who lives at 4245 W. Newland, West Bloomfield, was awarded two. He got the first for "Most line drives caught by a shortstop." The second was for "Most line drives dropped by a shortstop."

Vic Chilson, an attorney and mortgage banker who used to live in Birmingham, walked off with a citation for "Most left-handed hits by a player from Colorado." Vic now runs his business out of Aspen and was the only one from that state.

"Most frustrated player" laurels went to Dr. Richard J. Lilly, a psychiatrist who resides at 25336 Castlereigh, Farmington Hills, first baseman for the Dreamers. The citation stated that Dr. Lilly "walked around St. Mary's school (in whose play-

ground the class contest was held) and church looking for a restroom and never did find one."

BUT IT WAS LEFT to Montgomery, the 1940 basketball co-captain, who made the most poignant comment of the two days.

It came during the belly-laugh-packed Saturday evening program in which Bob Krue, 87 Nantucket, Bloomfield Hills, and mayor of that city, along with Crawford Cox, an actor from Burbank, Calif., served as co-masters of ceremonies.

Each of the 44 fellows attending was to take the floor, after suitable introduction by Krue and Cox, and spent two minutes telling of his greatest success. ("No failures. If no successes, make up something," the pre-reunion program agenda advised.)

There were all sorts of outlandish - some true - offerings. Our sides ached from laughing.

Then came Montgomery. "If success is measured by the happiness I have had with my family," Tom told his classmates, "then I have led a very successful life."

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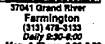
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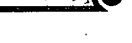
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