

I'm melting! I'm melting!



Well, maybe that's what the Wicked Witch of the West said, and she was not happy, but in my case, I like what I'm seeing.

It has taken me decades to get the guts to start a diet company and begin the discussion of losing weight successfully. That's because until now, I've been a diet failure my whole life. I started dieting at 12 years old and have been working at it (in one form or another) ever since. I went to ridiculous measures to lose weight or stay thin. My definition of thin. Laugh, cringe, or recollect your own stories as you cruise through my list of strange or extreme dieting.

Here goes:

At 12 years old I noticed I was the "fattest cheerleader." I wasn't fat, but I thought I was. I began switching my dessert from something sugary to a single hard-boiled egg. Dieting had begun. I was low-carb before they coined the phrase. I always was a pioneer.

At 15, I was so fed up with being fatter than other girls (but not yet obese), that I decided that eating every third day was a good idea. How I pulled that off, without my mother figuring out, was a feat to behold. I can remember that I even passed out

on my bed twice after walking home from school on particularly hot days. I was starving. I had no energy. Who was I kidding? I lost 30 pounds in a month. I took my babysitting money and bought contact lenses and boys came out of the woodwork. My first "successful" diet.

Approaching age 16, I wanted to stay thin and feel thin, so I worked at a job that required me to ride my bicycle across town all summer long. I worked two shifts so I had to do it twice every day. In-between shifts I came home and had one single, solitary, fried egg and a glass of milk. I didn't eat anything else all day, but when my mother asked me if I'd eaten (she was worried about me missing dinner while I rode my bike back to work), I could say yes. Boys continued calling and I made the Drill Team at school. When I got the flu and laid on my bed, I was happy because I was losing weight. I rolled over on my stomach, and if I could balance on my hip bones and my stomach didn't touch the mattress, I decided I was skinny enough. My waist was 19 inches. I was skinnier than the cheerleaders. I measured that as a success. I watched with horror as they carted off one of my classmates to a special hospital for girls who didn't eat (*we didn't call it anorexia back then*). I deluded myself into thinking I was not "like her."

One school year all I ate was a hot dog with no ketchup and a diet Coke every day.

Any of this sound familiar to you?

At 18, I went to my doctor for my college physical. I told him that I thought I was fat. I was 5'-6" and weighed 112 pounds. He blew me off. He told me to stay at that weight and I'd be fine for life. I guess that he missed the day when they taught doctors how to spot the warning signs of the dieting "insane." Or maybe they didn't teach that class. I wonder.

My early adulthood consisted of fasting or eating nearly nothing, so I could fit the image of a Playboy bunny. Funny that, because I was living in Chicago at the time and Playboy continually tried to recruit me for a photoshoot. They assigned one VP to pester me regularly at my job. I was working in a restaurant, so I could not keep him from coming in and sitting at the bar. He campaigned like a champ but I never gave in. My measurements were 38-19-33. This was before breast implants. No wonder he followed me around. I looked like I'd topple over frontwards at any moment!

At my next job, I had a candy jar on my desk. I ate Tootsie Rolls and nothing else for two weeks once. Lots of men visited my candy jar on their way back to their desks. Most of the time I was yawning. I wonder why? Another time I ate popcorn after work every night for two weeks. No butter. I was trying to fit into a dress for a special dinner date. That dress would fit crumpled, in the palm of your hand. I think they call it a handkerchief dress now. I got into the dress, but halfway through dinner, I was in the ladies' room as my intestinal tract went into overdrive. No way was my stomach in any shape to hold actual FOOD. I came back to the table looking gaunt. I found room for dessert though. And back to the bathroom.

One year, at another job, my assistant went every day to a take-out joint downstairs from our offices and she bought me a Chef Salad and a large diet coke. That was my calorie consumption per day. Hey! I was moving up to a salad from candy or popcorn!

On weekends I ate half of a peanut butter sandwich per day and 3 diet orange sodas. That sure saves on the food budget.

Then, as I became more successful I started paying for diets.

I did the "shakes only" plus 10 raspberries or a half a banana a day diet that was prescribed by diet doctors. Dieteen. It's the

same diet that Oprah Winfrey did. She lost 40 pounds and dragged fat around in her wagon to show her point. I lost 52 pounds. Although I don't know Oprah, she and I have yo-yoed in an almost identical concert ever since. She lost weight. I lost weight. She gained it back. So did I. The reasons I gained it back varied. The lack of long term success stayed the same.

I did Atkins.

I did Weight Watchers. Both miserable disasters.

I've gone to the Obesity Clinic at the University of Wisconsin. They studied me and declared my metabolism a disaster. Shot. Kaput. Nothing left. They put me on experimental meds. Then the head of the department left and the program disbanded. I was left hanging.

I even went to an eating-disorder psychiatrist for 3 months. They couldn't find anything wrong. They even *hypnotized* me to MAKE SURE nothing was wrong. I told them I was not eating bags of Oreos in a closet. I guess they had to satisfy their own theories, their own way. I went along with it. I was doubting myself enough to think maybe I HAD been sleepwalking and stuffing myself.

I went to a dietitian who reluctantly put me on a 750 calorie a day diet. After one month and a one-pound loss he resigned. He was afraid I'd keel over. He, at least, was honest with me.

I hired a trainer and worked with her 3 days a week for 7 years. No weight loss, but I sure got strong. And I walked and walked and walked. Nothing as far as weight loss.

I took Fen-Phen before it had that nickname and before they found out it could kill you. Took it for 18 months. They came and found me two years later to get my heart tested. I was fine,

but it was not a success for me. I had only lost 8 pounds in all that time.

I did another shake diet a few years ago. I ate one small meal a day. I lost 38 pounds in one month. Didn't take long before it was all back.

I'm a smart woman. You'd think I'd get a clue. When I look back on this part of my life I was my own dysfunctional enemy.

Until now.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Zola". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.