

Cupcakes are Not a Diet Food

**A collection of true, funny, short stories written by four
sisters, and a few thousand words from the wise written
by a brother**

By

Brenda Kennedy

Carla Evans

Martha Farmer

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**This book is dedicated to every woman who has ever
dieted.**

**We hope that everyone to whom this book is dedicated
buys a copy.**

SMASHWORDS EDITION

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Chapter One: “Let’s Talk About Diets,” by Brenda Kennedy

Preface

First, I want to say I am NOT a dietitian, or a nutritionist. I wish I were. If I were, maybe dieting would have been easier for me. I’m just a fat girl who thought it would be funny to write a book about my personal weight-loss failures. If you can’t laugh at yourself, then who can you laugh at? Not Taylor Swift. She’s skinny. This is not a book about telling you what diets work and what diets don’t work. This book is strictly written to talk about my failures and the things that I know do NOT work for ME.

At age 52, I believe that I have tried and failed at every diet out there. If I didn’t try it, it’s because I read a book on it, and I knew I would fail at it before I ever started.

I was born and raised in the era where fasting was an effective form of dieting. When did starvation ever become a good idea? You would lose some weight, but trust me, it was very short lived. As soon as you started to eat again, the weight would latch on and return, bringing more weight with it in retaliation.

This book is written with humor in mind. It is NOT an educational tool by any means. I’ve been dieting for as long as I can remember and I wanted to share my not-so-productive adventure with you.

Things I have learned along the way is a ½ gallon of ice cream is NOT a single serving. Wine is NOT a serving of fruit, and cupcakes are NOT a diet food, even if they are made with real strawberries.

I hope you enjoy the story of my dieting disasters.

Let's Talk About Carbs

I remember the first time I thought I was fat. I was in my twenties and had given birth to my third child, Bo, who I believe was six months old. (No, not when he was born. Six months after he was born.) I was 5'3" and weighed 134 pounds. I was standing outside of our apartment talking to a friend and she readily agreed that yes, I was indeed fat. I wish now that I was as heavy as I was when I first thought I was overweight.

Back then my life was a rollercoaster and I didn't need to diet to lose unwanted weight. I divorced and instantly became thin. Then I was in a new relationship and again gained some unwanted weight. During the courting period with my now-husband Rex, my weight would rise and fall depending on how our relationship went. We had a very rocky start and when we married on October 22nd, 1988, my wedding dress was a size five. To be a size five again, I think I would be too thin, especially at my age now. But in a size five, I looked and felt great in my twenties.

I remember when I really knew I had an overweight problem. Rex and I moved to Florida on April 26th, 2006. It was a great move. We both had great jobs, the sun was shining everyday, and the winters were warm. Life was grand. One night in October, Rex and I got into this huge fight and he called me a "fat ass"! I was shocked and hurt, even if it was the truth. By this time I weighed 176 pounds and being a short girl, I knew he was right. I was fat. But so was he. What right did he have to call me that?

So, you know what I did? Yep, that's right. I dieted and I lost the weight. It wasn't easy, but every time I thought back to his "fat ass" sitting on the couch eating, I was more and more determined to lose the weight and show him who

the fat one was.

I was a nurse and worked at a prison in Lake City, Florida. I worked with a thin, cute girl named Amanda. Amanda was also from Ohio but was much younger, prettier, and thinner than I was. I loved her. She had spunk and will power, and she was one of the sweetest girls I ever met. We worked well together and became instant friends. I guess when you work twelve-hour shifts with someone, they do tend to grow on you. We were more like family than co-workers.

We got to talking, and she told me that she was heavy when she was in high school. I couldn't believe it so she brought in a picture of her in her senior year of high school. Yep, Amanda was once a fat girl. When I asked her how she lost her weight, she told me she told herself she didn't like snake cakes. One day, she actually believed it.

Well, what works for one does not always work for another. I told myself everyday for two weeks that I didn't like snack cakes, candy bars, or potato chips. The more I told myself that, the hungrier I became and the more I craved snack cakes, candy bars, and yes, potato chips. I love that kind of shit, and I knew telling myself I didn't like it wouldn't be enough. I needed a diet, and it had to be a diet I could do.

While I was starving myself to be thin, Amanda was eating *and* snacking. She would bring in nuts, cheese sticks, pepperoni rolls, and even three pieces of Starburst candy. See, working night shift as a nurse in a prison, we had some downtime in the late night hours. We got to talking again and she told me she doesn't eat carbs. That's a lie. Carbs are in almost everything. She told me she tried to stay away from all carbs. We talked about the foods she ate daily and the foods she never eats. Birthday cake being one of the things she never eats. Hell no. I was born and raised that

you have to have a piece of birthday cake for luck. I have no idea if this is true, but I wasn't about to find out if it wasn't. Besides, I loved birthday cake. I took notes as Amanda talked. The faster she talked, the faster I wrote. I honestly and truly believed I could also do the low-carb diet. Breads and pasta are bad carbs, while fruits and veggies are good carbs.

I bought books and eagerly researched everything I could on this new-to-me diet. Bound and determined, as opposed to the book, which was bound and paginated, I went to the store and bought everything on my list of things I could eat. I was so excited because I knew this was something I could do. I even bought the whipped cream in the can, because believe it or not, whipped cream was low to no carbs. Hell yes, this was a diet I could excel at, I just knew it.

I did the low-carb diet and the first two days were fine. Rex and I went out for breakfast one morning, and I had my list of things I could and couldn't eat. I needed the list because I still couldn't remember everything. I sat at the booth and anxiously ordered my breakfast. Two eggs over easy, three slices of bacon, and white toast. Wait, I can't have toast. I'll have biscuits. Nope, I can't have bread. NO BREAD! Nothing to soak up my runny yolks with? What will I do? *Rex? He did this. He knew I would want toast. He planned this all along.* I smiled and told the waitress, "No bread. Just the bacon and eggs, please."

"Would you like grits or home fries?"

Hell yes, I want hash browns and home fries, and hot cakes and syrup, and toast. "No, thank you," I said politely instead. *She's in on it with Rex. It's a conspiracy.*

I sat there at the booth and pouted. I added the creamer and Splenda to my coffee and stirred. I could still at least enjoy my coffee, and my Mountain Dew, even if it was diet. I

watched the waitress and Rex and wondered if they're in cahoots. *I'm being ridiculous*. I wanted toast with my eggs and I'm acting like a child. This wouldn't be the only time I would be childish over the lack of foods I love to eat and couldn't eat. When the food came to the table, I almost ordered toast until Rex's words — "fat ass" — replayed over and over in my head, just like a record stuck on repeat. I watched as Rex buttered his hotcakes and added real maple syrup to them. He added salt and pepper to his hash browns, and real sugar to his coffee. At that moment, joy smacked me in my face. While I was dieting and getting thinner, Rex was eating and gaining more weight. *Who's the fat ass now?* It was all the motivation I needed to make this low-carb diet work.

The best times I had on this diet were the nights I worked. Amanda was on the exact same work schedule that I was on, and I loved working with her. She wasn't a diet cheater and she'd been on this diet long enough to know it by heart. She would tell me what she had to eat for her meals and for her snacks during her days off. She was so disciplined and I wanted to be like her. Who am I kidding? I wanted to be her.

After a few months, I reached the point where I knew what I could and couldn't have, and dieting became easier. Rex and I would have pizza and I knew that I could have the toppings, but not the crust. Oddly, I was fine with that. When I craved something sweet, I would stand at the refrigerator door and hold the can of whipped cream to my mouth and squeeze. It was delicious and satisfying. I didn't miss the pie or the other yummy stuff that was supposed to be eaten with it. Jello and whipped cream was a satisfying treat for my sweet tooth.

In May of 2007, I had lost thirty pounds and I looked and felt wonderful. I secretly and beneath my breath thanked

Rex for my weight loss. If he hadn't called me a "fat ass" in the midst of a heated argument, I never would have lost the weight I needed to lose.

Sadly, as we all know, all good things must come to an end. Amanda left the prison and Rex and I transferred further South for his job. I started working at the Manatee County Jail where my weight slowly returned, plus some.

Through my dieting adventure, I've learned that with every diet I have been on my weight loss was short lived. When the weight returned, it also brought a few extra pounds with it. Therefore, the end result was, I was heavier than I ever was before.

Being a woman *and* being heavy is tough. The world says that beautiful sexy women are tall and thin. Every commercial portrays sexy as thin; whether they mean to or not, they do. Sadly, when I'm thin, I feel sexy, confident, and beautiful. When I'm heavy, I feel embarrassed and ashamed.

Does anyone remember the diet pill Fen-Phen? It was big in the late 1980's and 1990's. They took it off the market when women started suffering from strokes, heart attacks, and yes, even death. I remember watching a talk show about women and the drug Fen-Phen. I will never forget this one woman said she was willing to take the drug even if she may die as a result of taking it. What does this tell us? What is society teaching us? Death as a side effect is OK just to possibly lose the excess weight? We'd rather die than be fat? It's sad and it's the painful truth for some of us. When Fen-Phen was taken off the market, women were sad and upset. No other diet pill could do what Fen-Phen did. *Thank God.*

All the women I have known have obsessed over their weight for as long as I can remember. Why? Can't all

women feel and be beautiful no matter their size? I'm still the same person no matter what my weight is. I'll always be 5'3"; that will never change. But at 130 pounds or 180 pounds, I'm still the same person. Sadly, at 180 pounds, I don't feel like the sexy, confident person I am when I weigh 130 pounds. People in public don't look at me the same either. It's a sad reality and I face it daily. When I'm thin, I'm funny and successful, and men and women notice me. When I'm heavy, I'm still funny and successful, but no one notices.

Guys don't get it. My husband doesn't get it. My brothers don't get it. My sisters, now they get it. We were all thin in our younger years, but those days are long behind us. Well, for most of us, not for my sister Martha. She lost weight and she looks amazing, not that she didn't before. My sister Rosa also fights the battle of the bulge, just like my other sister Carla.

Leave your husband, suffer a death of a loved one, break-up with a long-time relationship, that's a sure way to lose the unwanted weight. They are a little extreme, so I think I'll hang on to the extra fat, thank you very much.

While being a corrections nurse, I've seen many things in my life. Crack cocaine users for one. Talk about weight loss and rapid weight loss at that! You want to lose 50 pounds in a month, smoke crack daily. Man, that stuff is wicked. I can't guarantee you'll come off the crack, but you'll definitely be thinner. (You may also lose extra weight due to the loss of your teeth.) Thanks, but no thanks. If I have to do illegal drugs to lose weight, I'm happy just the way I am.

Most of the nurses working at the Manatee County Jail were women. We always talked about weight loss, dieting, and food. It's what women do, right? Right. We often joked that strawberry ice cream was indeed one serving of fruit as

were chocolate-covered strawberries, strawberry margaritas, mojitos, and sangrias were also one serving of fruit. Of course, we didn't believe it, but it was funny to joke about. Man, how I wish it were true.

Can you imagine cheesecake being one serving of fruit because you added some fresh fruit to it? I'll have two, please. Or red wine counting as your daily intake of fruit because it's made of grapes? I'll have two bottles of that, too. Or how about counting frozen bananas dipped in chocolate a healthy dose of dairy and fruit? Count me in. I'm all about that.

Let's Talk About Points

When I think back on it, the first sign of weight gain was in my boobs. Bigger boobs, hell yeah! I went from a B to a C cup. I was excited, not realizing that everything else would also be going up in size. I did take advantage of the bigger boobs for a bit. Even Rex thought they looked good on me. I wore tighter shirts and lower-cut tops, and I even left an extra button undone when I went out.

The joy of big boobs didn't last long. Soon, my jeans got tighter, my legs got that cottage cheese look on them that soon crept up into my butt. My chin now had a shadow, and my ankles — what the hell happened to my ankles? If I didn't know what a cankle was then, I know now.

My daughter Amanda, God, how I love that child. Yes, my daughter just happens to have the same name as my friend at the prison. One day, Amanda tells me she wants to start counting points and she doesn't want to do it alone. I knew some things about counting points and not calories, but I didn't know a lot about it. I knew you could eat in moderation whatever you wanted, and it went on a points system.

Let's talk for a moment about eating in moderation.

Moderation does not mean if you want to devour a dozen glazed donuts, you eat only six instead. That is NOT eating in moderation. Or, if you want to eat a one-pound bar of Hershey's Chocolate (you know the block they use for baking purposes) and you eat the king-sized bar instead. That is NOT eating in moderation. Go ahead and laugh, it's true. I crave those large one-pound blocks of pure Hershey's Milk Chocolate. Talk about heavenly!)

Speaking of doughnuts, I discovered that I am allergic to sugar. Every time I eat a dozen doughnuts, my stomach swells up.

Counting points is a diet where you can eat anything you want and you don't have to feel deprived. I've been on those diets where it's strictly fruits and vegetables, or vegetables and no fruits. Eat meat, or don't eat meat. I've even been on a cabbage soup diet. I've deprived myself so much that I had to binge eat just to curve the cravings. That's my story and I'm sticking to it. OK, well, I guess I didn't have to, but I did all the same.

I think and I can't be certain, but I believe I was back on the low-carb diet at the time. My one and only time of binge eating, I was craving something sweet, so I went to the dollar store and I bought a six-pack of Mallo Cups. You know what those are, right? Creamy, ooey, gooey, soft marshmallowy center, covered with milk chocolate. The delicious candy bar that was made in heaven. I swear, when I opened one of the packages, a choir of Angels sang to me—that's how heavenly those are. If you are not from the United States and you are wondering why US Americans are so fat, have a friend in the United States send you a Mallo Cup. Eat it. The US American obesity epidemic will make perfect sense to you. I'm pretty sure that in heaven you eat Mallo Cups when you want to lose weight, or when you're hungry, or whenever you want to.

Anyway, I bought one pack of six, because I couldn't find just one single Mallo Cup. I wanted only one but somehow, and I don't know how or when it happened, but before I got home, I managed to eat every single one of those heavenly scrumptious treats. All six of them gone, devoured, vanished, with no trace in sight that I even bought them less than a half hour ago. If I hadn't been the only person in the car, I might have blamed it on one of the kids or the grandkids. This is a true story, I couldn't make that shit up. After I hid the evidence, I went into the house and ate dinner with the family.

Anyway, Amanda and I joined a group on-line where we read, and researched, and took notes on how to count points. Before hitting the grocery store, we calculated our height and weight to determine how many points we could eat in a single day. I had 21 points I could eat, while Amanda had less than I did. That meant when I had reached that golden number of 21, I was done eating for the day. I couldn't eat anything else. Well I could if I went into the allowed borrowed points. This program did have extra points that you could borrow for the week. These points were free to use and you didn't have to pay them back from your daily points. These extra points were to be used for special occasions. In case there was a birthday party or a wedding anniversary you attended, they gave you extra points so you could enjoy a piece of the celebration cake and still not go over your daily points. I freaking love counting points and not calories! And go, Amanda, for suggesting it!

On our grocery list, we also added two black permanent markers. We had a plan and a mission, and we were going to conquer our weight-loss goals together with the help of each other. We also bought measuring cups and measuring spoons. We even bought a scale that weighs ounces. Yes, when dieting, ounces count as a weight loss. We were

serious and this time, I was going to be thin, forever. Eat whatever I want in moderation. I can do that.

Amanda had a lot less weight to lose than I did, but I knew by doing this together we would get there. We shopped for everything on the list and if the label listed or mentioned Weight Watchers then we bought it. I was so excited when I saw that the maker of this diet made light and fluffy fudge bars worth 1 point each. In case you can't tell, I have one hell of a sweet tooth. In my head I had calculated I could have 21 Fudge Bars a day and nothing else. If I was awake for 16 hours in a day, I could eat one Fudge Bar about every 55 minutes or so. Now this is a diet I could live with. Of course, this isn't how the diet works, but I didn't care. They want you to eat healthy and eat sweets only in moderation, but it's hard for a fat girl on a diet to be rational. I didn't share this newfound revelation with my daughter because I knew for certain she wouldn't be happy about it.

Amanda and I went home and excitedly marked every box, bottle, can, and jar with how many points everything was. We marked cereal boxes, olive jars, milk cartons, and condiment bottles. In case you didn't know, condiments have no point value, they're free. Eat all you want, they're free, I say! Breakfast: all-you-can-eat mustard. Lunch: all-you-can-eat ketchup. Dinner: all-you-can-eat horseradish. The rest of the day: Weight Watcher Fudge Bars. Yum, yum!

The next morning for breakfast, I truly never realized how little a one-cup serving size was. One cup sure is NOT a lot of cereal, milk, or oatmeal. However, one cup of M&M candies could be quite satisfying.

One day I had a bagel for breakfast and measured out one teaspoon of cream cheese and wondered what the hell was I going to do with that? That's when I knew I had a serious

problem with portion control. One teaspoon of cream cheese is what I used for each bite of bagel before I started counting points.

Everyday we weighed, measured, counted, and ate the number of points we were allowed to eat. Everyday we saw the changes in the scales and eventually in our clothing. This diet worked and I was thrilled. Once again the fat girl left on what I hoped was a permanent vacation and the newly arrived thin girl felt, sexy, strong, and beautiful.

Rex was still heavy and he was fine with it. God, how I wanted to be him. I wanted to feel good in my own skin. Nope, women aren't made for that. I have no idea why. I have no idea when or where it started that women had to be this tall and weigh no more than this amount. If a real woman looked like a Barbie doll, she would be too weak to get out of bed. It sucks not being comfortable in our own skin. It sucks to always want what you can't have, or what you don't have. It sucks to always be compared to someone else. Not only do others compare us, but we also compare ourselves, to the younger, thinner, more attractive women.

It is said that everyone is created equally. That's a lie! If that were true, we all would be tall. None of us would have stretch marks after childbirth. We all would have tight, flawless skin. None of those great qualities were in my cards. Nope. At 5'3", I'm the tallest girl in the family. Whenever I said I was tall, people would laugh. Depends on whom you're comparing me to. Compared to two of my sisters, I am tall. Compared to two of my three daughters, I'm short. We all can't be 5'7". In case you can't tell, my two tall daughters take after their father. Compared to my oldest daughter, Carey, I'm tall. Everyone in the second grade or higher is taller than Carey's 4'11" height. At 105 pounds, she wouldn't look right any taller than that.

Anyway, counting points changed my life. My daughter

Amanda married and moved away and life was good. Rex and I were getting along great, and one night he told me he loved me just like I was, and he didn't understand my obsessiveness with weight loss. I sat up a little taller in the chair, and politely reminded him of our fight we had back in October, 2006, when he called me a fat ass. While those words hurt me then and they still do, he couldn't recall ever saying them to me.

As of today, I still say I've been hungry since October, 2006. It's not totally true, but it's funny to say. Those who know the fat-ass story laugh and then glare at Rex, and he's oblivious to the whole situation. I do remind him often of his not-so-nice words. He's sorry, and he should be.

Over time, I stopped counting points, stopped counting calories, stopped counting carbs, and I stopped weighing myself daily. I was in my late forties and life was good. The weight slowly came back and with it came some extra weight. I still joked about how many servings of fruit are in a small milkshake and how many servings of vegetables are in an order of nachos. I'm heavy, but I can still joke about food and my lack of willpower to resist it.

As time went on, the fat skinny girl inside me was screaming to get out. I usually shut her up with a candy bar but sometimes, I would listen to her. I was getting older and I wanted to be thin and attractive. I live in Sarasota, Florida, where people are thin, healthy, happy, and beautiful. Sarasota, Florida, is where middle-aged and older rich people go to work out. I wanted to be one of those people. Although heavy, I'm still the same person, but I don't feel like the same person. I look in the mirror and wonder who the hell is that person looking back at me. That can't be right! Can it?

Let's Talk About Smoothies

FYI, these are the ingredients for a vanilla shake at one particular fast-food restaurant chain: whole milk, sucrose, cream, nonfat milk solids, corn syrup solids, mono and diglycerides, guar gum, imitation vanilla flavor, carrageenan, cellulose gum, vitamin A palmitate.

When I talk about smoothies, I'm not talking about the strawberry and banana smoothies made with whole milk you get from the drive-through of a fast-food joint. You know the ones that taste like milkshakes. I'm not talking about those kinds of smoothies. I'm talking about leafy greens, fresh fruit, and water smoothies. Since when did I think mixing kale and cranberries together with two cups of water would taste delicious and would be satisfying? Since I was fat and desperate, that's when.

Even though time goes on, history somehow repeats itself. I was on Facebook and saw this new thing out that had great benefits with fast results. The older I get the less time I have on this earth. Fast results are exactly what I need. It wasn't a diet, but a body cleanse. I can do that, right? I like clean.

So, like before, I Googled, researched, and read everything I could about these new healthy smoothies.

- Make a list.
- Buy the ingredients.
- Follow directions.
- Drink smoothies for ten or twenty-one days, depending on which detox you follow.
- Bam! Lose 10 to 15 pounds.

You know where I'm going with this, right?

I get online and buy the paperback book, and then I call my

daughter Amanda and tell her about this new detox program that I have planned for us. She is just as excited as I am. Poor Amanda. What am I doing to this adult child of mine?

When I get the book in the mail, I study it like I'll be tested on it. I eagerly and excitedly make out a grocery list. Not just for me, but one for Amanda, too.

On Saturday, Amanda and I go to the Farmers Market and buy all the fresh fruits and vegetables we need for the first five days. According to the book, it's best to shop twice, five days apart, so the ingredients remain fresh. Then, we go to Walmart and buy the other ingredients we need. Detox tea, flax seeds, and stevia, to name a few. We also buy freezer bags and containers to store our pretty detox smoothies in for the day. Three containers for each of us.

After two hours of shopping, and two hours of food prepping and bag labeling, we are now ready to begin our smoothie detox. On Sunday I continue to read and research this new smoothie that will change my life. The book stresses that this is not a diet but a detox and it's a way to a healthier you. I like that idea. I'm so excited I want to start now, but I wait.

On day one, the smoothie is delicious and filling. I did exactly as the book said to do. At the end of the day, I was vomiting and I was tired. All signs of detoxing so I'm right on target.

On Tuesday, I get up and mix the ingredients for the smoothie with two cups of water. I pour it into my new storage drinking containers I bought just for these life-changing smoothies. Spinach and berries, not a bad combination. This morning, Amanda calls me to see what my thoughts are on today's smoothie. Obviously, she doesn't like the berries as much as I do. Again, I do

everything like I'm supposed to and I feel great. I'm even down four pounds from my starting weight. Go, me!

The next day, I mix the kale with the other ingredients with two cups of water and pour it into my new fancy drinking storage containers. I look at it and it looks seedier than the other smoothies. I drink it and it doesn't taste as good as the other smoothies. I call Amanda and she laughs. "It's good, right?" she teases.

According to the book, you have to follow the recipes precisely. You can NOT mix it up, but you can add stevia. I already added four packets and that wasn't enough; however, you can eat a light and healthy meal in the evening if you want to. Amanda and I decide that today, we'll have a healthy meal.

I was determined to make this work. I got on Facebook and reached out to my friends. They won't let me down, right? Right? I asked for help from anyone who has tried the smoothies and they didn't suggest anything for me. However, my brothers and closest friends suggested I add almond milk and ice cream to it. One close friend suggested I add bananas, milk, ice cream, whipped cream, and even a cherry. He was certain if I added enough of these ingredients I wouldn't even notice the kale's bitter taste. Thanks, close friend, but your advice kind of defeats the clean eating purpose.

By this time, on day three, I can NOT finish the smoothie. I guess I don't like kale, go figure. I thought the ten days would fly by and one day I would wake up and be 15 pounds thinner than I was. Nope, the days are dragging, I'm hungry and grouchy, and the smoothies are NOT tasting all that great and they certainly aren't going down all that smoothly.

On day four, I called Amanda and told her I couldn't do it

another day. She understood. She wasn't as verbal as I was about the ten-day challenge, but she also didn't ask for the book and she also didn't shop for the last five days of smoothie ingredients.

And so history repeated itself: I gained the four pounds back and a few extra pounds with it.

To this day, I still don't understand why I couldn't have eaten a salad, a bowl of fruit, and a bottle of water and called it a meal. Why and how does mixing everything in a blender change the effect it has on a person? And then they call it a smoothie. In my opinion and this is only my opinion, it is anything but.

Let's Talk About Salad Bars

I love nothing more than a freshly stocked salad bar. This is where clean eating truly begins. Right? You get in line, load up on your lettuce of choice, add some spinach, cucumbers, tomatoes, olives, onions, cheese, eggs, sunflower seeds, and then you get to the dressing. Dressing? I have identified the source of my problem.

If I were used to clean eating, I could use the vinegar and oil and be all excited and shit. But, no. I go right for the buttermilk ranch dressing. Now, I have a heaping plate of healthy delicious vegetables and buttermilk ranch dressing is staring at me. I use the ladle and put some on my plate. It looks good, but it's not enough for all those vegetables I have rolling from my plate onto the floor. So, I use another heaping ladle full of the buttermilk ranch dressing.

There's 140 calories in two tablespoons of my dressing of choice. I have NEVER EVER used only two tablespoons of dressing on my salad in my entire life. As I stand here, I try to figure out how many tablespoons are in a restaurant-sized salad dressing ladle. Not just one ladle, oh no. I had to use two in order to make sure there was enough dressing

for each piece of lettuce.

Can someone tell me what good a salad bar is for clean eating if you don't use the vinegar and oil or low-fat dressing? I just spent fifteen minutes carefully choosing the greenest, freshest vegetables for my salad only to add over one thousand calories of dressing to it. I may be wrong, but I believe I just added more than half of my entire daily allowance of calories just in the salad dressing.

Hold on, I'm not done yet with the salad bar. The salad bar I go to in Florida also has a baked bread counter, a soup counter, and get this, a loaded potato counter, and a dessert bar. If I didn't ruin my clean eating and/or diet with the salad dressing, I sure as hell didn't stand a chance with the bread bar. There's not a fat girl alive who doesn't like bread, or potatoes, or dessert. There may not be any person alive who doesn't like those things, period.

I'm not sure where my poor eating habits came from. I know that eating healthy is expensive. Hot dogs are a lot cheaper to buy than lean ground beef. Maybe that's where it started. My childhood. Yeah, that must be it. It's my mom and my dad's fault. I'm just kidding, this is all Rex's fault. He's the one who started my diet crusade. He's acts like he doesn't remember those two little words he said to me in the midst of an argument, but I know he's just lying in wait to use them again.

Seriously, I would love to blame someone else for my diet failures. I could blame it on baby weight from my last child, and I have actually done that a time or two. But since my last and youngest child is 29, it's just not believable.

Let's Talk About Confusion

By this time in my life, I consider myself a diet expert. There isn't a diet out there that I haven't heard about, read about, or researched. I also consider myself pretty

knowledgeable when it comes to diets. You couldn't tell from looking at me, but I am a diet professional.

This is where the diets get confusing, well, at least for me. I know a lot about a lot of different diets. I've tried a lot of different diets, but yet I'm still heavy. I think I know why.

I always start my day with a positive attitude, and determined that today is the day I'll succeed at my diet. Because I'm married, and because I'm raising three teenage grandchildren it really is hard to diet in a houseful of eaters. So, instead of me picking one diet, I mix them all up depending on what's going on for that day. You see where this is a problem, right?

The kids want pizza, great. I can do that. I'll just count points and eat my 21 points worth of pizza. Rex wants seafood, great, I can do the low-carb plan so I can eat all the crab legs I want and still be able to dip them in butter. A birthday party, great, back to counting points again.

It's a rollercoaster ride and I'm really getting tired of being on top and taking the plunge to the bottom. You can count calories, net carbs, or points, or drink smoothies if you can get them down, but you have to pick only one diet and you have to stick with it.

Let's Talk About Braces!

In my last desperate attempt at weight loss, I went to the orthodontist and got braces. Yep, that's right. Mother of six, grandmother of more than six, and at age 53 I decided to get braces. When my grandson Desmond had braces, his mouth was so sore he lost ten pounds. The same thing happened to my granddaughter Samantha — she dropped fifteen pounds from wearing braces. If it worked for them, certainly it'll work for me. Right? Wouldn't you think?

I have a space that has always bothered me and when I was

at the dentist I mentioned I wanted braces to close the space. I didn't tell him this was all part of my weight-loss plan. He thought it was a great idea. I called and made an appointment with the orthodontist. A few weeks later, this 52-year-old (see what I did there? In the previous paragraph, I was 53. This is a book so you can't see how old I am. I may decide to end my essay by telling you that dieting works and I weigh 105 pounds and I am really 24 years old) grandma was sporting braces. My mouth hurt, the wires rubbed the inside of my cheeks causing sores, and I couldn't bite into anything. Great, my plan was working. My mouth was too sore for me to eat anything.

The first two days or maybe a week was the worst. I was eating soup and was not happy about it. While I was forced to eat soup, Rex was eating big fat burgers from his favorite hamburger joint. I had forgotten how it felt to go hungry and I wasn't happy about not being able to eat.

That didn't last long. Either I was hungry enough to ignore the pain, or I just got used to it and it didn't bother me, so I also ate whatever I wanted.

Great, I failed at another weight-loss attempt, but I do have perfectly straight teeth. I just got my braces off and moved on to wearing a retainer 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Maybe the retainer will help with my weight loss. Can't blame a girl for trying.

Conclusion

This book was not written to make fun of diets or the women who are on them. Obesity is a serious problem. Not just for our health, but what it does to our self esteem. There is NOT one woman out there who likes being overweight. Not on this planet, anyway, although Heaven may be full of fat, happy women and men. It's hard to carry the excess weight we have. It's even harder to lose it.

Women have so much we must do, that when it comes time to taking care of ourselves, it's the last thing we worry about. We take care of the house, the kids, the husband, and the grandkids, and we cook dinner, do homework, and keep doctor appointments, and then we still go to work and work eight-, ten-, and sometimes twelve-hour shifts so we can pay bills.

Of course, not all weight gain and obesity are from overeating. Sometimes it's caused by a medical condition or illness. No matter the reason, it takes a toll on us physically, mentally, and emotionally.

In 2012, I had a complete hysterectomy, and in 2016 I was diagnosed with hypothyroid and the early stages of Hashimoto's thyroiditis. These are more contributing factors to weight gain, as if I needed something else. All the more reason for me to lose weight and to be healthy.

I honestly believe the key to weight loss is to change your lifestyle. You have to do it for YOU. At the age of 51 (and now I'm 51! It's magic! I love being an author!), I have come to terms that I may NOT ever be skinny, and I'm fine with that. (Well, at least for today, tomorrow is a different day.) I do, however, want to be healthier, live longer, and be happier.

So today, I vow to live a healthier lifestyle. I know what I need to do — we all know what we need to do. Drink more water, eat more fruits and vegetables, eat less sugar and other bad carbs, and exercise (or at least move more). I absolutely despise exercise. But any movement is better than none.

To each and every woman out there who is dieting or who has dieted, this book is dedicated to YOU. May we all live a long, healthy, and happy life. Because WE deserve it!

Chapter Two:” Did Someone Say Cookies?” by Carla

Evans

One Sister's Story

My sisters came up with a plan on our last sisters' cruise to write a book together. "Yay!" Notice, I said my sisters, because I want it put on the record that I was the one sitting quietly in the corner, minding my own business, stuffing a cupcake in my mouth and rinsing it down with a glorious chocolate martini. It'll be fun! A little light, humorous, easy-read book about dieting bloopers! I about choked on the martini! Thankfully, it just spewed out my nose, instead! "Come on, Carla, you must do it with us! You will regret it if you don't and we become *New York Times* bestselling authors!" That's easy to say when Brenda is already a very talented, successful author who spends her days writing! And so, for months now, I have been receiving these rude private messages: "Is everyone working on their part?" "It's going to be so great!" "How is everyone coming along?" "Carla, have you started yet?" Blah, blah, blah ... "How rude!" I can't even think of one funny thing about dieting. I have a love/hate relationship with food! I love to eat and I just plain hate being fat!

So, my three sisters schemed and plotted and brainstormed about writing this book and how they were going to pressure me into spending my valuable time coming up with ways to laugh at myself and share with anyone who would listen my horror stories of my weight and my many desperate attempts to lose it. I secretly hoped that one of the other sisters would not come through with their portion of the book so that I would not have to feel guilty about not doing mine and I could go back to binge-watching Daryl on *Walking Dead*. But no, the overachievers all came through and so now here I am at the last minute trying to find the words to tell my sad tale of my dieting woes. I have always had a bit of an issue with weight. You know that age right

before puberty when everyone or at least some people plump up a bit. Well, it seems like I never really came out of that stage. I began dieting way before I should have even been thinking about my weight. You see, I had two older, thinner, and more beautiful sisters who teased me relentlessly about being the “chunky one.” They later confessed that they regretted tormenting me, but I’m sure it was only because it forced to me to take notice and lose some weight. Then, I became the “skinny sister.” There, take that, bitches! Call me chunky again, I dare you! My younger sister, the author, well, she was just a twig! You know, one of those people who can eat whatever they want and never gain a pound. I just hate those people.

Of course when I was a teen, I could drop five pounds just by getting a new boyfriend. It melted off me like a Popsicle on a hot sidewalk. After all, there was no room for food in my tummy, what with all those butterflies fluttering around in there. I miss those dang butterflies. Where the heck did they go anyway? Those were the days. And now, decades later, I eat right and exercise for a solid month and if I am lucky and the planets are aligned just right **so** that their gravity pulls me upward, I might lose a pound. Doesn’t seem worth it, does it? Of course, as soon as I so much as smell bacon frying, or glance at a piece of birthday cake out of the corner of my eye, I will gain it right back. And that pound is not going to be coming home alone. He is bringing his friends with him! And he has tons of them! Pun intended!

If I remember correctly, I pretty much kept the weight off when I was younger. I weighed 116 lbs. (I’m barely over 5 feet tall) when I became pregnant with my daughter. I weighed 155lbs (GASP!), when I delivered her. It was the end of April, I was breast feeding, I was happy, and I had a lot of supportive friends and a beautiful baby daughter. The weight came off naturally, without trying, much. I was

young, I was settled, I was single with a baby, and I worked hard to support the both of us. I was doing outdoor electrical work. During the summer months, my weight stayed off. It was summer, we drank a lot of water, and we didn't eat much. The winter came and that was a whole new story. I worked with very large men who liked to eat, a lot, especially in the winter when we wore mounds of clothes just to stay warm during those frigid months in Ohio. One morning, I awoke to discover that there was not a pair of jeans in the house (not even my "fat" jeans) that I could squeeze into. Not even if I left off the long johns, put baby powder on my entire body and lay on the bed to zip them. It just wasn't happening. Those freakin pounds had snuck up on me like ninjas in the night and attached themselves to my body while I was sleeping! I swear, it was overnight!

Good lord! I was miserable, I couldn't breathe, and I had nothing to wear! I had to do something drastic. I came up with my own diet: I allowed myself to eat one thing a day. I could eat whatever I wanted, as long as I stuck to one thing a day. Please, don't try this at home! I have to admit, it worked. Most days I ate a sandwich, it could even be a cheeseburger, as long I stuck to that only-one-thing rule. If I wanted a candy bar, or a sundae, that was fine, too, as long as that was all I had for the day. Did someone say cookies? It was great! I could eat whatever I wanted! I would think long and hard about what it was going to be! I planned what I would eat the next day and the next day and even the next week. I have to confess the weight came off (remember, don't try this at home ; no one gets extra points for stupidity) and I was happy about it! At first, the weight loss was rapid, but as time went by the weight loss was slower and slower and soon I was eating only one thing a day and losing only maybe two pounds a month. Remember the whole "your metabolism slows down if you

are not eating properly” ... “your body will go into starvation mode” thing. Blah ... blah ... blah. I’m sure my body was not thrilled with me; neither was my doctor. He asked me at one visit how I lost the weight and I blurted out, “I starved myself!” He said, “I hope that’s not true.” I really did not care. I looked better and younger and prettier and that’s all that mattered. Well, that and the fact that I could squeeze into my jeans again! (And not the fat ones either.) My story pretty much goes downhill from there!

The Odds were Against Me

Our mom was a great cook and baker. She never used a recipe or measured anything. It just seemed to come naturally to her. I’m not exaggerating when I say that she baked a dozen pies for holidays. (My two older brother used to each eat one-quarter pie of each kind of pie she would make: one-quarter of an apple pie, one-quarter of a pumpkin pie, etc.) There were mounds of sugar cookies for Christmas, too. Sugar cookies are still my favorite to this day! Darn her and her cookies, too! Did someone say cookies? You have to admit that the highlight of the holidays is the food. Well, that and getting together with friends and family.

For Easter we always had a nice ham and sweet potatoes smothered in butter and brown sugar. Christmas dinner was either a ham or turkey or both, homemade noodles, mashed potatoes with gravy, and homemade loaves of bread smothered in real butter. Thanksgiving is still my favorite holiday. I’m not sure if it is because you get together with friends and family without all of the stress of shopping for the perfect gifts or simply because I adore turkey, dressing, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie. My sister Martha would bring her famous “salad” with the crumbled bacon and boiled eggs and the dressing made with mayo, sugar, and cheese! I wonder why I’m “chubby.” Rosa would bring her

famous “party potatoes” with the sour cream, butter, and of course the cheeses! I am sure to host the holidays just to ensure that I have some leftovers. Since I moved to Florida, I have had to learn to make those wonderful traditional dishes that my sisters prepared. Wonder why I’m “chunky.”

It’s not just the holidays where the focus is on the food, it is anytime you get together with anyone for any reason. Most social events include some sort of food. I’ve never heard anyone say, “Let’s get together for some organic carrot sticks and a few bottles of cold water.” Wherever there are people, there will be food and we don’t mean rabbit food. There must always be some form of something tasty to eat. Often, they are referred to as “refreshments.” Did someone say cookies? Refreshments will be served. You bet your ass they will because if they weren’t, nobody would show up. You can’t plan to watch “the game” without refreshments. No Tupperware parties, no baby showers, no card games would ever exist without the “refreshments.” I’m just doomed to be “chunky.”

Then there’s Halloween and Halloween treats, you know, for the ghosts and goblins. Wink, wink. And the Easter candy, you know for the Easter Baskets that the bunny hides for kids and the grandkids. Wink, wink. What is it about Reese cups shaped like eggs that make them so much better than the traditional round shape? The Reese’s corporation caught onto this and started making the treats into Christmas Trees, Pumpkins, and Valentine Hearts! Yay! Oh? You didn’t know about these? Well, just pretend you didn’t hear that here and don’t go looking for them during the next holiday season. And then, when you do anyway, don’t blame me for your addiction. I like to have candy in a pretty candy dish for well, you know ... “company.” I am the only company I need to dig into the candy dish, And I can tell you that I have absolutely no

self-control. I can't walk by that candy dish without sneaking a piece or a handful, depending on who happens to be in the house with me at the time. Lord knows I wouldn't want anyone to know what a glutton I am.

The last place I worked, I swear they would find any excuse to have food catered in. I wasn't sure if they all liked to eat or if they just liked spending the company's money. On my last day of work for that company, they actually catered in BBQ! Hey, let's celebrate your leaving! Did someone say cookies? The HR Director always kept a huge jar of mini chocolate candy bars in his office. I would always find an excuse to go to his office and sneak some. If I had a really bad day, I would find myself in his office several times on those days. Since I am a nurse, I had lots of bad days!

There is always an excuse to eat cake! My boss is notorious for celebrating everything and anything with a cake! Birthday? Here's your cake! Promotion? Here's your cake! New grandchild? Divorce? Bought a new dress? Here, have some cake! Nearly all of our morning meetings include some sort of celebratory cake! "No thank you, really, I just started a new diet." Oh, but it's unlucky if you don't eat the cake! I swear, the cakes are stacked against me! Er, I mean the cards, the cards are stacked against me. Did someone say cookies?

It's Just Not Fair

It's just not fair! Seriously, I should be skinny! After all, I wish for it every year before I blow out the candles and eat my cake! What do I have to do ... eat right and exercise? Whatever! That's not going to happen! I tried it one weekend and that crap just does not work! I didn't wake up skinny on Monday! Liars!

The truth is I do eat right. Lucky for me, I like fruits and

veggies. I like fish and chicken. I cringe when I think of what I might look like if I didn't. Salads with grilled chicken breasts are one of my favorite things to order out! And water. For the love of God, I drink water. I order it at restaurants! I should be skinny and healthy! The problem is I love cookies, cake, ice cream, mmmm, and chocolate ... my sweet tooth must be the size of Texas! Did someone say cookies? So I eat healthy and then, I have dessert! We go to dinner with my sister and her husband, order a dessert to share, "Four forks, please!" Everyone takes a bite and lays down their fork. Everyone but me, that is! I encourage everyone, "Please, you must eat more than that. I can't eat it all by myself!" Knowing full well I could eat four or five of those suckers by myself! Especially if it is densely populated with chocolate and whipped cream in an attempt to make my belly look like it is densely populated with twins. Everyone politely declines and I am forced to devour the rest all by myself. I'm convinced this is all my sisters' evil plan in the first place!

I also enjoyed working out for some crazy reason. I started doing aerobics to the videos in the living room at home. I started with Jane Fonda videos. Yes, I'm that old! So is she! Some of you may remember those. From there, I went to the *Abs of Steel* and the *Buns of Steel* videos. Remember? Way back in the day? I never ended up with abs of steel or buns of steel but that never stopped me from trying. I started going to the fitness center and taking classes. I loved it and I would finish one hour-long class and rush to the next one and I would do them back to back like that, sometimes five days a week. I was a freak! Then my favorite instructor informed me that she was moving out of state and encouraged me to become certified to teach step aerobics myself. And so I went through the training and low and behold (that's the name of my blouse that is my husband's favorite for me to wear) I got my license and

began teaching myself. I was addicted! I'm telling you it is just not fair that now I carry around all this extra weight and am considered "chubby." I swear that is what is wrong with my knees to this day. Exercise ruined my knees, not being overweight. Did someone say cookies?

And since I do eat healthy, for the most part, I sneakretly eat the goodies, behind closed doors, where no one can see me. Those ninjas got nothing on me. Everyone knows that if no one sees you eat it, then it doesn't count! That is a well-known rule of dieting, right? I recently learned that if you are standing, the calories don't count either. And everyone knows that crumbs have no calories. My most favorite sneakret eating is ... shhhhh ... my husband is not ever allowed to find this out ... my favorite is this creamy vanilla frozen custard, which is simply ice cream that is way more fattening than regular ice cream. I can tell because of the heavenly taste and the divinely creamy way it melts in my mouth. If you haven't tried this, do yourself a favor, DON'T! Just don't do it! Your buttocks, thighs, hips, and tummy will thank you. Your mouth is going to be pissed if she ever finds out what she has been missing, simply because you care more about the way you look than pleasing her. Anyway, I can pull off the freeway after work and go through the drive thru knowing I should be getting one dip, but noooo, I have to get two dips! AND I make sure to go to the drive thru where they have wisely trained their employees to push the custard into the cone. I will NEVER go back to the one that just puts the dips on top of the hollow cone! I don't know if they are thieves or just plain idiots! I can have that creamy dream gone by the time I pull into our driveway, and if I need a little more time, I simply drive slower. I have learned to ignore the blowing horns and other drivers cursing and flipping me off. I wipe my mouth with the back of my hand, pop a mint in my mouth, and smile as I open the door and sweetly ask,

“What’s for dinner, honey?”

Not that I Blame Anyone

I don’t want to blame anyone for my weight, but I do feel compelled to mention my adorable son. As I have already mentioned, I lost the weight fairly painlessly after having my daughter. I was left with only a few very small stretch marks and fortunately they were all below the belly button. I was a little older when I became pregnant for my son. Eight years, I was eight years older when I became pregnant for my son and I want to tell you, that pregnancy wrecked my body! I weighed the same as I did when I delivered Tiffany. (I remember because when the nurse asked what I weighed, I turned my head away from my husband’s inquisitive (prying) ears and mouthed 155 to the nurse, who I am sure rolled her eyes.) However, I ended up with more stretch marks that extended the entire length of my torso (I’m talking all the way down to the pubic area) and even though I was breastfeeding, which is supposed to speed the weight-loss process along, I simply could not lose the weight. I continued to wear maternity clothes both to “hide” the fat and because I had nothing else in the closet that would fit. I remember my husband saying, “But you’re not pregnant anymore.” I didn’t speak to him until Keith was in preschool.

Keith was a beautiful child with light golden, almost white hair, big blue eyes, and beautiful skin. He could only, or would only eat a few bites of anything at a time. He would look at me with those big eyes and say, “I’m hungry and firsty.” I would prepare him a snack, and the remains of little snacks could be found all around the living room because the boy could not, or would not finish anything. During the summer months, we would go to the community pool nearly every day where they had a lovely “concession” stand that sold anything from pizza and hot

dogs to candy bars, chips, and ice cream treats. Yay! That beautiful child was given money to buy whatever his heart desired from that stand all day long. You guessed it, he would eat a couple of bites and say, “Mommy, I all done” as he handed me whatever delicious treat he decided he couldn’t or wouldn’t eat. Of course, what’s a good mother to do, but take the treat and finish it for him? It took me a while, but I finally caught onto that little monster’s evil plot and refused to finish the snacks for him! Not that I’m blaming him! I put myself on my famous eat-one-thing-a-day starvation diet and eventually lost the “baby” weight. I got down to 106 lbs. I remember because my family and I would go to the mall together about once a week. (That was about all there was to do in that small town in Ohio.) Anyway, there was a scale in which you could insert a quarter and it would print out your weight on this little piece of paper. 106 lbs! I was so excited! I held onto that little piece of paper forever. Truth be known, I probably still have that piece of paper tucked away somewhere. I was also in a size six jeans. I bought the cutest pair and I wore those suckers until they literally fell apart. I remember my husband’s ex saying, “Carla, you are thinner than me!” Heck yeah I was!

It wasn’t too long after that, Mike and I were in a store and he put a scale on the floor and asked me to step on it. No way! I was putting the weight back on and he and I both knew it! I snuck back and got on that scale: 122lbs! Out of nowhere. Those dang sneaky little ninjas anyway! Here we go again!

When I started nursing school, I was already “chunky,” and was warned by previous nursing students that I would be packing the pounds on but not to worry because when I became a nurse, it would all come right back off. Made sense to me and I am sure that had I started nursing school at a much younger age that would have been true. But I was

older than most, well, OK, ALL of the other students and yes I started to pack it on. I sat in class five days a week. I ate when I was studying, when I was tired and trying to stay awake, and when I was stressed out over an upcoming exam. So, my darling husband went online and paid way too much for some diet plan that was delivered directly to the house. It was very complicated! I was supposed to take pictures of myself and figure out where I needed to lose the weight blah, blah, blah. What I did get out of it was that I was supposed to eat six mini meals a day, one every two and a half to three hours. I was also supposed to walk for one hour at least five days a week. My freaking genius of a husband paid a small fortune for this bit of wisdom to be delivered to the house. We bought a treadmill and my journey began. I learned how to read and walk on a treadmill at the same time. And so I got back on track AGAIN and lost the weight AGAIN. Well, remember the part about losing weight when you become a nurse? I thought I was really going to be thin. “No time to eat when you are a nurse.” Liars! Well, it’s true that nurses frequently don’t have time to take a lunch break, but trust me, nurses can multi task. I learned to down an entire bag of chips and finish a can of soda while emptying my bladder! Break’s over! Back to work! It did not take long for those pounds to come back and bring even more friends!

My darling husband is always very supportive of my attempts to lose weight. But, he also likes to bring me home some treats. Even now as I sit here with writer’s block, he runs off to the grocery store to pick up my favorite ice cream, you know, for “inspiration.” And he knows just what I love and will manage to find just the right thing, not that I’m picky. Did someone say cookies? I have often accused him of liking me “chunky,” which he adamantly denies. (Thanks a lot, honey.) Not that I want to blame

anyone. I can't tell you the number of times that I have been determined to lose weight because of some comment that he has made. So, why is it that whenever I start a diet, even if I haven't said anything to him, suddenly he will walk through the door with a bag of Dove's chocolates or even go so far as to stop at a restaurant just to bring home one of my favorite desserts. He even went through a spell where he was looking online to find the recipes for signature desserts from some of our favorite restaurants. Thank the Lord none of them were even close and some of them were even quite nasty. Shhh ... I don't like to tell him, thankfully he already knows.

I don't really like to talk about this much (but I still need 500 more words). Anyway, about six years ago, I actually packed up my car, left my husband, and moved to Florida. I lost 10 lbs in the first two weeks! I just couldn't eat. I remember one day, my sister Brenda said she drove by the pool and saw this skinny tanned woman in a black bikini. It was me! She was shocked, but genuinely happy for me. When Mike and I got back together and he was moving down here to be with me, she warned me not to let him sabotage my new look. Well, so much for that. He often jokes that when I left, that was the easiest 190 lbs I ever lost.

Who are They, Anyway?

I don't believe that there is a diet out there that I haven't tried, at least once. I've counted the carbs. Yes, I can eat meat and cheese, and salads. What? I can't eat fruit? Forget it, can't do it, not even for two weeks. I've counted the points. You can eat pretty much anything in moderation. I have to do what? Weigh in? In front of people, every week? Nope, sorry, it ain't happening! If I did that, I would have to kill the witnesses. I've counted the calories and the fat grams. I even did the 24-day challenge! You know, the

cleanse phase, then the max phase? My daughter said, “Mom, you can do anything for 24 days!” Well, apparently I can’t! I can do anything for a short while (which I define as six seconds), but I just can’t seem to stick with it anymore. Remember, the no self-control? True story! No matter how badly I want to be thin enough to look cute in those little sundresses, I just can’t seem to kick my addiction to sweets! I’ve also counted the pounds and I’ve watched them go up, then down, then up again. Mostly up again.

Why is it when I start a diet, suddenly I become this insatiable animal that just can’t seem to get enough to eat? Just the thought of dieting and I think I’m starving! I actually go on the search for food! I have learned to make sure there is no change in my purse so that I can’t use the vending machines. If I know I have change in my purse, I think I have to have a bag of chips or a candy bar from those dang machines. It’s bad enough that patients and their grateful family members are constantly bringing in treats like donuts, cupcakes, cookies, etc. Did someone say cookies? And my unit secretary will always make sure that he wraps one of those treats up for me just to make sure I get one. He thinks he knows me so well! I think they are all out to get me.

I felt pretty normal living in Ohio. You can cover your weight with clothes and it seems like people are a little plumper in the North. I moved to Florida six years ago and the women are fit and thin and appear to be much younger than their age. It seems that people are more health conscious here. People are out and about, walking, running, bicycling. I could do that if it weren’t for these knees. You know the ones that were ruined from too much exercise. The people eat healthier, too: fresh fruits and veggies, lean meats. You know, the stuff we’re supposed to eat! They don’t eat a lot of bad carbs or sugar. You can’t cover up

with clothes in Florida. I hate all of these beautiful women running around down here, wearing their cute clothes and showing off their fit and tan bodies. I wish I was one of them!

I have even kept my favorite skinny clothes, just in case I happen to get skinny again. So, I have my fat clothes, my skinny clothes, and everything in between. That's better than comedian and Florida resident Jackie Gleason, who used to always buy his clothing in three sizes: fat, fatter, and elephant. When he was really fat, he used to check into a hospital and undergo a weight-loss plan. Once he checked out of the hospital because he wasn't feeling well.

What is this obsession with being thin anyway? Sure, we all say, "I just want to be healthy." We all know THAT's a lie! What we want is to be skinny! And rich! You know it's true. There I said it. I wish I was rich and skinny! Of course, if I were rich I could just have all this fat sucked right out of my body! Then I would need a whole body lift. I wonder what that would cost.

I stopped in my coworkers' office to see if they had any funny stories to share about dieting. You know, because I still needed 100 words (I told you, this was not my idea and I was completely against it from the beginning.) One of the girls, Tammy, held up a set of plastic utensils. Apparently, Wanda, in an attempt to help Tammy lose weight had devised these "diet" utensils. She had cut off half of the knife blade, half of the fork tines, and had put holes in the spoon. Tammy, eagerly shoved them at me and said, "Here, put these in your book!" I'm sorry, but Brenda said I couldn't do that, so you'll just have to make your own.

We all know what we have to do to lose weight:

Eat breakfast, they say.

Drink water, they say.

Eat fruits and vegetables, they say.

Eat lean meat, fish, and chicken, they say.

Eat whole grains, they say.

Eat healthy fats, they say.

Don't eat after a certain time of day, they say.

Exercise, they say.

Get a good night's sleep, they say.

Avoid stress, they say.

Whoever the hell "they" are.

I'm pretty sure "they" know what "they" are talking about.

Did someone say cookies? "They" didn't.

Chapter Three: "My Knee-Slapping Diet Experiences" **by Rosa Jones**

WARNING: Content May Not be Suitable for Children Under the Age of 29

Who is to Blame?

I was a petite little girl growing up in a large family, the middle child of seven ... three brothers and three sisters. Because I was always tiny as a tot, my parents would bribe me to eat so that I would grow (pffft, grow!) allowing me to stay up late and watch TV but only if I would be eating bread or the like, developing the unending black hole of carbohydrate hell ... thanks a lot, Mom and Dad! Parents, stop trying to bribe your children to eat. I also blame my parents for my membership in the "Clean Platers Club." This, if you haven't already guessed, is an imaginary club to ensure your rightful place in the world of obesity! I never asked to be a member in this club! I think this

fictitious club is the reason for my tremendous thunder thighs, and possibly my FUPA (fat upper private area)! My poor parents, always the culprit of my demise. I have to blame somebody right? I figure it's OK to blame our parents for anything bad that happens until we reach the age of 60; after that, we need to take personal responsibility. I still have two years and six months left to blame them. Another sure way to produce a pudgy child/adult is to force feed them by telling them that they can't leave the table until they eat everything on their plate. I have heard horror stories of children having yesterday's dinner for breakfast the next morning. Neither I nor my siblings ever had that problem because I would happily eat their dinner along with my own ... you know, just to keep them out of trouble. TO THOSE EVILDOERS KNOWN AS PARENTS ... I SAY, PLEASE DON'T DO THIS. WHEN YOUR CHILD IS HUNGRY, HE OR SHE WILL EAT!

Breads were plentiful in our house growing up; we had a large family and bread was cheap — 10 loaves of white bread could cost \$1 on sale; since then we have been “educated” to pay \$3 or more a loaf — and considered fill-you-up food. I am absolutely and hopelessly in love with breads of all kinds ... white, wheat, Italian, French, biscuits, brioche, muffins, bagels, particularly my mother's homemade yeast bread ... you name it and I loved to eat it. A meal is not a meal without some morsel of baked goodness slathered in fresh churned butter ... the culprit of my dimpled unsightly cellulite-covered bottom ... oh, how I hate those dimples ... but not enough to stop this love affair with food ... well, not for very long anyway.

Sugar is another extreme addiction of mine ... I cannot get enough. Have you seen those “share size” candy bars in the stores? Yeah right, SHARE, like I'm really gonna give half of it away. ELOL (evil laughing out loud). I keep a king-

size or “share size” as they say, candy bar in a plastic zip bag in my purse for emergencies involving low blood sugar or any other excuse I can think of. This is no joke! I have a king-size Pay Day ready to go at a minute’s notice. Once in a while I replace it with a new one ... just to keep it fresh ... and yes, I eat the old one. Just knowing it is there is a comfort to me, I think about it often. God, how I love sweets, pastries, pies, cookies, candy, desserts of all varieties ... once again my parents are to blame. I think I was deprived of sugar as a child, and so now I cannot get enough of it. Poor mom and dad ... the unwarranted cause of all my fat problems. Teehee, not really ... it wasn’t my parents’ fault ... I just love to eat! I have always loved large family meals on holidays when you had so many items to choose from. My mom would laugh and call it a smorgasbord (it is called a buffet in today’s language). Skinny people probably call it a grazing station for cows!

Now that I am an adult I am on the never-ending roller coaster of weight loss and weight gain as I go on a diet and off a diet, and I have acquired a gigantic wardrobe of size six and size 16 and all sizes in between.

Really, I think cheesecake is to blame. Who ever invented cheesecake anyway? I can always find a reason to eat cheesecake.

- It rained today ... Let’s eat a cheesecake!
- I lost my job ... Let’s eat a cheesecake!
- My cat died ... Let’s eat a cheesecake!
- I had a great day ... Let’s eat a cheesecake!
- I’m gonna be a great grandma (not a lie) ... Let’s eat a cheesecake!
- I stubbed my toe ... Let’s eat a cheesecake!

Well, I think you get the idea, and the list goes on and on.

I am presently living in the guest house belonging to my boyfriend's mother and stepfather. When his mother cooks and bakes ... oh my, my, my, EVERYTHING is exceptional. It is unbelievable how everything can taste so good. I have eaten tacos before but not tacos like these. Mrs. Keebler makes the very best cookies your mouth has ever drooled over. Noodles, don't even say noodles. Homemade ice cream that melts in your stomach because it's so delicious that you swallow it before it melts in your mouth...then, you can gobble up another spoonful of ice cream. I don't get it ... how can one person make EVERYTHING taste delish? How does she do that? Practice makes perfect, I guess. We will have to move out very soon or I won't be able to fit through the guest-house door.

Realizing I'm Fat

I remember realizing I had a plump behind when I was in junior high school. My friend had taken a picture of myself with three other girls in an unflattering pose ... good God ... what were we thinking? With our backsides to the camera and looking over our shoulder and smiling brightly the image was captured ... forever haunting me for fear it may turn up on social media. When viewing the unsightly vision of my caboose ... I realized that I was the un-proud owner of a "bubble butt" ... not the cute hineys that the other girls proudly displayed but a huge beach ball of a butt that when someone passed me from behind, their hand would accidentally graze my protruding butt cheeks! Thank God 3D wasn't invented at that time ... I may have put an eye out juust by viewing the photograph! Hence ... the salad diet was invented. I ate nothing but salads for the next few months until my balloon butt became a deflated-balloon butt.

I was able to contain the magnitude of my rump until marriage and kids. Control of appetite was non-existent during pregnancy. I could eat an entire Thanksgiving dinner and turn around 30 minutes later and be hungry again. Oh Lord! I gained 50 pounds for each of my two children ... you know, because I was eating for two, of course. I was bigger than ever, before and after childbirth. I considered naming my first born “Lasagna.” Some people name their children after their favorite adult beverage — “Brandy” or “Chardonnay” — so I thought what the heck, “Lasagna”— what a great name! My hubby forbid it.

Being married to a drop-dead gorgeous hunk of man that every girl (and gay guy) ogled on this side of the Appalachian Trail did not help. In fact, it was depressing ... depressing enough to use for an excuse to eat. Others may have used this for incentive to diet ... but I am not a typical human being. This drove me crazy, for I am a jealous person. He always looked great and was never overweight, even though he never worked out. The women loved him, he was sweet and kind with a giant beautiful smile that everyone was attracted to. I would eat a cheesecake to soothe my aching heart. Take that! That’ll teach ‘em! Well, life goes on and on and on and so did my butt.

Something caught my eye one night when watching my husband do laundry and fold my panties. I counted the seconds it took for him to do so. It took approximately ten seconds and ten folds for just one pair of my satiny, silky GRANNY PANTS! I remember the days when my skivvies were so small there would be no folding ... just throw them in the underwear drawer and you’re done. Oh, how I reminisce about those days of thong glory.

I’m sure I am not the only person to experience the shock of the “double take” ... seeing your own reflection in a plate glass window and thinking that it is someone else and

then looking again just to realize that the person shown in that window is “yours truly”. I have experienced this dreadful shock many times in my life. Va-va-voom, the sheer volume of this voluptuous figure in that window is me! Reality once again sets in. I am fat and I must do something about it.

Diets

I have tried every diet known to man! Most will work but are temporary solutions to a lifelong problem.

I was the fat sister of four girls ... I have always been the fat sister. We are always on diets ... but I'm the fattest of all four. Although people say that I have a pretty face, and to those who think this is a compliment ... I say please kiss my “fat ass”! I (we) have tried spandex body suits to hold me (us) in. Those things are so hard to get into, you are lucky if you can still breathe once you squeeze yourself into it. It is such a relief at the end of the day when you can breathe again, but don't exhale too soon or you may hear the ping, ping, ping of the fasteners flying across the room. OK, so here we go again, more dieting. I've tried the military diet, the break-up diet, the low-carb diet, the starvation diet, the eat-and-vomit diet, the Adipex (diet pill) diet, and the don't-eat-till-you-get-hungry diet. There are also the cabbage soup diet, the new-boyfriend diet, the energy drink diet, and the Bee Pollen diet, among others.

The military diet is by far the worst diet on the planet ... promising the result to be a ten-pound weight loss in just three days, but you have to get through those dreaded three days to do it. The only pleasant thing on this diet is the vanilla ice cream. Yes, I said ice cream! It's the only reason to stay on it ... the reward of ice cream at the end of the day! After choking down three or four disgusting hot dogs, you get a reward of ½ cup of vanilla ice cream! However, the ice cream was not incentive enough for me to stick to it.

I haven't been able to stay true to the diet past the second day so I have no idea if the ten-pound weight loss is real or fiction.

The break-up diet is not good at all. It is the diet of a broken-hearted damsel and just the thought of eating makes her nauseous ... however, it is short lived because eventually our hearts mend and we move on to better things and by "things" I mean men, better men! For some reason, however, the effects of the broken heart work in reverse on some people who eat ice cream non-stop until they can face the fact that they have been dumped, oops, I meant they have dumped the low-life sucker and are now single and back on the meat market. (Did I really just say meat market?)

Low-carb diets will work for a while. You can have all of the meat and cheese your little heart desires all day long and you can throw a few veggies in for good measure (ha ha, measure, I crack myself up!). The sugar-free gelatin and canned whipped cream is the saving grace at the end of this meat/cheese all-day eating frenzy. Standing at the fridge in the middle of the night and squeezing that creamy, fluffy, sweet goodness into your mouth until it spills out the sides is pure heaven. The rapid weight loss is sensational, but when you return to regular eating the poundage returns at the speed of light, bringing along extra fat with it. So this one is cronk (stank).

I plead to you not to try the starvation diet. It will not work nor will it last more than a couple of days. I know from experience. Scheduled on the midnight shift, I merrily go into work after eating only my not recommended daily allowance of two Hersheys Kisses and nothing else. After taking care of a few customers, I start to feel a bit dizzy and then something else begins to happen — sweat beads form on my upper lip (attractive, right?) ... I thought I was

having my first hot flash ... no such luck! I am the only person working and I have a line of customers as far as the eyes can see. A lovely, sweet lady just a bit older than me is next in line. I am brave enough to ask her if she has ever had a hot flash and she tells me, “Not like the one you are having right now”! I start to black out, I say as a warning “I’m going down” and so down I go arse over tit. This sweet lady comes behind the counter and stays with me until paramedics arrive. My blood sugar had spiked and then plummeted to a mere level of 70! After seeing my family physician, I find that I am hypoglycemic. I need to eat multiple small meals each day to prevent my blood sugar from dropping. Great, multiple SMALL MEALS ... this will never work for me! I have tried ... some days are better than others. I now consider myself “special”!

The eat-and-vomit diet, another great diet of choice, NOT! Bulimia and anorexia are no joke, and that is not what I am talking about in this case. My experience at eating and vomiting is not related to bulimia. My vomiting episodes are provoked by my friends. Knowing that I have a weak stomach, they love to gross me out and see me vomit. Funny, huh? One day after work, many of my friends and co-workers went to a local sports bar. The guys ordered wings and draft beer and after eating a few wings and then drinking from their beer glasses with sauce-covered fingers, their glasses became a disgusting, slimy, gross mess and made me sick, sick to the point of vomiting. Thinking this hilarious, they still try — some 15 years later — to get me to vomit. The sound of another person emptying the contents of their stomach is another way for those friends to get the response they are looking for from me. Many times, they will fake puke just to see my response. Idiots!

The Adipex diet does work; however, your family and friends won’t be able to stand you! You wake up, take a pill, feel GREAT with tons of energy, you are so creative,

you clean everything in sight and best of all you have no appetite whatsoever. Finally, when the pill starts to wear off, your sweet self turns into “The Bitch from Hell”! I am serious, my friends. People can’t stand to be around you and you can’t stand to be around yourself. You hate everyone and everything, and you let them know how you feel about them. If you are lucky, just before your husband sees the divorce attorney, you decide that being skinny just isn’t worth the loss of your family, friends, children, and in-laws.

The “don’t-eat-till-you-get-hungry” diet is my diet of today. It doesn’t work, so don’t even try it. I usually don’t get hungry until about two or three in the afternoon. That is the time I have to show up for work. As soon as I walk through the door at that gas station, I am surrounded by Little Debbie Cakes, King Dongs, candy bars, chips and every other snack made to man. Once I open my mouth to eat something (even if it’s a healthy item), it sets off a chain reaction of non-stop eating until I clock out for the night at around ten p.m.! I go home and pour my body into bed like hot lava from an erupting volcano.

Have you ever just wanted to negotiate with God? Dear God, When I wake up in the morning, if you could just make me skinny then I will stop eating. I just need to be skinny first. It will be so much easier if I am skinny first. I promise to watch my calories, exercise, eat healthy ... just make me thin when I wake up tomorrow and then I will start my diet. Amen.

Remember when body types were the rage? Apple shape, pear shape, banana shape ... no, wait ... banana is not a body type ... oops, I got lost in the thought of foods for a second ... back to the business at hand. No one ever said “watermelon shape” ... that’s me! When a person is this short — a whopping 5’1/2” tall — most of their weight is

carried in the mid-section. However, I carry my weight all over my body, my arms, legs, chins, muffin loaf, cankles, and thigh gap ... no, wait ... I haven't seen thigh gap in years.

I tried eating one thing a day just like my sister Carla did to lose weight but that didn't work for me. One bucket of chicken, one bag of donuts, one pound of bacon. That shit just didn't work ... I didn't lose a pound. I think when she told me to do that it was really sabotage, to keep me fat! I'll just send her a cheesecake...that'll teach that heifer!

Why can't there just be an all-bacon, all-day diet? I don't know about you but I love bacon. I could live on that stuff. Bacon, bacon, bacon, all day, every day. They even make chocolate-covered bacon these days. Paradise!

Keep Your Opinion to Yourself!

It's OK for me to make fun of myself, but I'll be damned if anyone else is allowed to do it!

I hate it when skinny people try to tell me how to diet! Fat people know how to diet! We know just about everything there is to know about dieting. We know about food groups, calories, exercise, vitamins, water, carbs, sugar, fats, portions, protein, pyramids, points, high blood sugar, low blood sugar, etc, etc, etc, and we know that cupcakes are not a diet food! We know what to do and how to do it. We get skinny and then we get fat again because we go back to eating the way we ate before we got fat. We also know that unless we make a lifestyle change we will get fat again. We know this ... so stop telling us what to do and how to do it! Damn!

More Rude-Assed Comments About My Rude Ass!

I have a couple of stories I want to share with you. They're not really funny; however, I laughed anyway just to save

face.

I worked in the food industry for many years. During my younger years, I was a server in a fairly large restaurant. Gleefully doing my job and happily waiting on the owner of the establishment and his colleagues, and wearing the mandatory dress uniform that was required of me, I tripped and fell. Plates and food everywhere, and I — with my lovely little peasant dress up around my neck — am face down on the floor in the middle of a large crowded room. Dave, the owner, spurts out loudly, “That felt like 5.4 on the Richter scale”! Everyone in the restaurant heard him and turned all eyes to me. I laugh to keep from crying. For many years after, every time I would think about this comment, I would just picture myself throat-punching him, and so, it really doesn’t bother me anymore.

Time goes by and I get a promotion at the same company. (That’s the least he could do! Right?) I was managing the snack bar/restaurant at the pool that his company owned. Swimming lessons were on the agenda for that evening. Minding my own business and doing what was required of my newfound job ... I look up and see a little fella run and jump into the deep end of the pool. I watched for a couple of seconds and realized he was splashing to stay afloat. Off go my shoes and I jump in to rescue the little tyke. I get him to the edge of the pool and we climb the steps to dry land. There I am standing soaked and wet with my clothing clinging to me like a stripper to her client when her rent is past due. Out of the mouth of the hot, fit, tan, blond and gorgeous pool manager dude comes, “You look like a beached whale”! That SOB! I was aghast, but again my throat-punching dream scenario comes into play and saves the day!

One time I bought a cute little outfit (actually two of the same outfits but in different colors because I liked it so

much), my husband and I were out to dinner and a friend of mine (presently, no longer my friend) asked me, “When is your baby due”? That BITCH!

Getting the Feels

A few good things have happened to me in the midst of the dieting evolution. During one or two of my skinny moments, I was able to turn an eye or two. Sure makes a person feel good.

One Christmas one of my sisters got me a darling bra and panties set ... they all told me that I had to model it for them ... of course I didn't. Eww. I was thin once again for a short time. I wish it had lasted.

Another time my friend Tina and I went to see a movie, and she told me to sit up in my seat ... I actually was sitting up in my seat! Yay me ... I was small.

Gosh, It's kind of sad ... I can't think of any more “feel good” stories at this point.

Tricks of the Trade

Finally at 57 years of age, I am 20 pounds lighter than I was when I was a bit younger ... I am still chubs. (Obese is what the scales call me at RiteAid, so I told the bitching scales that she had to stay in that corner until she stopped lying to me!) Anyway, I feel pretty good about myself after being 182 (192 was my max) most of my adult life. The struggle is real, I will always have to be careful about what and how I eat ... but I am getting better at my choices daily. As they say ... it is a lifestyle change! The following are my personal tricks on how to stay in control of my weight-loss and maintain my weight. I hope they will help you, too!

CHEW GUM. While dieting and not eating a whole lot of

food, we miss the sensation of chewing. Gum is a good way to satisfy that missing impression. Choose a mint gum because food just tastes funny when you have minty mouth/breath.

BRUSH YOUR TEETH. Freshly brushed teeth will keep you from eating and messing up that perfect smile. (No one likes to see that spinach wrapped around your tooth!)

REWARD YOURSELF. Use clothing or other items to compensate yourself when you do well. (Don't use food as a reward!) I love to give myself antiques and house plants, and sometimes a new boyfriend!

USE YOUR SPECIAL DISHES, GLASSWARE, AND LINEN NAPKINS. It just makes you feel good, and you deserve it! Set the table and eat on real china plates, use linen napkins, and drink from wine glasses even if only for water. Paper plates are for fat flakes.

TAKE A BREAK. It's amazing that this will work ... but believe it or not it does. When you are about halfway finished with your meal, excuse yourself from the table for a few minutes ... go to the restroom or just take a walk around the house. The break will give your body a minute to realize that you are not as hungry as you thought. (You thought I was going to say take a break from dieting, didn't you?)

DRINK WATER AND LOTS OF IT. Yes, I hate water, too ... I usually add a flavor packet to it or squeeze lemon into it along with an artificial sweetener. It is good for you and good for your skin. You will not only be thin but your skin will look fabulous! (If you can't do the water thing, drink tea, coffee, and plenty of other fluids.) I eat tons of watermelon all summer long ... I place it in a heavy bowl so that it won't fall over, cut the top off of it and just scoop, replace the top and put the whole watermelon into the

fridge. This is the lazy man's way but hey, if I wasn't lazy I probably wouldn't be fat.

PREP YOUR FOOD. Have fresh fruits and vegetables prepared and ready to go so you don't grab for the quick junk food when you are really hungry. Fruits and veggies make you poop and you will feel a lot lighter after a good dump.

EAT THE HEALTHY STUFF FIRST. Fill up on the nasty healthy items on your plate first before eating the less healthy good stuff like potatoes and starches and gravy — everybody likes gravy.

DON'T RESTRICT FOOD GROUPS. Your body needs milk and dairy, protein, veggies and fruits, breads and grains, and yes, some fats are healthy. If you deny your body any of these food groups, you will begin to crave them ... so keep them in your diet! Yes, your body needs fats to stay healthy. YAY!

DON'T DENY YOURSELF. If you want something ... eat it ... but don't eat a bunch of it. Try a small amount and then if you want more, wait 10 minutes and have a little more. (Sometimes you will decide not to have a "little more.") Everything in moderation. This works SOMETIMES.

VARIETY. Don't get stuck in a rut and eat the same items over and over again. Change it up to keep things interesting. You will feel less deprived. Who knows, you might like eating that baked sweet potato without the butter and molasses ... but I doubt it!

CLEAN YOURSELF UP. My mother-in-law told me once (or fifteen times) that a lady should be showered and dressed by noon every day! It feels good to get cleaned up, do your hair and your makeup and get dressed. Don't save clothing for special occasions. If you love it ... then wear

it. It's all about the way you feel about yourself. Some clothing just makes you feel pretty. Don't do what I did and wear outfits that make you look pregnant. (it really was a cute outfit)

KEEP YOUR HANDS BUSY. Try sewing, art, crosswords, or doing crafts to keep your hands busy in the evening when you are more likely to snack. I can think of other things to do, but you will just have to use your imagination!

MOVE YOUR BODY. Just move, in any way possible ... little things like getting up and walking across the room to pick up a book, toy, or something. Park your car further away from the building so you have further to walk ... take the stairs. Any movements will help. Try doing simple exercises, just lifting your arms in the air a few times or lifting your legs while sitting on the couch. I try to do squats every night ... in the shower even, if I forget to do them beforehand. I'm a leg jiggle, I can't sit still, I bounce my leg while watching TV ... I consider that exercise! Don't judge me!

READ. Read encouraging, empowering, and motivational books. Surround yourself with the positive! Hey, you picked up this book to read, didn't you? You may not get inspired, but hopefully you will get a good laugh or two.

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU. Spoil yourself and know that you deserve the best this life has to offer. Be selfish when it comes to you. If you take care of yourself, then you will be on this earth for a longer period of time for yourself, and for your children, family and friends, if only just to drive them crazy.

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH THE POSITIVE! You don't need people bringing you down. You don't need people being jealous of your accomplishments. If a person

isn't happy for you and your progress, then they don't deserve to be in your life. (For some people, though, it might be fun to keep them around ... if you enjoy making them jealous about your progress.)

YOU ARE TOO CUTE TO BE FAT! It's as simple as that ... and this is the truth! I remember my sister Brenda on the cruise ship, drunk and crying, "I'm too cute to be fat"! (Laughing my ass off, I hope!)

Finally, don't ever give up! Keep at it, no one is perfect even if they think they are! Bitches!

Chapter Four: "‘Let's Go On A Diet Together!’ She Said. ‘It'll be Fun!’ She Said. ‘My Ass!’ I Said" by Martha Farmer

"Let's Write a Diet Book Together," They Said. "It'll Be Fun," They Said.

Oh dear God! I was approached by my author-sister, Brenda Kennedy, who said, "Let's write a diet book together with Rosa and Carla." Rosa and Carla are our other two sisters. Brenda wanted us to come together to write a book on dieting, dieting with a twist. "It's going to be funny" she said. "It'll be fun," she said. Now I don't know about you, but I've never known dieting to be fun or funny. I've also never known myself to be funny. What have I gotten myself into?!?!?! (Help me!!!!!! I can't control my punctuation keys!!!!!! Fortunately, I can control the other keys, such as the shift key. I am not shiftless.)

Brenda is the funny sister with Rosa following close behind. I am not funny, usually. My humor somehow comes across as sarcastic, usually. Believe me when I say I'm laughing with you and not at you ... usually.

Now, my dilemma is, how do I make dieting seem fun, or funny? Okay, I do have a few stories to tell that could

embarrass some of the parties involved so I've decided to change dates, names, and places to protect the guilty!

Because I grew up in a large family with seven children who lived on a farm with fresh veggies all summer long and lots of acreage to wander, you wouldn't think any of us would have a weight problem. Not true! We all have had to watch our weight at one time or another or always, some of us more than others.

I never thought I really had much of a weight problem until I became "with child." Gaining 54 pounds during pregnancy was a rude wake-up call for me. People said that it took nine months to gain that weight and it will take nine months to lose it. Again, not true! It took me three years to lose it. Baby weight does not come off quickly or easily, if it comes off at all. Brenda's youngest daughter is 29 and Brenda says she is still trying to lose the baby weight, 29 years later.

Once upon a time when I was living very comfortably, had relatively few problems, and was on the up side of the scale, an acquaintance came up to me in the grocery store and patted my stomach and asked, "You had the baby?" I said, "Yeah, 16 years ago." How embarrassing, mainly for her!

My three sisters and I have three brothers and we spent part of our childhood on a farm in Rose Farm, Ohio. We lived on the top of a pretty high hill and walked that hill to and from school every day during the school year, so I don't believe we had a weight problem back then. But as a lot of people know, time does change things. We tend to get sedentary in our lives and some of us enjoy food more than others.

Our mother was a good cook. Back then we had a lot of comfort foods, high in carbs. Have you ever cooked with

lard? Our mother did. She made the best fried chicken, noodles, spaghetti, breads — lots of breads — pies, and the list goes on and on. Of course we were active kids for the most part and burned off a lot of those heavy calories.

Somehow our social lives tend to revolve around food and drinks. Even now, the seven of us try to meet up for dinner monthly. That way, we see each other fairly regularly instead of waiting for funerals and weddings and holidays. We know that's impossible since two of us live in Florida and five of us live in Ohio, but whoever is available is welcome and we meet on a Saturday night in a restaurant gathered around the table! Why wouldn't we meet at the gym, or a health food store? Or why not meet to run a 5K together to support the fight against obesity or the fight against world hunger? (Funny how obesity and hunger are big problems in the same world.) I'll tell you why. Because it's easier to talk around a table full of food, and we all prefer it.

The decision to write this book came after a sister cruise, after eating multiple times from the dessert bar, after grabbing as many free ice cream cones as we could, after eating breakfast from room service, and then going to the breakfast buffet in the same morning and lastly after drinking multitudes of chocolate martinis that Brenda ordered and sent to the rest of us to enjoy as we were watching the dancing and listening to the music while she was gambling — and drinking for free. They finally had to tell her, "Only one drink every 15 minutes, Brenda!" Ha ha. Now that was funny.

So here we are writing a book about our dieting experiences and she said, "It'll be fun."

Dieting is a Roller Coaster Ride

Dieting is definitely like riding a roller coaster at a theme

park.

I know you all know what I mean and where I'm going with this. When things in your life are going smoothly, you're cruising along, with no major ups and no major downs, and so you tend to eat maybe a little more than you should. Before you know it, you are putting on a few pounds. If you are anything like me, a few pounds turn into five pounds, then turn into ten pounds, and before you know it you're twenty or fifty pounds overweight. You reach the top of the coaster and then "BAM." Your boyfriend, girlfriend, or significant other decides they want the gorgeous socialite who just moved in down the street instead of you, a twenty- or fifty-pounds overweight mom with the graying hair and the worry lines on your forehead. You're upset, he breaks it off with you (or divorces you), you can't sleep, you can't think, you can't even eat! What! That's when the roller coaster starts going down and the weight starts to melt off, and I do mean melt. This is when the weight comes off quickly. The weight comes off so quickly you don't even realize it's coming off. You wonder why didn't the bastard leave you sooner. I'm skinny. I'm cute. This is the way it's supposed to be. I'm too cute to be fat.

Of course, you get skinny! Wow! Great! You meet someone new. You start settling into a new relationship and everything's great! You're going along happily, no major ups and no major downs. You're very happy with your life and you start getting comfortable in the relationship when suddenly you realize that roller coaster just took off uphill again. You're gaining weight! Wait! What? This is not supposed to happen. This isn't fair. How do you stop this vicious cycle? Life is so unfair.

You knew I was going there, didn't you? Everyone has been on this diet and somehow it does work. Not in a good

way, though. It's a temporary weight loss and is over before you realize it.

We all know the best way to lose weight is slowly and by eating in moderation and avoiding fats and carbs as much as possible. And bringing exercise into our lives. My last diet started by accident. My appetite went down for some reason and I was eating one portion of everything at dinnertime. What the heck. I usually eat like it's the last meal I'll ever have. If it's something I really like, I eat it like I'll probably never be able to make that dish again. I was lying in bed one evening and put my hand on my stomach. I thought, what is this? Where is my stomach? It was almost flat. Oh my goodness. It's never like that. What happened? I had lost some weight without even realizing it. I think I became so used to my weight gain that I just never really looked at myself until I had lost some weight. Not a lot, but a little bit noticeable. Oh happy days!

We never really get comfortable with being heavy and we never really know how we look to others. I walk along the street, window shopping, and catch a glimpse of a woman in the window. I think, I wonder if I'm that large? I wonder if I'm smaller than her. Surely I am. She's a pretty large woman. I start to walk away, and the woman walks away, too. Oh my gosh! That heavy woman is me! I'm not that big! Am I? Is someone playing a trick on me or what? I don't feel that heavy. She looks awful. Oh my gosh, that is me! That was the first time I really knew just how big I was. Now I like to take pictures (for my eyes only) so I can get a true sense of what I really look like to others.

The best diet ever, for me anyway, was the divorce diet. You're upset, worried, don't feel the best about yourself, but man do you lose weight. I once lost so much weight that when I tried to go and buy a new pair of jeans I had to go to the little girl's department and I tried on a size 14! A

co-worker came up to me and told me I looked a little anorexic, I was so thin. I thought, “Cool!” Not that I want to look sickly, but I was thinner than I had been in years! “Cool!”

Just four years ago I was on another low in my weight and I could wear a size six. I bought a few clothes that I could wear, which was just as well. It lasted only about six months!

This really is a roller coaster nobody wants to ride!

“Come ride the roller coaster with me,” she said. “It’ll be fun,” she said. No, thank you!

Skinny Minnie or Saggy Maggie

As a young girl I never had to worry about my weight, much. I was busy and wasn’t all that interested in food, except potato chips. Oh, I have a major obsession with potato chips. If they had never been invented, I wouldn’t have much worry in the world, but more of that later.

At the age of 14 I was pretty thin, 5’ 2 ½” tall and 105 pounds. That seems sickly to me now, but then it was pretty thin, but doable. While playing basketball at a park in my neighborhood, one of the guys we were playing against called me “Skinny Minnie.” “Skinny Minnie?” What an insult! I didn’t want this hunk thinking of me as a “Skinny Minnie.” I wanted some curves. Now, at the age of 58 I would love someone to call me “Skinny Minnie.” Please call me “Skinny Minnie.” Take away some of these curves, lumps, and bumps. I think he would call me “Saggy Maggie” or “Lumpy Bumpy” now. I can’t win.

As I’ve said before, I have three sisters. Two of us are over 5’2” and under 5’4” and the other two are around 5’. Brenda and I are the Amazon women and Carla and Rosa are the shorties. Honestly! Brenda and I still think we’re the

“Amazons” of the girls in our family! I am around a lot of tall people at this point in my life and it does bring things into perspective. My husband is 6’2” and his brothers and sister are tall also. When I get around their family, I am definitely the “short” one of the group. The only person in that family who is considered short is still taller than me.

When you’re a short person and you gain five pounds, it can make a big difference in your size, as opposed to being 5’8” tall and gaining five pounds. I swear if I eat one large meal I can see my stomach grow! I have to go into a larger pant size the day after Thanksgiving. This is so not fair.

If I weighed 105 pounds now, I’d definitely look like a skinny old hag. I’d be deliriously happy at 135 pounds now. It may never happen.

My sister Rosa and I have gone on many, many diets together through the years. We’d even get together and exercise. Now, I have a hard time getting off the couch to go for a walk. My intentions are always good, but after working all day at a desk job I just can’t seem to get motivated. Ha ha ha, I sit at my desk and my co-workers and I have a hard time getting up to get documents off the printer. I don’t know how I did it when I was younger and worked as a waitress. Maybe that’s another reason I could keep weight off during that time frame. I’m a very positive person, and I’m positive I couldn’t do it now.

When you’re young and active, food isn’t so important to you. As you age and become less active, food gains importance in your life. Life is backwards.

They say once you hit 30 it’s harder to lose weight and I have definitely found that to be true. Plus the fact that I have hypothyroidism, so my metabolism is slow. These are the reasons that I am overweight today. “It’s my story and I’m sticking to it,” I say.

**“Don’t Eat the Russell Stover Caramel Eggs,” She Said.
“They’re Horrid,” She Said.**

I have come to realize that my weight also fluctuates with seasons. In the winter I always gain weight and usually in the summer a little bit will come off. I don’t know if this is because I’m more active in the warmer months and tend to hibernate a little in the winter. Or, is it because we have Halloween candy, Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas cookies and treats, New Year’s excesses, and Valentine’s Day chocolates.

Let’s talk about these horrible holidays that tend to add lumps and bumps to our bodies. My husband and I enjoy handing out candy to the little kiddos who dress like ghosts and goblins to get free candy from their neighbors. No really, they are just the cutest little things and their excitement is contagious.

We buy large amounts of candy at our local warehouse club. The number of kiddos who come treat or treating has been declining in recent years, so it’s really not necessary to buy those giant bags of candy anymore. Also, we really shouldn’t buy it in August! By October we are back at the warehouse loading up on more Halloween candy. I just don’t know where it goes. And why is it we buy the candy that we like? That really doesn’t make sense. We’re not buying it for ourselves ... or are we? We really should be buying the candy we don’t like!

I really don’t like Halloween!

Then, there’s Thanksgiving. I like having holidays at my house because there are leftovers for me to eat. However, my sister-in-law has been having Thanksgiving at her home, which is just as well. Her home was very large and my husband’s brothers and their families have been coming every year for years. It is a great time. Eating, drinking,

playing cards, the nieces and nephews are all together and my mother-in-law basks in all her glory. She is much loved by all. Again, our social lives tend to surround food.

Thanksgiving weekend is food, food, food. My two brothers-in-law come in from out of state and we engage in a few rituals. Every town has its special treats. In Zanesville, Ohio, Adornetto's pizza and salad night is special. Conn's potato chips are everywhere. No one can get enough Donald's Donuts. Steak N Stein used to be a must until they closed down. So sad. And then Bloomer's Candy was in everyone's home. But sadly they are gone also. And don't forget Tom's Ice Cream Bowl.

Being that my husband and I live in Zanesville and Donald's Donuts is just a couple of blocks away and they are also sold in the business where my sister works, there is no shortage of Donald's Donuts in our home. If you've never tasted them, you don't know what you are missing. People talk about how good Krispy Kreme donuts are. They don't even compare! When my husband goes on his golfing trip in the fall, I try to make one of my dinners nothing but Donald's Donuts! I don't know why I can't lose weight and keep it off!

Christmas is a holiday that brings me joy for the whole month and for my whole mouth.

It's about the only time of the year where I really do a lot of baking. Cookies, fudge, pumpkin rolls ... yummo! Is it any wonder my weight goes up at this time of year?

I haven't yet mentioned Easter. This year I discovered my biggest sin of all. Russell Stover caramel eggs! Oh I wish I hadn't tasted them. If you've never tasted them, don't! I'm warning you. They're so awful — I couldn't get enough of them! Moderation was out the window! And after Easter one of the stores that I stop in frequently for small items

that I need had them on sale for ½ off. Oh no! Yes, I bought them out. Really? I couldn't just get one or two? Oh no, I had to have them all, every box! No kidding! Not funny! However, I did let my husband have some of them and he liked them, too! Add that to my list of things to avoid during the holidays.

My son Josh and I used to love the peanut butter eggs that come out at Easter. When he was little I'd buy a package of six of them and we'd eat the whole package before we even made it home. I still buy him a couple of packages of them for Easter every year.

Don't even get me started on Columbus Day or Arbor Day! Whatever the holiday, we can find something fattening to celebrate it. Columbus discovered the Native Americans, who ate buckeyes. Who knew they invented the delicious chocolate-and-peanut-butter treat? And to celebrate Arbor Day, there's nothing like cornmeal pancakes with real maple syrup.

These things have definitely turned me into a "closet eater." Is anybody else out there a "closet eater"? I tend to hide food. I don't want people to know how many bags of Conn's chips I eat in a year or how many Russell Stover caramel eggs I ate in the months of March and April. I would be so embarrassed! My husband Steve can walk into our house and come into the bedroom and I swear he can sniff out any chocolate that I have put away in a drawer to eat later, when he's not around. He's a hound dog.

"Don't eat the Russell Stover caramel eggs," she said. "They're horrid," said no one ever.

Diets, Diets, Diets

During my life, I do believe I've tried every diet known to man: diet candy, diet cola, diet pills. I've been on the no-carb diet, the grapefruit juice diet, the cabbage soup diet,

and on and on and on. Some work better than others, but obviously none of them have worked totally or I wouldn't be dieting today.

Back in the day when diet candy was so popular, I'd buy a box and keep in the cupboard for days when I just needed a chocolate fix. Unbeknownst to me, my "roommate" spotted this box of candy in the cupboard one day and just decided it'd be a good idea to eat a piece. Evidently my "roommate" couldn't eat just one and ended up finishing off the entire box. My "roommate" really shouldn't have done this. If my "roommate" would have read the label on the side of the box, my "roommate" would have seen a warning. "Eat in moderation, may cause diarrhea." Bwahahaha — evil laughing out loud. My "roommate" was paid back for eating the last of my expensive diet candy. My "roommate" spent the entire evening in the bathroom. Bwahahaha!

The no-carb diet is a great diet for carnivores. If you love your fresh fruit and veggies, this diet is definitely not for you. It is hard going to the grocery store anyway and looking for something different to make for dinner or lunch. If you are on the no-carb diet, you are mainly looking at meats and cheeses. I love meats and cheeses, but I love a little variety. When you are on the no-carb diet, you can eat pork rinds. Pork rinds. I like pork rinds. My dad ate them when I was a kid and we'd gobble them up. Did you know they make them in different flavors now? You can pretty much eat all you want while you are on this diet. Yummo, until the second week of this diet and you are going cross eyed eating the same old stuff every day.

I did discover that on the no-carb diet you could have Cool Whip! I'd put it in the freezer and eat it frozen. It was as good as ice cream. What a treat. I'd go to the freezer and open the Cool Whip and have a spoon with me and I'd eat

one spoonful at a time. I could have so easily eaten the whole tub in one sitting, but I did try to restrain myself.

Another treat I had while dieting was putting one chocolate kiss on a rice cake and putting it in the microwave. After it was melted you could spread it on the rice cake and it was such a treat. After eating fruits and veggies for days and days and days, a rice cake with one chocolate kiss on top was delish!

Now I'm probably going to show my age. I haven't heard of this diet in many, many years. Back when I was 13 and was 5'2 ½" tall and weighed 103 pounds and thought I needed to lose weight, I heard about the grapefruit juice diet. Drink grapefruit juice and it will burn the fat off. I'd walk to our neighborhood grocery with my babysitting money and buy a large can of grapefruit juice and drink, drink, drink. That fat just melted off. Lies. It's all lies. Don't we wish the fat would or could just melt away? I think this diet was thought up by the owner of the grapefruit juice factory.

Cabbage soup, I love cabbage soup. I went on this diet and it was great for the first two days. I could feel the weight coming off. I loved the soup and ate it like crazy. On the third day I was pooping water. 'nuff said.

I went to a huge book fair the other day and there were thousands and thousands of books for \$2.00 and under. As I'm walking around and browsing and looking at these books, of which the majority were "gently read," I found diet books of all kinds. I thought about buying a few, but I already have the no-carb diet book and the "biggest loser" diet book, among several others. Why add to my collection? I love to read, but how many books on dieting does one really need?

“Let's Go on a Diet Together,” They Said. “It'll be

Fun,” They Said.

We have all watched *The Biggest Loser* on television, haven't we? I've never watched a whole season, but I've seen bits and pieces here and there. You see how they struggle and race against each other to lose their weight. Right?

At one time, many years ago, I worked in an office with a very small group of people. Someone in this office suggested one day that “we” should do a “biggest loser” contest in our office. Great, right? Yeah, right! “It'll be fun,” they said.

We started with six contestants paying \$10.00 a week to the group's treasurer. Somebody brought in a scale and it went into our powder room. We chose one person to be present for our weekly weigh-ins to make sure none of us tried to cheat on our weight loss.

The first week was great. We all came in and got weighed. We all paid our \$10.00. Nobody knew what the others weighed with the exception of the one person who witnessed the scale when we weighed in. He kept the chart of our weight loss. We truly trusted this person.

I kept a tote bag with a notebook, a calorie chart, an ink pen, a measuring tape, a book on no-carb dieting along with the newest *Biggest Loser* weight-loss book. I lost weight. I had quite a bit of weight to lose. I don't think I knew at the time just how much weight had grown on me that needed to come off. The first two weeks it came off quickly. By the third week I wasn't losing anything. The fourth, fifth and sixth weeks I lost a little. I wrote down every single thing I ate and how many calories I ate. Everything! I tried to keep it below 1000 calories. I lost and I was so happy with myself. I stayed on a weight-loss plan after our contest was finished and to this day I have not put all that weight back

on.

One contestant in the office was especially large, but to be fair she was sooo short. She could lose 10 pounds and it would show greatly. At the end she really looked good and she went on to lose more and to this day she has kept it off and looks great. I really have to give her credit. It was a great start for her to make a huge difference in her life.

People started dropping out of our “biggest loser” contest in the first week. Evidently we were the only ones who really wanted to do that contest. The other three were guilted into doing the weight-loss program by the three of us who were really serious. The three of us decided we would trust each other to weigh ourselves and we would all be honest. Huh, except the one who didn’t look any different at the end than she did when we began! From the third week to the end of the contest, we had only three contestants and I was one of them. I was so excited. It went on for just six weeks, but by the end we had a three-way tie, yeah, whatever!

We had each lost the 15 pounds we wanted to lose in the six weeks of our journey. We split the money in the pot, three ways. It was a great way for the three of us at the end to get a jump start on our weight loss. I was very happy with my outcome and I know one of the others did very well and to this day she still looks great. The third girl always claimed she was also losing but I never really saw it. At the end of our “biggest loser” contest I thought she looked the same as she did when we started. “I lost 15 pounds, too,” she said. “Yeah, whatever,” I thought.

“Life has Ups, Life has Dips. At Least We have Potato Chips”

Potato Chips!

My biggest downfall when it comes to dieting is definitely

potato chips.

I think my mom must have craved Conn's potato chips during her pregnancy with me. As a kid our big treat on Fridays was sharing bottles of Pepsi and Conn's potato chips. I have chips on the brain!

When I got an allowance from my parents, I would buy potato chips. When I started babysitting and making my own spending money, I would buy potato chips. Now as an adult I still buy potato chips. I have slowed down a little on buying them, but then my husband will buy them. Whenever I worry about the United States' worldwide position in such things as health and education, I can cheer myself up by saying that the United States is number one when it comes to potato chips.

As an adult it's really bad because both my husband and I love potato chips. They can be Conn's, Lay's, Mikesell's, Pringles in the can, I love almost all of them. I love regular, barbecue, green onion, ranch, the list goes on. I do not like dill pickle potato chips. I can't believe I said that! There is actually a potato chip that I don't like! Amazing!

It's hard to believe some of the flavors that they are coming out with, such as chicken and waffles. Really? I want my chips to taste like chips, or barbecue, or green onion, or ranch, but not like chicken and waffles. If I want something that tastes like chicken and waffles. I'll get chicken and waffles. The same goes with dill pickles. If I want something that tastes like dill pickles, I'll get some dill pickles. It's that easy!

When I first started working at the police department, we celebrated everyone's birthday! We celebrated with a birthday cake, of course, but we also brought a couple of bags of chips to the party. Now, I always thought you celebrated birthdays with cake and ice cream, but no, we

celebrated with cake and potato chips! Hallelujah! I knew this was the job for me!

Diet Tips and Tricks

But seriously folks, dieting is hard and just no fun whatsoever. There are gimmicks, books, pills, promises, exercise machines, and on and on and on. What can we all really believe and do to stay at a good weight for each of us? What is a good weight for each of us? I know as I have matured I look better with a little more weight than I did when I was 16. I also know what has worked and what has not worked when I try to lose weight. It's just doing it that is hard.

I know that if I stay at around 142 pounds I feel great and that is my perfect weight. I know this because my doctor told me to. I trust my doctor. But, I also trust how I feel. I know that I want to stay active because I don't want to lose any more bone density and movement than I already have. I want to be able to walk, bend, stoop, stretch and run for as long as I can. I want to be as healthy as I can be for as long as I am around. Isn't that what we all want?

I can only tell you what I know for certain has worked for me in the past and what I want to do to live a healthier life. I am hoping this book will give everyone a laugh, which we all need, but also provide a little insight into the fact that most of us struggle with weight.

Beginning this day forward, these are the things I want to do to be healthy. If I do only a couple of these a day I will be happy and if I slip, that's OK. I will try harder the next time.

I plan on:

- Drinking more water

- Walking more
- Keeping a daily log of what I eat
- Eating more fresh fruits and veggies
- Cutting down on sugar and starches

I want to drink water at every meal and I will try to drink a full glass of water with any medication I take. Drinking more water will also make me feel full, tricking me into not eating as much as I would normally.

I want to begin walking in the afternoons as soon as I get home from work. I will try to walk whenever the opportunity arises. I will park so that I have to walk a little more to get to my destinations.

I want to stop eating before I feel full. I will try to eat small, frequent meals. I know that if I get really hungry I tend to eat whatever I can get my hands on, no kidding!

I will visit my neighborhood farmers market more often to stock up on their wonderful fresh fruits and veggies and will try to keep more in my refrigerator ready to eat for those hungry attacks!

I want to try to limit my sugar intake and stay away from potato chips, my biggest challenge of all. I know I will still eat these items, but in moderation. (Maybe I'll start to buy the flavors I don't like.)

I know that everyone has their own evils when it comes to food and exercise and I know that the same tips don't work for everyone. We each have our own lists of what we know will work for us. You may want to create a list for yourself of things you know work for you.

I will keep this little book handy so I can re-read it over and over to remind myself of how I want to better my health. It

will be my incentive to stay on the road to better health.

Chapter Five: “Diet, Nutrition, and Exercise — The Serious Stuff” by David Bruce

Introduction

You have already read the funny stuff, so be warned: What you read here is the serious stuff. (I wrote the serious stuff because my sisters are the funny ones.)

Whether or not you eat right, and whether or not you exercise, you will probably be alive at age 50, 60, 70.

Whether or not you eat right, and whether or not you exercise, you will probably be dead at age 80, 90, 100.

Mother Nature wants us to be alive long enough to have and raise children, and then it's OK with Mother Nature that we die.

We see this in animal protein, including meat, fish, dairy, and eggs, which has good nutrition and perhaps also has bad nutrition. Animal protein has vitamin B-12, which we need in order to be healthy, and it has all the amino acids that we need to be healthy. We can get vitamin B-12 as a supplement, but our bodies easily use the vitamin B-12 found in meat, fish, dairy, and eggs, whereas our bodies seem not to easily use the vitamin B-12 found in many supplements. My vitamin B-12 supplement, which I take on days when I don't eat any or only a very little animal protein, has 1,000 MCG, which according to the label on the pill bottle is 16,666% of the minimum daily value recommended for our bodies. Why such a high percentage? Probably because it is so hard for our bodies to use the vitamin B-12 in this supplement and so most of the vitamin B-12 simply passes through our body and ends up in the toilet. Supposedly, taking extra vitamin B-12 does not harm our body, but do some research and see if you agree with

that statement.

However, animal protein also has cholesterol and saturated fat, and these may (or perhaps may not) have very bad effects after a few decades of eating animal protein.

Mother Nature makes available to us foods that will keep us alive for a number of decades before the bad effects of eating those foods show up.

If you read about nutrition, you will find that nutritionists often disagree about which are bad foods and which are good foods. Why? Probably because a lot of foods are a mixture of good and bad. However, the most non-controversial statement in nutrition is that veggies and fruits are good for you. In general, veggies, fruits, herbs and spices, mushrooms, legumes (e.g., peas, beans, peanuts), whole grains, and nuts and seeds are good for you. Remember this: A healthy diet includes lots of plants. Also non-controversial are the statement that manmade trans fat is bad for you and the statement that processed food is bad for you.

This statement is also non-controversial: However long we live, we want to feel well, be healthy, and pursue happiness during that time. In my opinion, that is the best reason for eating health-promoting food and exercising. It is also true that we want early, healthy old age to last many years and we want late, unhealthy old age to last only a few minutes.

If you are eating an unhealthy diet, you can take steps to eat a healthier diet. Simply add foods that are good for you and take away foods that are bad for you. It may be impossible to know the absolutely best diet, but we do know that some foods are more productive of health than other foods.

What are the Contenders for the Absolutely Best Lifelong Diet?

Number 1: Maybe, perhaps, a vegan diet with supplements. What are the supplements? Vitamin B-12. Creatine. And probably a bunch of others, such as zinc and vitamin D and maybe some other micronutrients that vegans lack that we don't know about. Also, be sure to eat omega-3 fat, which is found in flax seeds. Do research. Meat, fish, dairy, and eggs have many nutrients that we don't get from plants, and that is why vegans need supplements. Your guru: Dr. Michael Gregor. (Look him up online.)

Number 2: Maybe, perhaps, a diet with lots of veggies and fruits, and plants in general (whole grains and foods in preference to processed grains and foods). And enough non-processed meat, dairy, and eggs to get your vitamin B-12 and creatine and zinc and vitamin D. Your guru: Michael Pollan. (Look him up online.)

Could the mostly plant-based diet with some animal protein be the absolutely best diet? Maybe, perhaps. Animal protein may have necessary micronutrients other than vitamin B-12 that are best gotten from animal protein.

To be honest, I am skeptical about being a hardcore vegan. Almost every society of humans has eaten animal protein, so I wonder whether veganism is an attempt to improve on nature. But who knows? With the proper meal planning and the proper supplements, it may work. But I choose to eat at least a little animal protein most days of the week.

In another 10 or 20 years or so, you will go to the doctor, and the doctor will have a readout showing your genetics. The doctor will tell you which diseases you are likely never to get, and which diseases you are likely to get. The doctor will also tell you foods to avoid and foods to eat that will keep you healthier longer and may prevent diseases you are likely to get based on your genetics.

But what about right now? If you are eating the Western

diet (lots of meat and white bread, and few veggies and fruits and legumes and nuts and seeds), and you want to improve your diet, it's easy. Eat lots and lots of veggies and fruits and legumes and nuts and seeds, and eat much less meat since people eating the Western diet eat much more protein than they need. Also avoid trans fat and processed foods, including processed meats such as ham, sausage, bacon, hot dogs, and lunchmeat. Eat whole-grain bread and whole-grain rice instead of white bread and white rice. Often, colorful food is nutritious, so it's a good idea to eat your colors.

Why Should You Want to Change Your Diet and Exercise Program?

Maybe you shouldn't. Maybe you are doing just fine. People want to eat healthy and exercise in order to feel good and pursue happiness right now, today — and tomorrow. But maybe everything is OK.

Ask yourself these questions.

Do you feel well?

If you do, great. You are supposed to feel well.

Is your blood pressure OK?

If it's not at a healthy level, it's a good idea to change some things. A change in diet and exercise can make your blood level normal. If your blood pressure is OK even without medication, that is some evidence that you are doing things right. You can buy a blood pressure monitor online for under \$40.

How do you feel when you weigh yourself?

A few pounds more or less than your ideal weight need not be a big deal. Lots of pounds more or less than your ideal weight may be a sign that you need to make a change.

Do you feel energetic?

A change in diet and exercise may make you feel more energetic, if you don't feel that way now.

Are your blood levels normal when your doctor runs a blood test?

A change in diet and exercise may make your blood levels normal, if they aren't that way now.

Does it hurt when you poop?

For lots of people eating the Western diet, the answer is yes. For lots of people who have been eating the Western diet, starting to eat lots of veggies and fruits everyday will make the pain go away. If you need to, see a proctologist, who is actually supposed to have a wonderful job despite what the proctologist spends a lot of time looking at. Yes, the job pays well, but also a proctologist can do a lot of good for people who out of embarrassment keep putting off going to the proctologist. When they finally see the proctologist, often the proctologist can do a lot of good for them after a brief exam. Making patients better provides lots of job satisfaction. Often patients are very appreciative and wish that they had gone to the proctologist much earlier.

Do you take a long time to poop?

Pooping should take roughly as much time as peeing. If you take a long time to poop, a change in diet and exercise can cut down on the time it takes you to poop. Eat more fiber, more veggies, and more fruits. (Do you poop at work and want to take a long time to poop because your employer is paying you for the time it takes you to poop? Grow up. Your health is important. Don't hurt your health just so you can get back at the man, who in many cases may be a woman.)

Is your poop often diarrhea?

If it is, a change is needed. Eat more fiber, more veggies, and more fruits.

Do your farts stink horribly?

If your SO has to leave the room, you may need to make a change in your diet (especially if you want to keep your SO). If *you* have to leave the room, you definitely need to make a change. Animal protein farts stink horribly. Other people's farts always stink. A healthy fart of your own is one that comedian George Carlin says you sniff and then you say, "Hey! That's not half-bad!" (The FDA has not evaluated this statement, but I think it makes sense.)

Is your urine dark yellow?

Drinking more water and tea should help lighten your urine's color. If your urine is bloody, see a doctor.

Do you have cancer or some other serious disease?

If the answer is yes, do what your doctor tells you. Eating all the broccoli and cranberries in the world won't cure you. Nevertheless, when you have cancer or some other serious disease is a good time to eat healthy. The other good times to eat healthy are before you have cancer or some other serious disease and after you have cancer or some other serious disease.

The rules of good health are fairly well known, although people can argue about specifics:

- Don't smoke.
- Don't drink to excess — or, perhaps, at all.
- Exercise. Do some strength training and some aerobic exercise most days or everyday.

- Drink water. Tea counts.
- Get enough sleep.
- Eat foods that promote health. Eat lots of veggies and fruits and plants. Eat enough animal protein that you get your vitamin B-12, but if you go vegan, get a vitamin B-12 supplement and whatever other supplements your doctor recommends.
- Have a healthy weight. If this is something out of your control, then focus on eating health-promoting foods and exercising. You may find that your weight is at a healthier level, even if it is not ideal.
- Spend time with people you like or love.
- Keep your mind active.
- Enjoy these things. Whatever exercise you do, you should enjoy doing it. Whatever veggies you eat, you should enjoy eating them. (There are lots of different veggies, so you should find some you like to eat.)
- Do these things consistently, day by day. Yes, it's OK to go a little crazy during holidays and vacations. But afterward, get back to your regular healthy lifestyle.

How I Lost 10 Pounds Without Trying (Hard)

No, it wasn't through illness or amputation, although those can definitely work. I also didn't die, although if I had, weight loss would have begun immediately. (The second fastest, most effective weight-loss plan ever invented is cremation. The fastest is standing directly under a nuclear bomb when it goes off.)

My blood pressure was starting to creep upwards, so I did a few things to improve it.

- I was already stretching and exercising for 30 minutes

each morning, but I added a 45-minute walk or a 30-minute bicycle ride most days of the week. I usually listen to good music as I walk, so walking is not a hardship, plus I enjoy riding my bike.

- I ate many more veggies and fruits, and I ate much less animal protein.
- I counted calories. Note that I was not trying to reduce my calories so I could lose weight; I was counting my calories so that I would not overeat. By exercising and not overeating, I discovered that I was losing a few pounds.

To count calories, I used — and use — a spreadsheet. To the left, I keep a running total of the calories I eat per day. To the right, I keep a list of calories for the foods I eat most often. I allow myself a certain number of calories each day, and I make sure that my evening meal is mostly veggies (for example, a mixture of lima beans, carrots, peas, corn, onion, and spinach seasoned with garlic, which is another veggie) so that I can eat a lot of filling food without a lot of calories.

I do not weigh food when I count calories (except for take-out). I am not super strict when it comes to counting calories. To me, an apple has 95 calories, whether it is a big apple or a small apple. To me, an orange has 65 calories, whether it is a large orange or a small orange. Sometimes I eat a large apple or orange, and sometimes I eat a small apple or orange, so it averages out. Besides, the numbers I see on my bathroom scale and blood-pressure monitor will tell me whether I am cheating.

Of course, sometimes I have to estimate the number of calories in a meal. I like take-out buffets (salad bar or Chinese), and I estimate the number of calories according to price. If I buy \$10.00 of take-out from a restaurant salad bar that costs around \$8.00 per pound, I estimate 1 calorie

per penny. Therefore, \$10.00 of \$8.00-per-pound take-out equals 1,000 calories. If I buy \$5.00 of take-out from a Chinese restaurant buffet that costs around \$4.00 per pound, I estimate 2 calories per penny. Therefore, \$5.00 of \$4.00-per-pound take-out equals 1,000 calories. Of course, the take-out is mostly veggies and fruits and very little animal protein, so I am not cheating by loading up on high-calorie foods. Instead, I am buying \$10.00 — or \$5.00 — of health-promoting food.

When I started doing this, I noticed that I was losing weight, even though dieting to lose weight was not my intention — I was eating healthy in order to lower my blood pressure. I easily lost a few pounds, and then I stopped losing weight, so I slightly lowered the number of calories I allowed myself to eat each day and I started losing weight again. After I lost 10 pounds, my blood pressure was normal and my weight was where my doctor said it should be, so I slightly raised the number of calories I eat each day and I continued — and continue — to exercise, eat health-promoting foods, and count calories.

Losing the weight was easy. Remember, I did not even intend to lose weight. I was simply trying to eat nutrient-dense food and bring my blood pressure down. I was a little hungry in the evening sometimes, but it was never too bad. Sometimes I was even able to eat five gingersnaps in the evening because I wasn't very hungry, I wanted something sweet, and I still had 120 calories left to eat that day. Other times, I did feel hungry and still had 120 calories left to eat, so I would eat two medium carrots (30 calories each) and 3 pitted dates (20 calories each). The carrots were filling, and the dates were sweet. Total: 120 calories. The two carrots and three dates were enough to keep me going until the following day. And if I had 150 calories left to eat, I could eat one pound of strawberries! Who knew that one pound of strawberries was only 150 calories! (Don't believe it?

Look it up. And remember that when strawberries are picked at the right time, they are sweet and so there is no need to add sugar.) One ounce of potato chips is also 150 calories. (Don't believe it? Look it up.) Life is a banquet, and calorie counters who choose to eat potato chips rather than strawberries are starving to death.

This helps show that if you eat mainly fruits and veggies and plants in general, you may end up eating much more food than you thought possible. A Little Debbie Zebra Cake is 320 calories. Instead of eating one Little Debbie Zebra Cake, you could eat an apple (95 calories), an orange (65 calories), a plum (30 calories), two tomatoes (50 calories total; 25 calories each), a cucumber (50 calories), and a carrot (30 calories). I once saw an apple tart at a very cheap price in a Sav-a-Lot, so I picked it up and stood in line to pay for it. Ahead of me in line was an obese man and an obese woman, who were buying several of the apple tarts. I looked at the nutritional information on the package and saw that the calorie count for one apple tart was 410 calories! I got out of line and put the apple tart back. And I have seen pastries that clock in at over 700 calories at Sav-a-Lot!

Note that I am allowed to eat Little Debbie Zebra Cakes and apple tarts and pastries if I want to, but I don't because I prefer to use the calories on better, more filling, and more nourishing food. I eat pretty much what I want, which is mostly veggies, fruits, herbs and spices, mushrooms, legumes (e.g., peas, beans, peanuts), whole grains, nuts and seeds, and occasionally a few gingersnaps or other small cookies. And yes, I do eat small servings of fish or chicken on most days.

I do tend to eat all the calories I am allowed. If at the end of the day, I have five calories left, I will eat one pistachio nut, which is actually four calories, but I round off

numbers.

I see no reason why what I do cannot work long term. As long as I exercise daily, count my calories daily, and stick daily to the number of calories that keeps my weight where it should be and eat the kind of food that keeps me healthy, there is little reason for me to gain weight. I have a lifestyle, not a diet.

This works for me, and it may work for you.

Of course, as always, do your own research and do what your doctor tells you.

Research is great. You can learn what will solve or at least ameliorate health problems. Suffering from a mild case of anal fissures? Eat two apples a day. Suffering from eye trouble? Eat corn and spinach. Your male SO's erections are not what they used to be? Have him eat pistachio nuts every day. Your male SO is at risk of getting prostate cancer? Have him eat flax seeds daily. Etc. And even if these things don't work as well as you want them to work, you are still eating health-producing, nutrient-rich foods.

One more thing. Some studies show that it is almost impossible to lose a lot of weight and to keep it off. But some studies show that coffee is good for you, and other studies show that coffee is bad for you. If you believe in free will, ignore the studies. Just do what you think you ought to do. And even if you think that it is impossible to lose a lot of weight and to keep it off, you ought not to think that it is impossible to exercise an amount that is suitable for you, to eat food that you know is good for you, to avoid eating food that you know is bad for you, and to avoid overeating. Remember: What I am advocating is a lifestyle, not a diet.

Some obese people say that they eat only 3,500 or 4,000 calories per day. How many calories does a moderately

active 24-year-old, 6-foot-6, 200-pound man need? According to one online calculator, approximately 3,150. How many calories does a moderately active 24-year-old, 5-foot-4, 120-pound woman need? According to one online calculator, approximately 1,985. You can find online calculators that will tell you how many calories you need per day. Use that number to start calorie counting, and adjust that figure up or down as needed.

By the way, I also use a spreadsheet to keep track of my health resolutions and goals. My spreadsheet has columns for such things as my weight, my blood pressure measurements, how many minutes I walk when I take a walk, how far I ride my bike when I ride my bike, etc. I can see at a glance whether I am slacking off on exercising or whether I have gained a few pounds or whether my blood pressure is inching up. I use an exercise tape by Tamilee Webb, the original Buns of Steel instructor, each morning, so I have columns for when I do her abs and her arms exercise workouts, which I alternate. I'm a guy, so I ignore the buns workout. Sure, her audience is women, but she has good workouts, so I do them although every other day I have to listen to her tell me that she wants to improve my arms so I can wear sleeveless tops without being embarrassed and all the other days I have to listen to her tell me to raise my "girl" area when she wants me to do a pelvic tilt.

Conclusion

We want to feel well now. When tomorrow comes, tomorrow will be now. A few changes, or perhaps continuing to do what you already do, may make you feel well or continue to feel well now.

Focus on being healthy today and tomorrow. That is the best way to help ensure that you will be healthy next week, next month, next year, and longer.

Appendix: Recommended Viewing and Reading

Dr. Michael Gregor, MD

Dr. Gregor is a committed vegan who has many free videos about nutrition on YouTube and on his website [<http://nutritionfacts.org>]. He reads scholarly research articles about nutrition and summarizes what they say. He provides much motivation for eating fruits and veggies — and for avoiding animal protein and for taking certain supplements. He wrote a book titled *How Not to Die*. (A better title would be *How to Not Die*.)

Michael Pollan

Mr. Pollan has studied food and nutrition for years, and he believes that non-processed animal protein can be part of a healthy diet. Look for videos by and about him on YouTube. His main advice takes up seven words: “Eat food, not too much, mostly plants.” By “eat food,” he means to eat real food, not processed food — which he calls “edible foodlike substances.” He has written several books, including *Food Rules*.

David Bruce

Download *Resist Psychic Death: 250 Anecdotes and Stories*, free, by David Bruce here:

<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/97267>

It’s a fun read that is not about diet and nutrition.

About the Authors

About Brenda Kennedy

Brenda Kennedy, an award winning bestselling author, is a true believer of romance. Her stories are based on the relationships that define our lives — compassionate, emotionally gripping, and uplifting novels with true to life

characters, that stay with her readers long after the last page is turned. Her varied, not always pleasant background has given her the personal experience to take her readers on an emotional, sometimes heart wrenching, journey through her stories. Brenda has been a struggling single mom, a survivor of domestic abuse, waitress, corrections officer, hostage negotiator and a corrections nurse. She is also a wife, mother, and grandmother. Even though her life was not always rainbows and butterflies, she is a survivor and believes her struggles have made her the person she is today. Brenda is the author of the award-winning book, *Forever Country* (The Rose Farm Trilogy Book 1). She has been dubbed “The Queen of Cliffhangers” by her adoring readers because books one and two always have a cliffhanger ending. In Brenda’s own words, “I write series whose beginning books end in cliffhangers, because I love them. I always give away the first book in each series so you have nothing to lose by reading it.” She was born and raised in Zanesville, Ohio and moved to SW Florida in 2006 with her husband Rex. They have a combined family, and she often jokes about not remembering what child belongs to who.

You may follow her on:

FB author page : <http://on.fb.me/1ywRwml>

BookBub Author’s Page:

<https://www.bookbub.com/authors/brenda-kennedy>

GoodReads : <http://bit.ly/1szWiw5>

Twitter : https://twitter.com/BrendaKennedy_

Webpage: <http://brendakennedyauthor.com>

For more information on her other novels, you can find them on all major platforms.

You can find Brenda's books on all major online bookstores:

The Forgotten Trilogy

Book One: Forgetting the Past.

Book Two: Living for Today. Coming... *Fall 2016*

Book Three: Seeking the Future. Coming... *Winter 2016*

The Starting Over Trilogy

Book One: A New Beginning

Book Two: Saving Angel

Book Three: Destined to Love

The Freedom Trilogy

Book One: Shattered Dreams

Book Two: Broken Lives

Book Three: Mending Hearts

The Fighting to Survive Trilogy

Round One: A Life Worth Fighting

Round Two: Against the Odds

Round Three: One Last Fight

The Rose Farm Trilogy

Book One: Forever Country

Book Two: Country Life

Book Three: Country Love

About Carla Evans

I am a wife, mother, grandmother, and registered nurse. I specialize in geriatrics and I am passionate about my work and truly enjoy taking care of my patients as well as their family members. I believe that the elderly deserve and have earned our respect, attention, and care. We have so much to learn if we just take the time to listen to the wisdom they have to offer. I have laughed, cried, laughed till I've cried, and learned so much simply by spending time with my patients. I love creating things with my hands. I draw a little, sew a little, and make wreathes sometimes. I love babies, children, and obviously the elderly. I love shopping, mostly at thrift stores, and believe no one (especially me) can have too many fancy dishes, tablecloths, or quilts. I love my family and enjoy spending time with them. Becoming a grandmother gave my life a whole new purpose and joy beyond anything I could have ever imagined.

About Rosa Jones

Hello, my name is Rosa. I am a mother and grandmother and a design enthusiast. I love beautiful things and think we should treat ourselves on a daily basis by using our special glassware, linen napkins, white towels, etc. I love mellow music, classic R&B, textiles, white linen, matlasse, and monograms. I love French doors and shuttered windows. I like rusty things, natural patinas, curvy furniture and crystal chandeliers. I like fine china, pink depression glass, stemmed glassware even for water. I love to shop at brocantes and flea markets to furnish my home. I love to read lots of books and I like to write a little (hence the *Cupcakes* book). I love to laugh and to laugh a lot (cupcake book again). I love for people to be comfortable in my home. I am a bon vivant ... someone who lives well ... not to imply that I am wealthy, but rather that I am at ease and enjoy day to day life ... enjoying good food, wine, family and friends. I also believe you should never hold back a

compliment. We all need that little boost in our day to day life and I believe in saying “I love you” to almost everyone.

About Martha Farmer

I too am a wife, a mother, and a grandmother. I am a records keeper at the local police station. I am a reader. I am a self-taught, beginning knitter. I am a “struggling” author. I love depression glass, antique linens, old crystal, vintage cut glassware and angels. I love frozen custard and anything lemon. I love peonies and roses, babies’ laughter and birds singing. I love knitting and reading and watching my grandson do anything. I love listening to rain falling on the roof while lying in bed in the early morning. I enjoy watching a lightning storm brewing, knowing it’s headed in my direction. The smell of fresh-cut grass, sun tea, a good book and a comfy chair bring me much pleasure. I love long rides in the hillsides and the valleys searching for old country churches. I love seeing the cows lying in the pastures and the barns that house them. I love the plentiful deer here in Ohio and the bears in Tennessee. I love the mountains, I love the ocean. But most of all I love my family: my brothers, my sisters, my husband Steve, my son Josh Murphy, my stepdaughter Tori Farmer, my mother-in-law Janice Farmer and finally, my grandson Tristan Murphy.

About David Bruce

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn't been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don't often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for "sounds like" and "two words," then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn't let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor's degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a master's degree in English and a master's degree in Philosophy.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Dance*, *Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose*.