

## Weight Loss

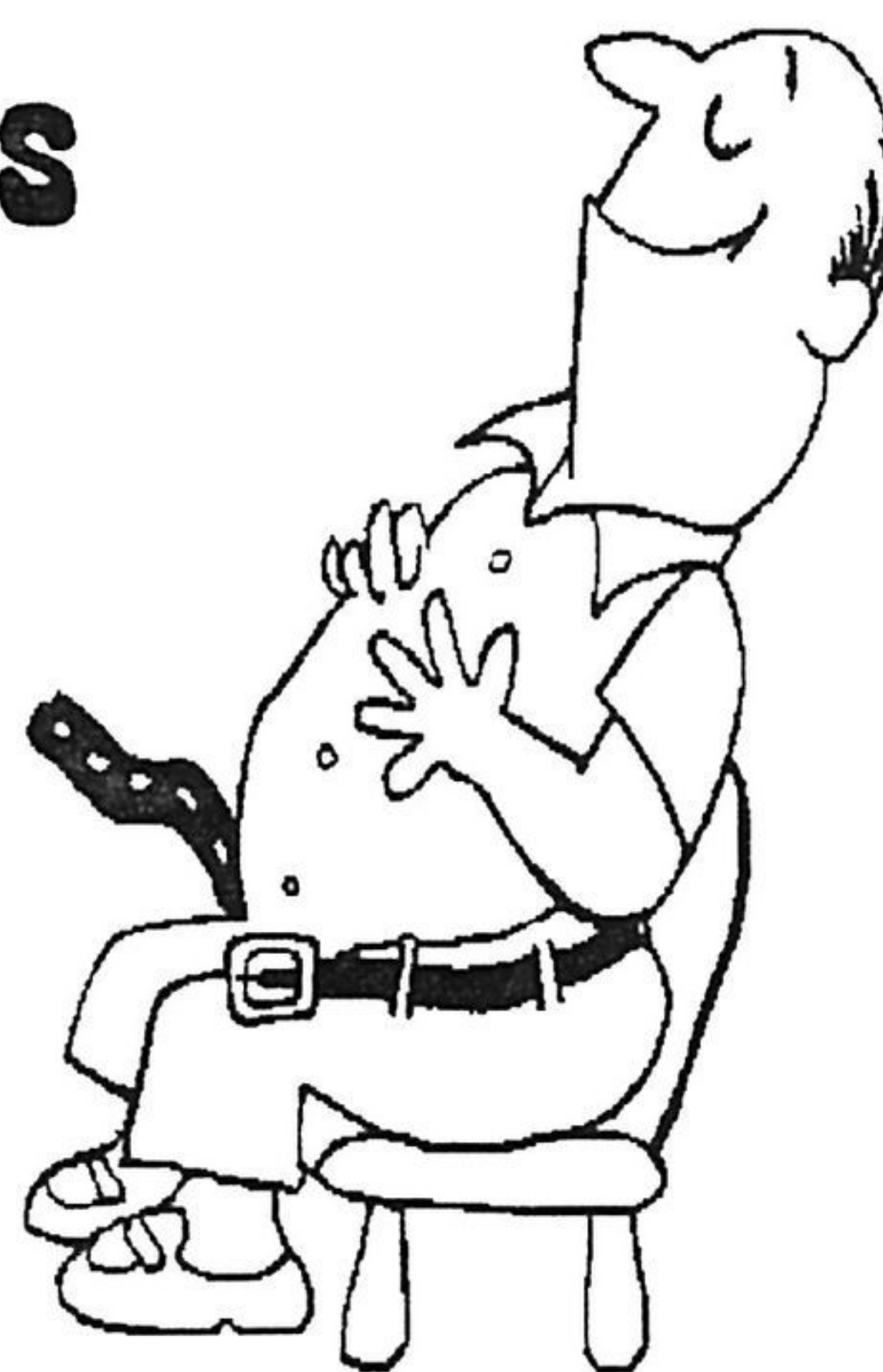
I bought a book of inspirational quotations recently, the kind that has a pithy little thought for each day. It wasn't until day three that I realized all 365 quotations had to do with losing weight. I know that weight is a concern to almost everyone, even those who are already slim, but are there really 365 messages on this singular topic? I'll never find out now because I returned the book, fearing that had I read all 365 messages, I wouldn't be able to approach Books on the Bay with a clear conscience.

Up to my mid-twenties, I was too thin. My trousers hung limply over my rear end, a source of great embarrassment to me. I wore my shirt outside my pants for years, compelled by the same physical shame that causes overweight people to do the same thing.

Between my twenties and forties, I became too heavy. Somewhere in that time span, I needed a friend to say, "You've attained perfection. Don't lose a single ounce, don't gain a single ounce." But no one saw fit to impart that valuable information to me, so I unwittingly passed right on through perfection and packed on more flesh.

So, I guess like many folks in South Marysburgh, I should lose some weight. Not necessarily to improve my appearance but so I can do simple things more easily, like dress myself without grunting like a walrus trying to pull on a set of flippers. The question that haunts me is, how does a person lose weight without giving up the foods that are so satisfying to eat? Icebox cookies that melt in your mouth, chased down with gulps of cold milk. Pancakes drenched in good South Marysburgh maple syrup on a Saturday morning. I have to have mayonnaise on my sandwiches. My body has a law on this.

Is the alternative some pathetic plate of vegetables arranged in artistic colours in aesthetic



placements? I think it was Julia Child who said, "The trouble with nouvelle cuisine is that you know someone's fingers have been all over it." What a precipitous decline in life's enjoyment meter if a person is reduced to eating little batches of green sprouts...or big batches for that matter. Grazing like cattle.

The logical side of my brain says there's lots of very good reasons to shed a few kilos. I read that it's more healthy. I feel sure there would be more mobility, greater fitness, an improved appearance. The appearance argument isn't a great motivator though. I've been married for thirty-three years, and my wife is used to me by now. I can't imagine her libido rising to teen-age levels again should I become more Apollo-like. I don't know what I'd do if that were to happen. As well, weight loss would leave me with all my existing psychological quirks. These unpleasant habits, in themselves, cause people to avoid me. Weight loss wouldn't solve that problem.

So, while the weight of evidence seems to fall on the side of the argument that favours becoming lighter, the emotional side of my brain keeps reminding me of the deprivation involved. As I understand it, you can't lose a bunch of fat and then revert to past gustatory pleasures. If you do, the suet simply returns, and when it returns, it clings ever more tightly to the body. There's not much point to feeling better for only two weeks, so if a person is going to lose some weight, they better be prepared to adopt changed eating habits forever.

I think I will ponder both sides of this question for another ten years.

- George Underhill