

On June 15, our first wonderful morning in Bermuda, we made the terrible mistake of taking our small resort's minibus over to Dockyard, on West End so we could ride the ferry into Hamilton and have lunch. If we had checked, we'd have understood that this was a cruise ship day and, there she was, in all her magnificence, the "Immensity of the Seas" or the "Enormity of the Seas" (or some such name) and she was busily disgorging, from her gangplanks, 3,600 of our fellow country men, women and children and, despite my propensity for exaggeration, at least 65% of them were fat; and of those, more than half were what the doctors call "morbidly obese". Shockingly most of the most obese were younger; forties and fifties and way too many of them had walkers or those all-too-convenient scooters and, worst of all, way too many of their kids looked way too much like their parents.



It is not politically correct to talk about "fat people" but there is a national discussion going on about obesity and my reason and maybe my small right to write about it is that I have been fat all my life; maybe not morbidly obese; but fat and, while I had decided to reverse that trend, finally, about six weeks before our trip; that brief encounter with that massive vessel and the massive vessels disembarking from it (here it comes) "changed my life" and I will never be fat again.

It's not even the vanity part, although, with the 20 pounds I've taken off these past three months, there have been the benefits of friends noticing and saying I look good. Far more importantly, I'm faster and more limber on the tennis courts; my arthritic knees are saying "hey, thanks for taking a load off" and my doctor has cut my mild BP reducer in half and, if I reach the goal I've set, I'm unlikely to need the little pals at all and there's nothing wrong with that.

Back to the cruise ship as microcosm: These people paid whatever they paid for a lovely cruise and pretty decent amenities. They also paid for endless eating opportunities from pre-breakfast buffet buffets to, oops, forgot the pizza stand and burger grill after having the lunch buffet, to oops, look, a soft-serve, self-serve ice cream machine to, oops, the waiter at dinner asking if "we'd also like to try the lobster, the veal sweetbreads in cream and the confit of duck in addition to the prime rib we've just downed", to oops, don't forget the midnight buffet; tonight's the "All-Chocolate-All-the Time one. (But hey, we can waddle around that track on the upper deck a couple of times – could be as much as a quarter mile – just to balance out those 11 meals we had today).

Alright, I know this is overkill and the larger among you are as angry at me right now as I've been at my wife every time she's asked me to slow down or even stop, or not take that extra piece of cake or pie or chicken. But, see, it really is "overkill"; our over eating is killing us.

Look around the rest of the world when you travel. Europeans are leaner; Africans are leaner; Australians and Kiwis are leaner; Bermudians are much leaner. It seems to be here in North America that it's the worst. I studied sociology and psychology and there are learned folks in those fields and our colleagues in medicine who could all give us chapter and verse on what's wrong and what needs to be done. But that will never change it. This is an individual challenge to be met (or not) by each person according to his or her own choice.

Beaufort Memorial has had to order an extra large MRI because too many of us can't fit in the regular one. Look around you next time you're seated in a restaurant. We used to fit in those chairs. Now they have to bring out chairs without arms so our haunches can get down to and then hang over the seats. Airlines are trying to figure out whether to charge obese people for two seats or continue having one-third of each of them spilling onto their seatmates on either

side.

OK, enough. There are lots of ways to change this. Find whatever way works for you. Mine is that a friend of ours sold us on Weight Watchers and my wife who has never been fat went there with me just to help me do it. It works for me. It has a lot of choices and you have control over your destiny. The meetings help and our coach, Glenda, is formidable and funny and helpful. This is not meant to be a commercial, but every time I'm there, there are people reaching their goals and people telling triumphant and simple stories about the small successes that add up to much more. It's good to see it and to be a part of it.

Back to Bermuda: We ran, like the wind, and caught a local bus to the ferry dock at Somerset Bridge, got on a boat with only two other passengers and had a refreshing ride over to Hamilton. At the lovely terrace restaurant we selected, was a woman I'd seen getting off the "Extra-large of the Seas". She was unable to fit in the offered chair and she and her husband departed. My grilled shrimp on salad (no dressing) was delicious and I did have a taste or two of my wife's way more rich and delicious sea food pot pie. But it did not go to my pot. In fact, I actually lost a pound and a half during our week away and that was something I'd never managed to do on a vacation before.