

Marilyn was a size 12

Since my last column mentioned that losing weight was the No. 1 subject on women's minds today, I figured this column ought to be devoted to that subject.

Yes, it's been on my mind, too, although I stopped obsessing about it somewhere in my mid-50s. Diets were nothing new to me — I tried them all: low calorie, high protein, Pritiken, the dreaded diet pills of the 1970s, Weight Watchers, over-the-counter pills, South Beach and every other fad diet and of course the Atkins diet.

I had even worked in New York with someone who had actually met the Dr. Atkins himself in earlier years and I



Generations

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had tried his diet. Weight Watchers was by far the healthiest of all ... but I was too impatient to give a good balanced diet a chance.

I wanted immediate results to meet some sort of deadline. I realize

now that deadline hasn't passed, but has lasted about 40 years.

My weight went up and down like a yo-yo throughout the years, especially after giving birth three times and then hitting menopause when my body decided it had had enough and stopped altogether. I used to joke with my girlfriend Harriet that I had every size dress in my closet, although I never, ever, bought a single digit dress size even when I contracted hepatitis in West Africa.

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So, when did I get comfortable with my weight? Well, I think I owe it all to Marilyn Monroe so let me tell you the story.

One rainy, dreary Saturday afternoon, I found myself with nothing to do but relax and take in a movie. Even with over 200-plus channels, including pay-per-view, I was still finding it difficult to select something that would keep me from re-visiting the refrigerator for a snack. My choices ranged from yet another Godzilla remake, to numerous films about teenage boys coming of age, to an animated tale about a mammoth, to some spy movie that had already begun, to not yet another romantic comedy where the gal gets the guy of her dreams after being made over.

I flipped on Turner Movie Classics, a channel I tend to end up at these days simply because there are no commercials and the actors are timeless. Turner was showing a 1961 movie that I had not seen called, "The Misfits," starring two icons in moviedom, Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe. It was a black and white film, done in annoying letterbox, written by Marilyn's ex-husband, Arthur Miller, and di-

PLEASE SEE GENERATIONS, C7

GENERATIONS: 'You can wear some of my exwife's clothes'

FROM PAGE C1

rected by the magnificent John Huston.

"How bad can it be?" I reasoned content for a few hours of nostalgia.

And nostalgia was exactly what I got. Clark was ... well, Clark, a true legend, a one-of-a-kind hunk of a man in a world of make believe heroes, that even today, 46 years later, no one can touch when it comes to class or sex appeal. I adore all of Gable's movies, but find it a bit frustrating since I can't figure out what woman in her right mind would give Clark a hard time, especially that snip of a heroine Scarlett O'Hara.

But the one who saved me wasn't Clark. It was Marilyn. In "The Misfits," she was absolutely stunning with a sweetheart of a face and white blonde hair that made it seem like a halo was permanently above the top of her head. Marilyn played a character pretty much based on her own life — a beautiful, but lost soul, who finds solace in the company of an older man. This time, it was Clark, an old cowboy who takes her in and offers to keep her at his humble abode for as long as she wants to stay.

Sure ... the movie was dated and somewhat corny as movies done in the 60's tend to be to viewers today. But in "The Misfits," you can't help but stare in awe as Marilyn steals every scene. She doesn't have to talk or deliver an Oscar-winning dissertation. The warmth she conveys by her mere presence makes the viewer fall in love with her.

About mid-movie, Marilyn really shows off her stuff when she prances around in something that was quite new and daring for women in that era — a pair of snug-fitting jeans. No, they weren't a pair of the trendy jeans that cost hundreds of dollars today with

some designer's name on the back pocket, but a simple pair of Levi's with the cuffs rolled up.

Right before the jeans scene, Clark turns to Marilyn and asks, "You can wear some of my exwife's clothes. What are you? About a size 12?" Marilyn nods.

And there you have it: double digits on the screen for all the women all over the world to see by a woman who wasn't afraid to nod. Marilyn wasn't a bag of bones, but a goddess above all goddesses, the epitome of what every man desired, the gal who today still adorns almost as many posters as Elvis, the blonde whose name "Marilyn" is symbolic with the most desirable woman in the world and one who even has a Web site devoted exclusively to her. And this icon over all icons was a size 12.

This revelation got me thinking about where we are today. When did a size 12 suddenly become gargantuan and when did a size zero shimmy in and take over? Why are young actresses today content on showing more skin than ever before, but on a bony frame held up by stick figure legs? Do you know that even "Barbie," the buxom doll that little girls covet, is considered fat by today's standards? Her highly durable rubber is being "slenderized" and pretty soon she, too, will be among the chic but painfully thin.

This skinny obsession is out of control in the advertising world, too. Food portions continue to grow while "miracle" diet pills and fads dominate ads and TV commercial breaks. We, as women, get this drilled into us on a daily basis while struggling in front of mirrors in fitting rooms convinced that the reflection we see is just too fat to survive in today's skinny obsessive world.

Sound like a Catch-22? It is. There's a commercial we've all

seen where a woman is proud as a peacock that she went from a size 10 down to a size 4. What on earth was wrong with her being a size 10? She looked pretty darn good to me. Only Dove has come out to illustrate what they call "the real woman" in their ads and they are beautiful, curvy, proud women.

According to www.cottoninc.com, statistics indicate that 40 percent of the women in this country are size 14 or larger, yet stand only 5 feet, 4 inches or shorter, but the models we see on runways are on average 5 feet, 9 inches, measuring 34-24-34 broad-shouldered, slim-waisted, long-legged, and a size 6 or smaller. So, are we supposed to be that size or curvy like the Dove gals?

To find the answer, let's conduct a survey ourselves with our boyfriends, husbands, fiancés, brothers, fathers and grandfathers. Find a picture of Marilyn Monroe in the archives and one of some paper-thin Vogue model in some current fashion magazine. Glue each picture on a piece of cardboard and put a very large question mark in the middle of the page. Then, hand it to the man in front of you and ask him which woman he prefers. If Marilyn doesn't win hands down ... well, I'll eat this article in between two pieces of bread.

The important thing to remember the next time you are tempted to beat yourself up because the bathroom scale moved one tiny line in the wrong direction is that Marilyn was a size 12, not a size zero. And, if size 12 was good enough for Marilyn Monroe, don't you think it may just be good enough for you?

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