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Maxine Williams
10904 N. E. 59 Street
Kirkland, Washington 98033

THE GADGET DIET

I hate to be told when to eat lettuce. It's good, but if the diet says "lettuce for lunch on Tuesday" (and Wednesday, Thursday, Friday), that's the day of the week it's loathsome. Eating eggs on schedule is worse.

With pencil and paper, a calorie-counting book, and a determination to get-it-off, you, too, can become an independent dieter. This basic collection must be kept in plain sight where you can write down everything that goes in your mouth, at the time it is eaten, adding calorie totals as you go along, because it's the total that counts. This diet works only if you know how many daily calories are allowed. (Allowed? There goes a fraction of our independence.)

But it's the gadgets that make the difference. First on the list is your toothbrush. Just before dessert is served, GO WASH YOUR TEETH. After that you can hardly make yourself eat anything more. You've spent a lifetime learning that brushing the teeth is the end of eating, and habit will be a strong ally. (In fact, even if you aren't on a serious diet kick, this gadget will cut out dessert calories.) Besides, moving away from the table breaks the spell of eating.

Some gadgets belong on the table. Two are a half-cup measure and a small-size dinner plate. Throw away that dingy aluminum measure (or put it back for baking) and get a pretty plastic one, or use a custard-cup that holds only a half-cup. A half-cup each of two vegetables tastes a lot better than a cup of one.

And if the food is spread about a bit on that small plate, the eye tells you that even on a diet you have a plateful of food. We dieters get hungry just thinking about the necessity of having skimpy amounts.

Butter is a "no-no" on most diets other than the no-carbohydrate ones, so we gadget-dieters are pretty smug as we get out the butter-cutter. That's one of those things with wires strung across it that cuts a quarter pound of butter or margarine into pats. One pat has fifty calories (the calorie book says), so we now put out one pat for the day and put the rest back into the refrigerator. Cut that pat into quarters and use them as you please -- maybe on that one slice of toast that Weight Watchers allows. Being one of those look persons who likes a trace of butter on my ugh-eggs, I use half the allowance for breakfast: one quarter on toast, one quarter on a boiled egg. But tra-la-la-la, I'm on a diet and I'm eating butter! (We can sneak in some jam, too. A tablespoon of jam has forty calories, but who wants to waste forty precious calories on that? A teaspoon of jam is only one-third that amount, and can be put on the one slice of toast instead of the quarter-pat of butter, and it will have no more calories. Just be sure to measure and write it down. Cheaters are always fat cheaters.)

The handy diet-gadget to use while preparing the evening meal is the kitchen-timer. Set it for a half-hour before time to eat. When it whirrs, have a cup of coffee or tea or a diet cola. This seems to fool the gastric juices into thinking they're about to have something to eat, and they squander their

energy on things that don't matter. By meal time you'll have lost a lot of appetite. This, combined with the toothbrush, really ⁶⁰⁰ cuts off the food on both ends.

Independent dieters can even eat roast gravy by having the right gadget. One that is to be found in every kitchen is an ice cube wrapped in a Kleenex. After pouring off as much fat as possible, wrap an ice cube in Kleenex and go over the top of the gravy (not thickened). The ice causes the fat to congeal and it sticks to the Kleenex so it can be lifted off. Use as many ice cubes and tissues as needed until the fat is all gone. If you're on a 900⁹⁰⁰-calorie diet you'll not want to put it on a potato, but if you can have more, a plain, medium-size potato, boiled or baked, has only ninety calories. Potatoes and gravy! Figúrese! (That's Spanish for "Imagine that!" but it looks like "Figures" and that's what we're on the way to.)

One gadget that is frequently sold to dieters is a postal scale for measuring meat quantities, but that's one we can leave out. Independent dieters know that the calorie count is not all that matters. Three hundred calories of lean meat is not half as damaging as three hundred calories ⁸⁰⁰ of carbohydrates. I'm told that the reason is that the latter make blood sugar immediately available, but meat and vegetables force the body to use fat to produce the needed blood sugar. Good judgment in regard to the quantity of lean meat is all that is required here (but write down the calories).

There is one more "gadget" which can hardly be called that: a sewing machine. As soon as enough pounds have vanish to make

skirts and dresses droop a bit, take them in. Once you've done this you're committed to keep on, but improved appearance makes it easier to do. ^{90°}

We must confess that our independence lies chiefly in choosing when we will eat the sorts of things that are required on all weight-watching schemes, but with the exhilarating bonus of very limited amounts of forbidden foods tossed in just to prove who's boss.

Behind the gadget diet I leave a trail of many years of unsuccessful attempts at dieting: grapefruit, grapefruit and eggs, the Air Force diet, bananas and milk, all fruit, all protein, eggs and vegetable soup; behind the gadget diet I also left thirty pounds, without being hungry or feeling deprived. The gages are being kept, ¹⁰⁰⁰ used less rigorously, to help keep them off.