

In 1953, I was twenty years old. In 1953, Audrey Hepburn was twenty-four years old and an overnight star. She won an academy award for her debut performance in *Roman Holiday*. She went on to star in one hit after another - *Sabrina*, *Funny Face*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *My Fair Lady*, and a dozen other Audrey Hepburn classics. *Breakfast at Tiffany's* was her signature role. She was a fabled actress, a beauty, a fashion icon, and thin. The little black dress she wore in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* was an icon of the twentieth century and the most famous "little black dress" of all time. Her slender figure was legendary. She made being *very* thin fashionable.

I wanted to be like Audrey Hepburn - the thinnest person of the twentieth century. And the best dressed. But I was plump. And not a fashionista. I was a school teacher. Haute couture was not my style. Even when I was not in school-teacher mode, I dressed down instead of up. How could I be fashionable if I wasn't thin? How could I wear the kind of clothes Audrey Hepburn wore - like the white organza gown with the floral embroidery in which she swept William Holden off his feet in *Sabrina*; or the red strapless sheath in which she cascaded down the steps of the Louvre in *Funny Face*, throwing her arms in the air to show off her sheer crimson shawl and elbow length white gloves; or the black and white masterpiece topped by the colossal chapeau she wore to the Ascot races in *My Fair Lady*? How could anyone live up to that level of chic? Who could look that preposterously good? Who could be that preposterously thin? Who could be the work of art that was Audrey Hepburn? But that is what I aspired to be.

I went on diets - the South Beach diet, the Mediterranean diet, the Macrobiotic diet, Jenny Craig, Pritikin,

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Atkins, the Weight Watchers diet, the Eat Right for your Blood-type diet, the Cabbage Soup diet, the raw food diet, the liquid diet, the Paleolithic diet, the Scarsdale diet, the high protein diet, the 120-Year diet (the author died at 79). I became a vegetarian, a pescetarian, a fruitarian. There were well over 100 of these diets. I went on all of them.

My efforts produced results. I got plumper. Audrey Hepburn did not. She retained her title as the Thinnest Person of the Twentieth Century. She remained a fabled actress, a great beauty, a fashion icon, a work of art. I remained plump, which rhymes with lump and frump.

But I never stopped trying. With all these attempts, I gradually went from 140 pound to 165 pounds. The graph of my weight went up and down like the stock market. But the dips always rebounded to ever higher heights, onward and upward – a bull market.

I thought 140 was bad, but 165! A far cry from Audrey Hepburn's 110. After all the diets and all the years, it occurred to me that diets didn't work. I made a study of nutrition. After I retired, I went to school to get a degree in nutrition. I even wrote a book on the subject. The book I wrote was called *Why Dieting Makes You Fat and What to Do Instead*. What I decided to do instead was never to diet again - not in the sense of going hungry, eating food I didn't like or depriving myself. I ate natural, unprocessed food that tasted good - no sugar, no white flour, no food in cans, boxes, jars, packages, bags. Lots of fresh fruits and vegetables. Like Scarlett O'Hara I vowed never to go hungry again.

Eating this way, my weight gradually settled at about 140 pounds, give or take. Ironically, I ended up right

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where I had started, at 140 pounds. Still a far cry from Audrey Hepburn's 110. But better than 165. And a weight I could maintain. Over the years, I should say decades, my attitude had changed. I no longer aspired to be the work of art that was Audrey Hepburn. I just wanted to be the best me that I could be. I didn't have to look preposterously good. Good enough would do.

After I retired, I moved down to Florida. I was shopping in a boutique for some Florida clothes when a woman sauntered in who had great style. She was wearing great colors, great design, great accessories, great jewelry. And she was greatly overweight. This was a great surprise to me. I thought being stylish and being overweight were mutually exclusive. I was wrong. Her outfit was a show stopper. It was a fire engine red duster that came to her ankles, underneath was a white tank top and white chiffon bottoms. A long black onyx necklace, dangling black earrings, and a broad band black bracelet accentuated the red and the white. . She looked good. She looked very good. In fact, she looked preposterously good. She was a work of art. This woman taught me a great lesson. And she answered that question: "How could I wear the kind of clothes Audrey Hepburn wore"? The answer was I couldn't and shouldn't. I looked for clothes that would look good on me, not on Audrey Hepburn or anyone else. I found them. I would go to great lengths to find them, asking perfect strangers where they had bought an outfit I admired. People were delighted to tell me. I scoured fashion catalogs. I found shops with colorful, flowing, whimsical, theatrical ensembles. Like black and white striped pants topped with a bright red tunic, a peach poncho trimmed with sequins with jewelry to match the sequins, a hot pink jacket with puffed cuffs at the end of the sleeves and over-sized

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black buttons. I found big, bold, colorful, striking jewelry like imitation flowers made of brilliant stones.

I became a fashionista.

Nothing had changed except my attitude. And that changed everything.

Audrey Hepburn was unique. There has never been anyone like her before. There has never been anyone like her since. There will never be anyone like her again. And the same can be said for me. I am unique, 140 pounds of haute couture. As Oscar Wilde put it, "Be yourself. Everyone else is taken."

