Nutritionist says crash diets misleading

By MARY MULVIHILL
Staff Writer

Many people are caught in the endless start-stop cycle of crash dieting.

When it is a struggle to fit into a pair of jeans or it is necessary to pull in a stomach to button some shorts, people crash diet to lose quick pounds.

Many people think that crash dieting and losing weight are a cause-effect relationship. Some local nutritionists and dieticians, however, said crash dieting might help gain weight more than it could help lose weight.

"When you eat under 1,000 calories, the rate at which your body burns calories slows down," said Marcia Mills, a registered dietician at Profile Associates-Outpatient Services in Chapel Hill and Raleigh.

While your body burns calories slower, it conserves calories faster. This means the crash dieter can gain weight, Mill said. "The diet defeats its purpose."

The crash diet, however, can make the uniformed dieter believe he is losing weight.

UNC nutrition professor Jean Burge said the crash dieter would lose about five pounds the first week, but none of this was body weight.

When they lose weight, Burge said, they lose too much too fast. This can produce serious side effects, she said.

"Some people have lost cardiac muscle and died of sudden death," she said. "You should never go below 1,000 calories for an extended period of time. I don't recommend a loss of more than one to two pounds per week."

UNC nutrition professor Mildred Kaufman said students in particular needed more than 1,000 calories daily because they were very active. "An active female college student shouldn't intake less than 1,200 calories per day, and the males (not) less than 1,500 calories per day," she said.

Students should maintain a safe calorie level while losing weight.

"It's best to look at what you're eating and reduce intake by 500 calories a day," Mills said. "You'll lose one pound a week."

People lose one pound of fat for every 3,500 calories cut from their daily intake, Mills said. If students cut 500 calories daily by eating fewer calories and exercising, they will have a weekly 3,500-calorie deficit, which equals the loss of one pound per week.

But Burge said students shouldn't expect to see this steady one-pound weight loss until the fifth week.

Cutting 500 calories a day is hard, especially for students, Kaufman said. "In all fairness it is hard for students to diet. Students eat in a variety of places, and it is difficult to always pick low-calorie foods."

Students should use a caloric chart and become more aware of the calorie difference between foods, Mills said. "They can then look at what they eat and make little changes. The easiest way to get rid of calories is to reduce fat intake. Each gram of fat contains nine calories."

She said students could reduce fat intake by avoiding margarine and butter, using mustard instead of mayonnaise and using less salad dressing on their salad.

Students who cook for themselves could reduce fat intake by cooking more chicken and fish than red meat, using products such as Pam instead of oil, and not frying foods, Burge said.

Students can avoid the extra calories of late-night eating by setting a time after which they won't eat and setting an alarm, Burge said. "When the alarm goes off, stop eating until the next morning. It works for some people."

If students can't fight off a late-night munchies attack, Burge said, they should snack on low-calorie foods such as fruits, vegetables and unbuttered popcorn. Students shouldn't feel guilty, however, if they can't resist a calorie-rich treat like a piece of cake.

"Enjoy it," she said. "Start your diet again after you eat the cake. Instead of feeling guilty about it, try to leave a bite left over. The difference between feeling guilty and feeling proud because you could leave a piece is enough to keep you on your diet."

Phyllis Smith, the dietician for University Dining Services, said students could always find a low-calorie entree such as broiled fish, baked chicken or a vegetarian dish at Lenoir Hall. The salad bar was another low-calorie option, she said.

Broiled ham, turkey and roast beef is also available daily, Smith said. "One of the reasons we instituted these carved meats was that they have no baking fat, grease or salts." The carved meats also let students choose whether to add the extra calories of gravy, she said.

Smith said University Dining Services featured low calories dishes in a special program last spring, but the students did not buy the low-calorie foods.

Burge said students can become more conscious of their eating habits by keeping a daily food log of what they eat, where they eat, who they eat with, when they eat and how hungry they feel.

"In my work with people, I found that 90 percent of the people lose weight just by keeping a food log of their diet," she said. " It makes you aware of what you're eating."

A nutritionist can help students turn these reformed eating habits into a long-term eating plan, Burge said. "You can live with this eating plan for the rest of your life. That means you don't have to diet for the rest of your life."

Burge advised students who wanted weight-loss counseling to visit the Health Education Section of Student Health Services.

Sue Gray, director of the Health Education Section, said the Health Education Section offered individual weight-loss counseling to students on a referral or walk-in basis.

Students can pick up a seven-day food log and suggested meal plans of 1,200 to 2,000 calories per day, Gray said.

The Health Education Section also offers two special programs: a support group for compulsive overeaters who binge but do not purge, and an outreach program, called Junkbusters, that teaches dormitory residents healthy eating habits.

Controlling calorie intake is not the only way to lose weight.

"It is a two-way thing," Mills said. "You also have to look at your energy output (or exercise)."

Burge said exercise would make it easier to lose weight and also tone the areas of weight loss.

"When you lose weight, your fat goes away, but you're still flabby," Burge explained. "If you exercise, you'll be toned and look good.

"Most college men and women diet to look good anyway, not to be 102 pounds. No one will know if you weigh 102 pounds, but they'll know if you look good."

DTH/Larry Childress

Fruit, vegetables and popcorn? Maybe not your idea of the perfect combination, unless you're a dieter.

Catered Calories: low-cal meals brought to doorstep

By MARY MULVIHILL
Staff Writer

It isn't easy to cook low calorie meals on your own. You must buy the right food, divide it into small portions and carefully prepare the food.

Catered Calories in Garner will do these chores for you. This unique catering service prepares and delivers three low-calorie, gourmet meals to people in Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill daily.

"The meals are bag-delivered and have a menu on the outside with the number of calories," said Colleen O'Neal, owner of Catered Calories. "The meals average between 800 and 1,000 calories. We also advise people to take a multiple-vitamin pill."

O'Neal said the Catered Calories meals were nutritionally balanced and checked by a nutritionist. "The meals are great for people who have health problems because they are low in sodium and cholesteral," she said.

A sample Catered Calories menu would be: a cheddar quiche for breakfast; a pita pizza, green salad and cookie for lunch; and barbeque ribs, french fries, coleslaw and vanilla pudding for dinner.

This menu may not sound like a diet, but O'Neal said the three meals totaled less than 1,000 calories.

"It is the portion size and method of preparation that makes things high in calories," she said.

But these small portions don't make the meals less filling.

"The meals really do fill you up," said Mary Cowan of Raleigh. "You don't feel like you're on a diet eating cottage cheese. I've never been hungry on Catered Calories."

Cowan said she and her husband would use Catered Calories for two weeks when they wanted to lose weight.

"My husband lost about 20 pounds over a six-week period," she said.

Catered Calories was the idea of Norma Sebeinger of Albuquerque, New Mexico, O'Neal said. "I saw a story about Catered Calories on 'PM Magazine' and thought that it was something I'd like to do."

O'Neal contacted Sebeinger and went to Albuquerque for a week of training. After getting her license to use the Catered Calories copyright, national trademarks and cookbook, O'Neal opened her own Catered Calories operation in October 1983.

Catered Calories is offering a $271, four-week special to Chapel Hill and Durham residents, she said. Normal rates are $70 for seven days of meals and $60 for five days.

People interested in Catered Calories can call O'Neal at 779-6149.

"You don't have to sign a contract," Cowan said. "I'd advise people to try it for a week and see if they like it."

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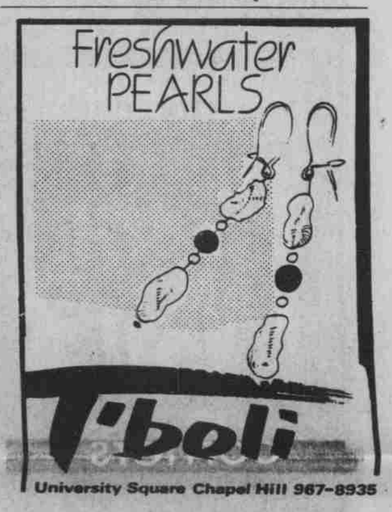

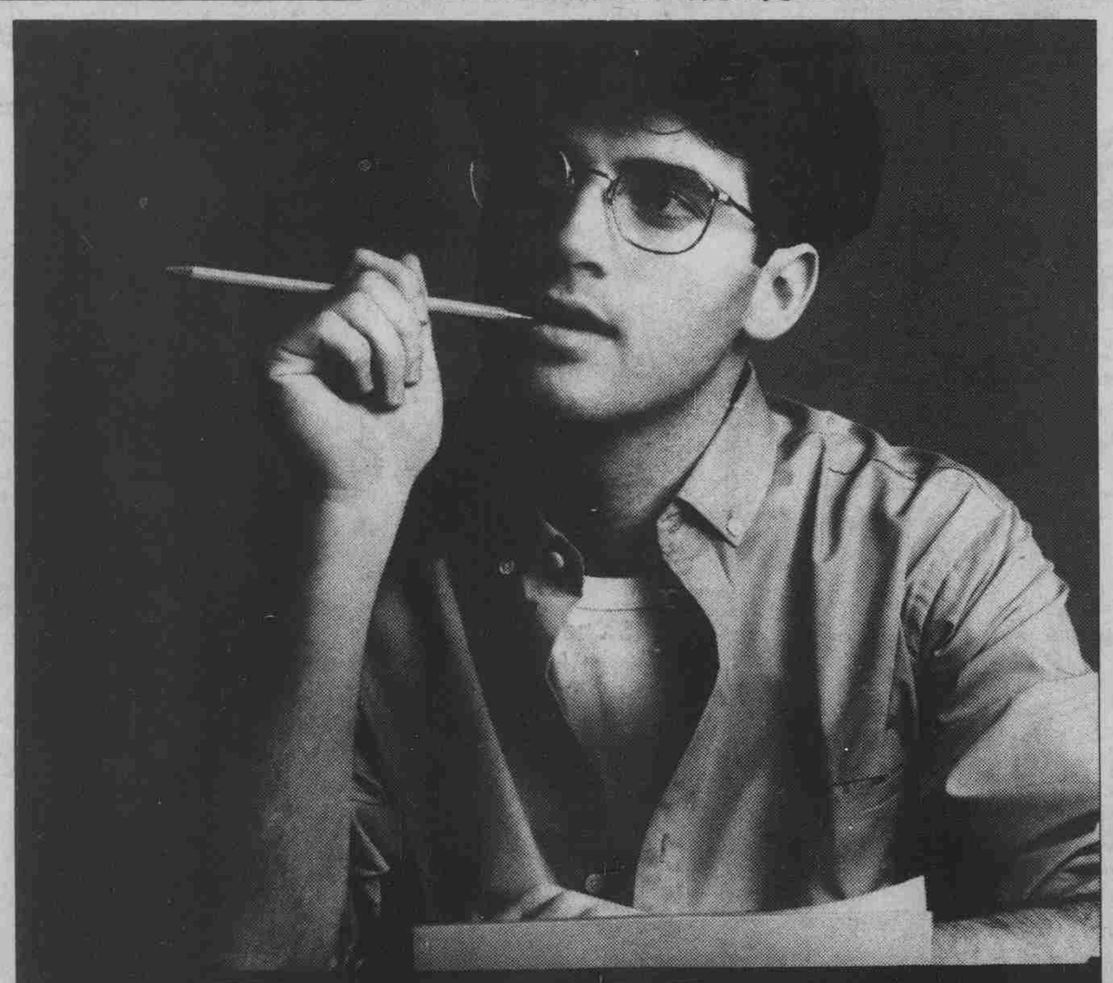

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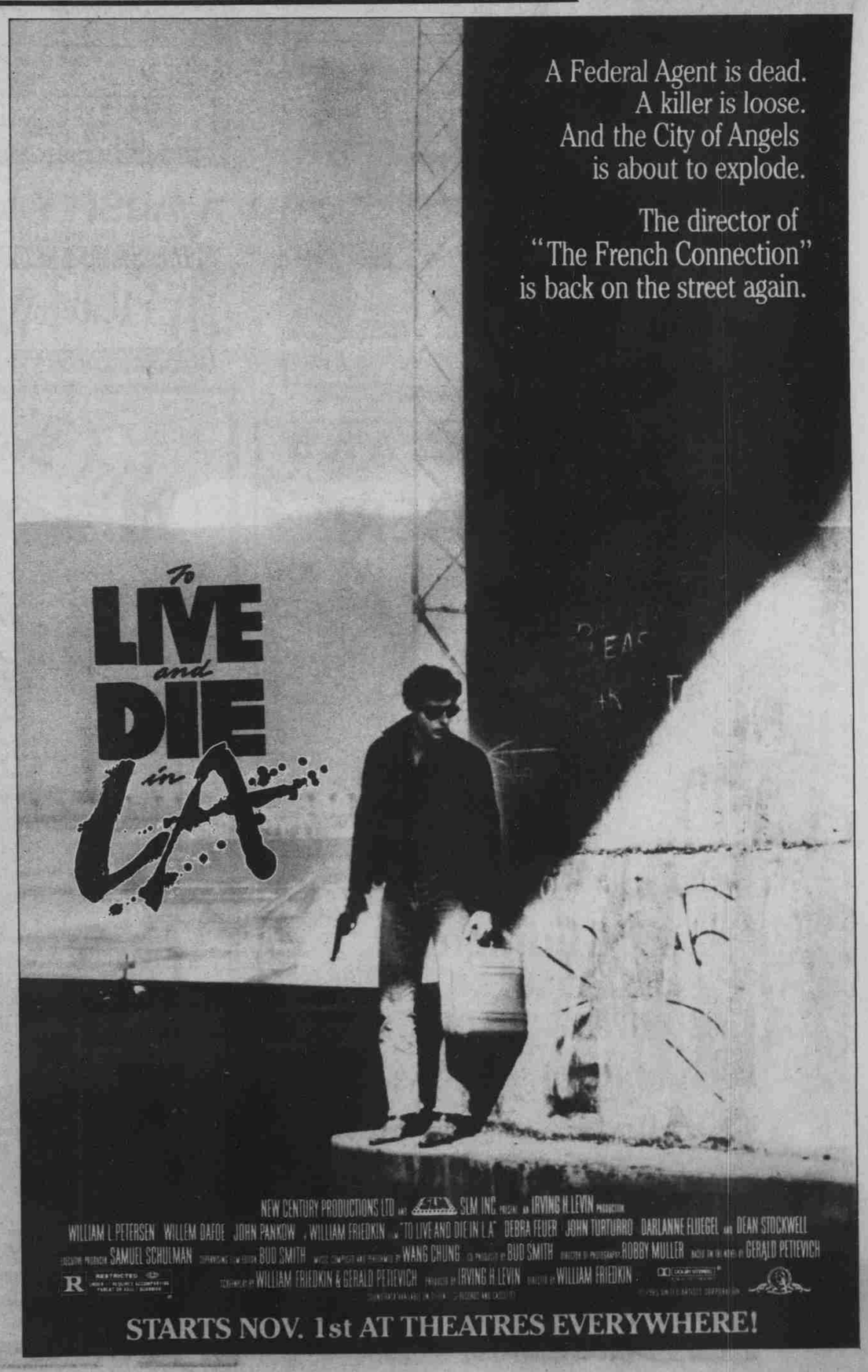
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