

THAT CUTE LITTLE FAT KID:

Carrying the weight

by Joe 'Kirsch' Curcio

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I woke up so early this morning that even the annoying motivational memes regulars on Facebook hadn't posted yet.

I killed some time flipping around cable channels and realized my options were basically limited to a Tony Little Gazelle Glider infomercial, a Golden Girls marathon, or a documentary on living with scabies. Instead, I settled on an episode of Bonanza while I knocked off the rest of the Papa Johns pizza in the fridge.

It was by about the third bite of that cold "*Zesty Italian Trio*" slice that I realized I'd been on a diet since at least 1967 - and that maybe all of my own endless social media ramblings and obnoxious observations - like this one - are just the byproduct of the extra baggage I've been carrying since being that *cute little fat kid* on the block in Brooklyn.

People don't realize how much baggage, both physical and psychological, comes with childhood obesity. From being the kid who hadn't seen much of the high side of the seesaw to spending Easter Sunday in the early '70s as the only one in a dark brown suit while my friends sported bright red blazers and avocado turtlenecks.

Even today, that little *carry-on bag* of fashion trauma has me sticking with the Johnny Cash "black-on-black" look. The only time I dabble with color and vogue is when I put on those snazzy Italian guy socks - which I may have disqualified myself from wearing because of being revealed here as a NY Italian who eats Papa John's Pizza! - at 4:30 in the morning.

I know firsthand what it's like being *that chubby kid*. At a neighborhood festival, I once heard some *carny stable hand* tell my father that I was "*a little too heavy*" to go on the pony ride." Well, my father could have just gently rubbed my head and watched me wallow in a pool of *woe is me* like some tenderhearted victim. Instead, he grabbed me by the hand, took me up the block and bought us both a couple of cheese calzones and a bag of zeppole's.

Granted, it wasn't a great choice for my future with GLP-1's and ACE inhibitors. But the lesson stuck: you can either let the baggage make you retreat into silence and curl up in bed with a box of Oreos because you think you can't compete - or you can change the game and do what *YOU* do best.

In Little League, I spent most of my time on the bench pulling splinters out of my stretched-out pinstripes and popping melted Tootsie Rolls from my pockets. With regard to running, I had about as much chance of reaching first base as I did years later with 90-pound Rosemary Rizetto. But I turned out to be a decent pitcher. The problem? When I walked to the mound, I had to put up with the other team's dugout singing "*I Feel the Earth Move Under My Feet*." Well, that soon ended once I decided to serve up a little tune of my own. There's nothing more rockin' than the sound of a fastball whizzing by the *ol' melon*. A little *chin music* as they say.

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After a few brushbacks and knuckleballs, the dugout choir went silent! We actually went on to win the championship that season. I was hoping that the team would hoist me onto their shoulders - but under the *circumstances* they just opted for treating me to a few franks and a Yoo-hoo. It's all about the way you play the game!

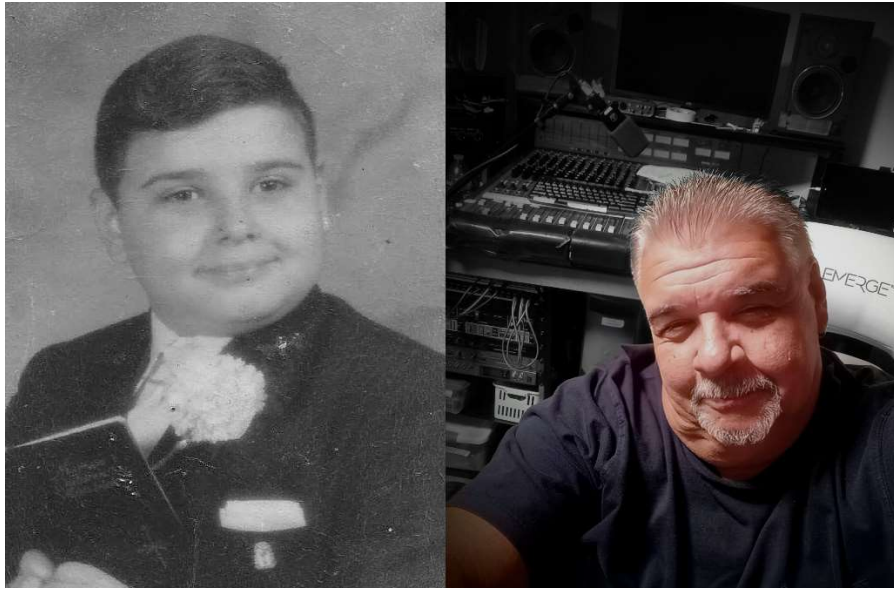
Sure, there's baggage. How could there not be? How many times can you endure the dread on an airplane passenger's face when they see you heading toward the empty seat beside them? How many times can you perform the ritual of triple-tying your shoes, or never sitting in a restaurant booth, or hiding suspenders under a T-shirt so that your pants don't fall down?

But there's a silver lining:

As Brooklyn Street kids, we spent summer nights playing tag. Being the slow guy, I was always "*it*." So, I proposed to *the gang* that we change the game a little: let me be the steady "*helper*" to whoever was "*it*." An *assistant*. Suddenly the game was more fun, with two taggers chasing everyone. And I didn't have to run as much - I was just the "*assistant*".

All's well that ends well many years later. After a successful career in broadcasting, I also retired as a helper! - An *assistant!* - The *Assistant* Director of Engineering at a flagship broadcast station in the number one market - New York City!

Yeah, it's all about playing YOUR game instead of playing the victim. Now, pass me another zeppole - but please hold the Papa John's.



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