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Living Today

Tuesday, May 13, 1986

The Miami Herald Section B

TODAY

Now here's what you should do ...

During the course of a lifetime, the average person gets plenty of free advice from plenty of sources. There's only one problem in dealing with that sort of thing: You usually get pretty much what you pay for. / 2B.

Best bet

WHAT: Opening of the musical *Dancin'*.
WHERE: Burt Reynolds' Jupiter Theatre, 1001 E. Indian town Rd., Jupiter.
WHEN: Dinner at 6:30 p.m., show at 8:30 p.m. (through June 22).
HOW MUCH: \$41 for opening night; \$32-\$37 rest of run.
CALL: 747-5261.

Fat Squad commandos offer fatties no morsel of mercy

By JOHN CORR

The refrigerator door opens silently in the night kitchen and a sliver of light scores the linoleum floor.

Suddenly, the still dark is shattered:

"Freeze, turkey! Drop it. Now!"

The Fat Squad strikes again.

"We're strict. In fact, we're mean. We're the Fat Squad commandos, and we're proud."

That's Joe Bones speaking. Joe is a nice person, basically, but a bad hombre when it comes to dieters. See, dieters pay him \$300 a day, and he or one of his commandos moves right in for a little intense surveillance.

"We are on the job breakfast, lunch and dinner," he said. "We are even there in the middle of the night. The Fat Squad commandos never sleep."

Bones is the operator of a new business designed to make diets succeed for people who have tried everything else. When you hire the Fat Squad commandos, you don't cheat on your diet. They don't let you.

Also, when you hire the Fat Squad commandos, you can't fire them.

"We move in and we provide the discipline," Bones said. "If need be, we will tie you to the bed

to keep you from breaking your diet."

Your \$300 actually buys you three commandos, each on an eight-hour shift. They go to work with you, come home with you, accompany you on dates.

If you don't want them listening to your every word, they will wear headsets that block out the sound. But they will watch you, they won't go away, and they can't be talked into anything. Once you hire these commandos, you are stuck with them for the term of the agreement, which is at least three days.

"That's the crucial period with dieting," Bones said, "just as it is with smoking."

(You also can rent commandos who won't let you smoke, but so far no one has.)

After the \$900 for three days, you can add extra days for \$250 each. Or you can start out by signing up for a full week for \$1,750.

"Who will pay that kind of money to stay on a diet?" Bones asked. "People who are desperate, people who have tried everything else and can't take the time to admit themselves to a health spa or a fat farm."

"We do the same thing for you, and you can

Please turn to FAT SQUAD / 2B



BILL KITCHEN / Miami Herald Staff

Fat Squad offers dieters no mercy

FAT SQUAD / from 1B

keep working and live at home."

When you sign up, the Fat Squad "shakes down the place," Bones said. That means a thorough search. The refrigerator and pantry are cleared of all foods that are not on your diet.

Other parts of the house, including the bathrooms, are searched for "caches." "You don't trick a Fat Squad commando," Bones said.

Martha Wilcox tried. She didn't think she could make it through last Wednesday, Thursday and Friday without cheating, so she hid a bag of chocolate chip cookies underneath her mattress, up in the middle. A commando found it the first night.

Wilcox, 51, of New York, figures she has gained and lost thousands of pounds over her dieting life. She has tried every imaginable plan — Beverly Hills, Cambridge, Weight Watchers. She even had her jaw wired shut so she could only have liquids. But she got a mouth infection and had to have all her teeth pulled.

In the three days squad members were with her, she went from 270 to 250 pounds — mostly water weight, she thinks. She has stuck to the diet in the few days since the commandos bailed out; she found out she has diabetes and knows she needs to be strict about nutrition. But she rehired the commandos for this week, beginning Wednesday, to make sure she sticks to her resolutions.

So far, the Fat Squad has had 40 customers, and the number of inquiries has risen sharply lately, Bones said. They require each client to work out a diet plan with his or her doctor before the squad takes charge.

It all started several months ago with a conversation among Bones, a friend in the Marine Corps and the friend's wife. The Marine was about 40 pounds overweight and

had tried a long succession of fad diets, crash diets, exercise programs and other tactics.

"What he needs," the wife said, "is a drill sergeant."

Bones is an actor and has a lot of free time between jobs. He volunteered to play drill sergeant.

"I was relentless," he said, "and the man lost 30 pounds. That got me thinking."

The first thing Bones did was recruit some commandos.

"I have also worked in the construction industry, where there is sporadic employment for a lot of people," he said. "So I know a lot of actors and construction workers who can be available to move

in with somebody and watch them like a hawk for a few days."

The commandos are instructed to provide "moral support," but not to get too friendly.

Clients sign a waiver absolving the Fat Squad from blame for "mental anguish" and other problems arising from surveillance, and the client signs a document giving the commandos the right to search for food and confiscate it, and to use "reasonable physical force" to prevent the dieter from eating "unauthorized food."

The Fat Squad can be contacted by calling (212) 254-7878.

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