

Reading: Fat Frank

Meet 'Fat Frank' Banks, a man who was one of the many obese people in America. He is 1.98m tall and he now weighs 115kg but five years ago he weighed more, a lot more.

His life was difficult: he couldn't go to the cinema or theatre because the seats were too small. He couldn't go shopping because people looked at him and laughed at him. He couldn't wash properly and so he smelled bad. It was difficult to stand up from his chair and drive to work.

Mr Banks is 42 years old and a teacher from Chicago. He remembers other difficult times: "I couldn't go to my brother's wedding because the airline wanted me to pay for two seats! I couldn't stand up from my chair and write on the whiteboard. I was always tired."

There were things he could do: he could always eat. "I went to my favourite restaurant a lot because it has a double door. But I took my big chair with me." At his school he helped with the school lunch for the children. The cooks always made too much and they gave Banks a plate of food for helping them. Then Banks went home and had another lunch! In the evening he also had dinner: not one burger but two or three burgers. He drank many bottles of beer and watched TV. He had almost 10,000 calories a day and did no exercise. Banks says, "You get bigger a little at a time. The bigger you get, the less activity you do, and the bigger you get."

Banks got bigger and bigger. When he was 37 he weighed 347kg! His stomach was very large and it was difficult for him to stand up properly. He went to the doctor. The doctor said that Banks had many health problems, Banks had only one choice: diet or death. Banks did not want to die. "I wanted to stay with my wife Thelma, to help my younger brothers and sisters and to see my nephews and nieces grow up."

So he started a diet. He still ate some of his favourite food but he had only 2,200 calories a day. He was on a special diet for two and a half years. He lost an average of 7.8kg a month, and he lost a total of almost 230kg. It was incredible that he lost this weight just by dieting.

Banks is a new man now. He still enjoys a burger or has a beer but he eats less, a lot less. He also walks a lot now too. One day he met some young people who were his pupils five years ago. "They were shocked to see me, but they were so happy that I was not 'Fat Frank!'"