

MOVE!® Patient Success Story

By Ray Follum, Vietnam Veteran and MOVE!® Participant



Ray Follum before Starting MOVE!®

“So, you can have that heart attack now or you can put it off for a few years, or possibly avoid it altogether.” Maybe that’s not exactly what he said, but it is what he meant. And it is not what you want your doctor to say to you.

It was never my goal in life to weigh 300 pounds, although the owners of the all-you-

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can-eat pizza buffet might argue that point. And the owners of the all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet certainly would argue it. I never actually hit 300 pounds, but at one time I was over 280. Every time I looked in that evil bathroom mirror while stepping out of the shower, I knew I needed to drop some tonnage.

I thought I was in pretty good health. I had not taken a sick day from work in over 10 years, my blood pressure was “okay,” and my cholesterol numbers weren’t too bad. The excess weight was really not my fault; I was a victim of heredity, circumstances, and stress. My wife is an extraordinary cook. And when you get to be 60 years old, certain considerations have to be made for “maturity.” Besides, everywhere I looked there were guys just as heavy (or heavier) than me. No, it was not my fault and when you really think about it, not my responsibility.

Then there was Veteran's Day in 2009. My company's newsletter had a *Thank You* column for all who had served in uniform. One of the new young twerps who are taking over the world came up to me and asked incredulously, "You were in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne?" I wanted to kick his scrawny little butt until he cried for his momma, and *then* ask him if he thought I was in the 101st! But I knew he was not being obnoxious, and I was in no shape to kick anyone's butt. It was just that he had seen *Band of Brothers* on TV, and could not believe that this old geezer (who was almost 100 pounds overweight and got winded climbing up a flight of stairs) was ever fit for combat. And he was right.

Serving with the 101st has been a source of pride for me for my entire adult life. This kid made me realize just how fat and lazy I had become, and it was embarrassing. My wife had been pleading unsuccessfully with me for years to get some exercise and lose weight, but I guess she just never hit the right button. Now the button had been punched and I was ready.

Over the years, I had flirted with fad diets and gotten limited and temporary results. This time, I decided the best way to start would be a visit with a doctor, but I really did not have a

personal physician. Some Veteran friends had been telling me about how much they liked VA (Department of Veterans Affairs) health care, so I gave the folks at Fort Meade a call.

It had been 30 years since I had been in the VA medical system. Getting re-established at the Fort Meade VA facility was incredibly easy, and I found myself amazed at the quality of care—including the services of a great doctor. In this age of modern pharmaceuticals, I was certain that he would be able to prescribe a simple pill that would make the excess pounds go away—we have all seen advertising for a wide variety of them, right?

Instead, he recommended I enroll in the MOVE![®] Program. During my initial visit with my MOVE![®] dietitian I was a little nervous. I had managed to lose a few pounds since first visiting my doctor, but it was not going well. Finally admitting that I had a weight problem and asking for help was not going to be easy. But she was exceptionally professional and supportive. She started me off with nutritional information and a plan for a permanent lifestyle change, which included calorie and exercise goals.

My wife was excited. She immediately began planning and preparing meals that tasted good and kept within the caloric guidelines. I started keeping a daily log of calories and exercise rather than guessing about what I thought I was eating.

At first, progress was slow. The food thing was going pretty well, but I was not meeting the exercise goals. I ended up purchasing an elliptical machine so I could exercise daily at home, and that helped me start making some significant headway. Since that first meeting with my MOVE![®] dietitian in February 2010, I have lost 65 pounds.

Although I have not yet reached my final goal, shedding inches from my waistline has given me confidence that I can and will. I would never say that it has been easy: I like all-you-can-eat buffets. But I also like feeling and looking better. Although at first it bothered me, I have to admit that I also kind of like people telling me I am looking good—my geezer-hood notwithstanding. Trimming down and getting in shape has enabled me to do things I haven't done for a long time.

Recently, I went swimming for the first time in almost 20 years. I like swimming, but had been afraid that I would be mistaken for an

inflatable desert island pool toy. It felt great to finally be able to swim laps without running out of breath. And when I got out of the water, nobody threw up.

After a year in MOVE![®], daily exercise has become a habit, and counting calories is a normal part of eating. But any success I have achieved in weight loss must be attributed to my support team. My wife continues to be incredible, fixing meals that are nutritious, balanced, and within the caloric parameters. At our monthly meetings, Casey, my MOVE![®] dietitian, always has advice and encouragement to keep me motivated. Of course, my VA doctor also is a really great guy and caring physician (although he has done some unspeakable things to me). I also must include those friends and fellow Veterans who encouraged me to get back into the VA medical system. I found a program and people who have truly changed my life.

One final thought: you know that skinny guy in the exercise commercial on TV who says his wife gives him “that little wink” more often since he lost weight? —Well, it's true.

- *Ray Follum*

Ray Follum after Participating in MOVE!

***Congratulations
on your
successful
weight loss!***

