

## Set realistic goals for 2008

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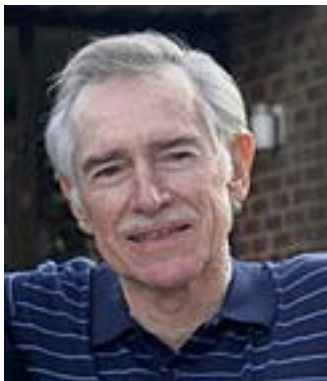
So how did you do, gentle readers, during the great American pig-out in November and December?

I warned in my Oct. 29 column about the possibility of gaining up to 15 pounds during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. On Oct. 26, I weighed 157. When I headed out for a 6-miler Saturday morning, I weighed 156. I lost a pound and achieved my goal over the past two months despite cookies, cheesecake, chips and dips. I made up for my lapses with extra miles and prudence after partying.

In the last 3 miles of my Saturday morning run, I worked on this column by reflecting on new year's resolutions. I made none. I thought more about goals for 2008.

As I set goals, I must be realistic and accept my limitations. As I grow older, I must lower my expectations. The cover of the current issue of *Runner's World* promises me, "New Year, New You," "52 Ways to Speed Up, Slim Down and Run Strong," and "Get Faster While You Sleep (Really)."

Those goals might be realistic if I were younger than 40, but I shall be 69 in 2008. I shall not become a new me in the new year, I will not speed up, I will not run as strong as I did in the past, and I certainly will not gain running speed in my sleep. I can, however, set some personal intermediate and long-range, realistic goals.



My primary long-range goals are that I may continue with my running regimen for the rest of my life and that I may participate in contests into my 70s. On the threshold of my 70s, I am a back-of-the-packer. Sometimes I place in my age group by default: only two or three competitors show up in my age group. My higher power and genes gave me health, discipline and persistence, not athletic prowess or speed, and for those gifts I am thankful.

My 2008 goals include to continue as an active member of the Brazosport Area Road Runners Association and the running community, to assist with area races and to serve as a volunteer for the Surfside Beach Marathon/Half Marathon, the Firecracker 4 and the Brazosport Relay Triathlon. A runner should give back to and actively support the sport that brings him joy.

Another goal for 2008 is that I finish each race I start without falling down or injuring or embarrassing myself. I want to finish at least three sprint triathlons in 2008 so I can be

ranked regionally and nationally by USA Triathlon as I have been in past years.

I hope to log 1,000 running miles in 2008. I logged only 718 last year; I was injured and couldn't run for almost three months. I swam only 31,650 yards in 2007; my goal in 2008 is 40,000. I cycled only 427 miles; my goal in 2008 is 500 miles. These goals are realistic and achievable. I didn't swim more because I'm a wimp about getting into cold water; I didn't cycle more because I procrastinated.

Realistic and achievable long-range and short-range goals for 2008 are better than resolutions I can't live up to. I agree with Robert Browning in "Andrea del Sarto" that "a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" (97-98), but I accept my limitations. To set goals and succeed gives me joy; to fail is a lesson in humility, a learning experience, and helps me to grow and build character.

Toss aside those unreasonable and impractical resolutions. Set realistic goals and do your best, with your limitations, to achieve them and to build character.

**Bill Shaw's running column appears in *The Facts* every other Monday.**