

THE FRONT

Becoming a Steel Magnolia

"I wanted a personal trainer to pull me off the couch, make me do situps and tell me I was outstanding."

My mother always said you have to be rich to be beautiful, especially when you approach what she called "that gray area of middle age." Who couldn't look good with a masseuse to knead away your tensions, a cook to prepare low-calorie/high-aesthetics dinners, and a personal trainer to pound you into shape?

For me, then, the idea of a personal trainer became a symbol for the good life, the kind of luxury only the very wealthy could afford. I resentfully continued my middle-income physical pursuits—aerobics, biking, jogging. Then fate intervened, sidelined me with a foot injury, and induced me to sit on the couch and eat bon bons for several months. My weight ballooned and my self-esteem deflated. With alarm, I realized I had lost my desire to exercise.

That's when I really wanted to be rich. I wanted a personal trainer to pull me off the couch and make me do situps and tell me I was outstanding at the end of the workout. I wanted somebody to be as concerned about my chunky body as I was.

I dragged myself off the couch and visited One to One, Birmingham's first personal training center tucked into the heart of Riverchase. Thankfully, that was the last act of will power I had to exert. Owner Bill Livingston took over from there, introducing me to gleaming black and silver Nautilus weight training machines lining mirrored walls. He claimed they



BY DON NEWTON/LE

were the key to One to One's "Fat to Muscle Makeover."

I, too, could replace the fat in my body with muscle by investing only three, 30-minute weight training workouts per week. Best of all, I'd have a Nautilus-savvy trainer at my side every minute.

Sounded good to me, and while the price wasn't cheap (\$275 for the first six weeks), it wasn't beyond my MasterCard means.

I schlepped through my first workouts in slouchy, fat-shrouding sweats. My trainers, in contrast, wore snappy pink polo shirts and pants that blended perfectly with the pink and black art deco look in the training room. They all worked out regularly, so I considered their bulging muscles as they harassed me into using my own.

Maybe harass isn't the right word, but they had to fight to keep me working. They came to know my point of fatigue, and then pushed for one more rep. In spite of myself, I complied. Honestly, what woman could resist a young, muscular man's undivided attention and encouragement?

Three months later, I'd lost 15 pounds and decreased my body fat by 12 percent. Getting all red-faced on a Nautilus machine still wasn't fun, but my trainer's encouraging repartee and knowing I'd be through in less than 30 minutes kept me going. What's more, for the first time in my life I felt strong.

Maybe this is what it means to be a Steel Magnolia. —Melanie LeMay



Capote's early years revealed in Moates' first book.

A Bridge of Childhood

A frequent Birmingham contributor before she moved to Atlanta, Marianne M. Moates has published her first book, a nonfiction work entitled *A Bridge of Childhood: Truman Capote's Southern Years* from publisher Henry Holt. The book is an investigation of Capote's early years in Monroeville, Alabama, and tales of his early days told by his cousin, Jennings Faulk Carter.