

# People

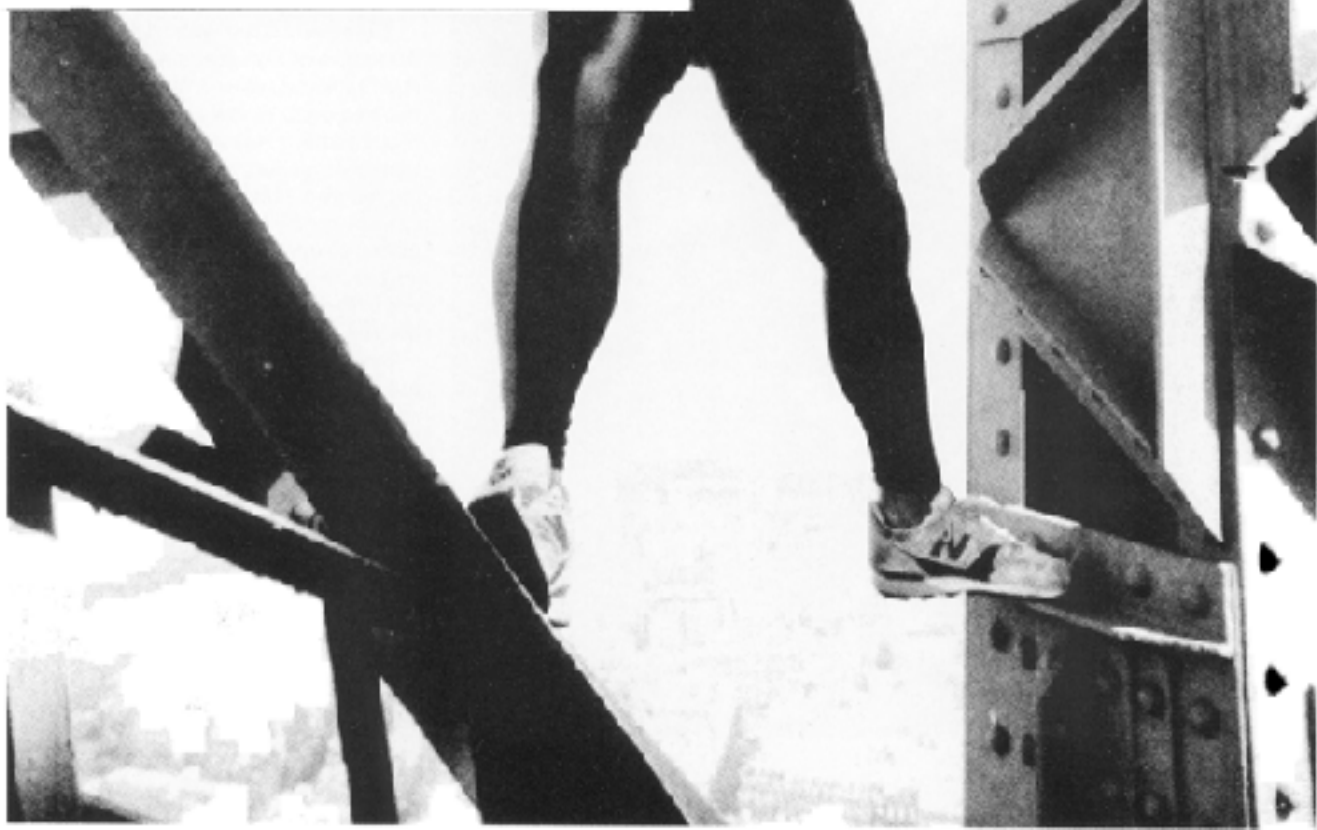
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## Body

**SUPER-FIT CLIMBER STEVE SILVA  
IS A NEW MAN SINCE FIRST HE  
CHOSE TO AIM FOR THE STAIRS**





A sumo-like Silva (tending to his daughter, Laura, in 1979) couldn't walk to his mailbox without becoming short of breath.

Silva took inspiration from the theme music from *Rocky* while running up and down the Eiffel Tower in pursuit of a record.



**S**teve Silva broke into tears when the ordeal was over. The 190-lb. fitness director had just completed a heroic assault on the world record for the vertical mile. He had raced up and down the Eiffel Tower 7½ times, covering a quad-numbing, lung-searing, heart-stopping 9,127 steps in 2 hours, 2 minutes and 54 seconds. The 39-year-old Silva had finished just 1½ minutes shy of the record, set three years ago by a 22-year-old at the Peachtree Plaza Hotel in Atlanta.

Yet it wasn't disappointment over his failure that led to Silva's emotional outburst. "I wasn't crying because I didn't make it," Silva said with a smile a few minutes later. "I was just so glad to finish!" By doing so, he achieved a remarkable personal goal that won't be recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records, but will be appreciated by all those who know him.

Eight years ago, Silva weighed 435 lbs. A high school physical education instructor in Randolph, Mass., Silva had so many weight-related health problems that his doctor told him he would not live to see his newborn daughter's sixth birthday. Dieting off and on, Silva had lost 100 lbs. six times, only to gain it all back and more. Convinced that exercise was the only way he could keep off the weight, he started climbing stairs, since congenital ankle problems made jogging impossible.

Eventually Silva was climbing up and down 30,000 steps a week. While losing 245 lbs. over a nine-month period, he began a new career with Health Management Resources, a Boston-based organization that was supervising his own slimming-down. "The work I'm doing now touches 300 to 400 obese people a year," proclaimed Silva before his upstairs-downstairs record attempt. "Whether or not I break the record is insignificant to me."

Silva says his weight still fluctuates, but only within a 20-lb. range. "I eat more, but more veggies," he says, "and I've learned to have more undereating weeks than overeating weeks." Silva's advice to others struggling with a weight problem: "Make some reasonable changes. Don't expect miracles."

This is practical advice from a man who has more experience than most with life's ups and downs. □