

1700

USA

Mackenzie Wolfson The Weight-Loss Camper

ONE-DAY'S FOOD

IN JULY

CAFETERIA BREAKFAST Apple pancakes (2), each with 2 tbsp of apple filling, 4 oz; with *Smucker's* sugar-free syrup, 1 tbsp • Turkey sausage, 1 oz • Skim milk, 4 fl oz • Orange juice from concentrate, 4.9 fl oz

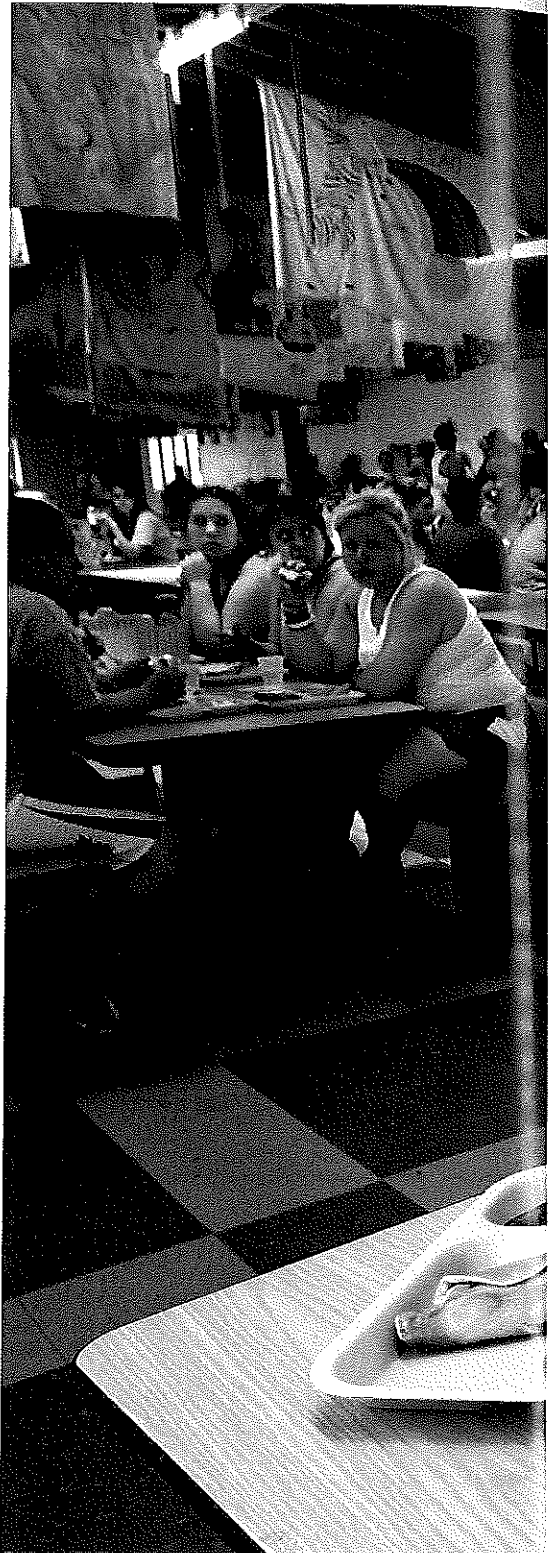
CAFETERIA LUNCH Peanut butter and jelly sandwich: whole wheat bread, 4.6 oz; reduced-fat peanut butter, smooth, 1 tsp; *Smucker's* sugar-free jam, Concord grape, 1 tsp • Celery sticks, 0.8 oz • Baby carrots, 1.3 oz • Ambrosia (fruit salad): mandarin oranges, 0.9 oz; pineapple tidbits, 2 tbsp; shredded coconut, 1.5 tsp; mini marshmallows, 0.2 oz; plain yogurt, 1 tsp

CAFETERIA DINNER Chicken cacciatore: pulled chicken meat (without skin or fat), 2.5 oz; and vegetables, 3.6 oz; cooked with *Smart Balance* margarine, 1.5 tsp • Salad of lettuce, cabbage, and carrot, 1.1 oz; with fat-free Italian dressing, 0.5 tsp • Whole wheat pasta, 2 oz • Sugar-free fruit punch drink, 5.3 fl oz • Italian ice, 4 fl oz

CAMP SNACKS AND OTHER Apple (not in picture), 5 oz • Chocolate pudding (not in picture), 4 oz • Pretzel (not in picture), 1 oz • Tap water, 2.1 qt

CALORIES 1,700

Age: 15 • Height: 5'9" • Weight: 299 pounds



CATSKILL MOUNTAINS, NEW YORK • Low-calorie food choices, rigorous exercise, and nutrition counseling might not seem an attractive combination for a fun-loving teen's summer vacation, but Mackenzie Wolfson returns to weight-loss camp willingly each year, working on a problem she's faced since fourth grade. "We didn't get like this overnight," she says about being overweight, "and we can't fix it overnight." She says that school lunches, paid for in advance at her grammar school, were the beginning of her struggle with weight: "It was buffet-style, all you wanted."

At five foot nine, the athletic varsity softball player is taller than her friends and carries her 299 pounds more gracefully than many at the camp she's come to for the last four years. She doesn't expect, or even want, to ever be ultrathin. "I'd love to weigh 180," she says. "If I was [thinner than that], I think I'd look horrible. In 2004 I was 180, but I was shorter, and I looked great.

Some might say that weight-loss camp isn't working if you have to keep returning, but Mackenzie disavows that notion, saying there's comfort in knowing you're returning to a place where the kitchen is locked up tight. "There's no way I can just go grab some-

thing," she says. She's told her parents she wishes it were more like that at home. "We've emptied out the cabinets of everything that I shouldn't eat, no junk food—nothing worse than pretzels. But I have a very picky sister," she says. "They'd start bringing stuff back into the house. They kept a cabinet in the garage with a master lock on it. And one day I found the code."

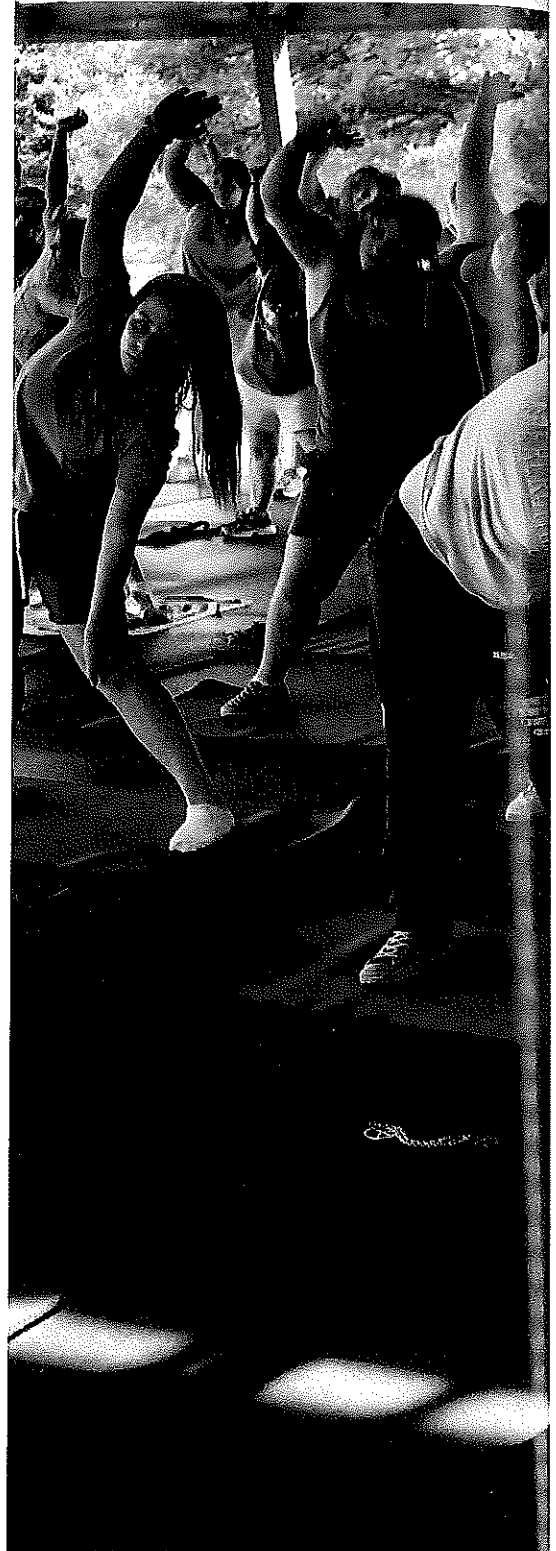
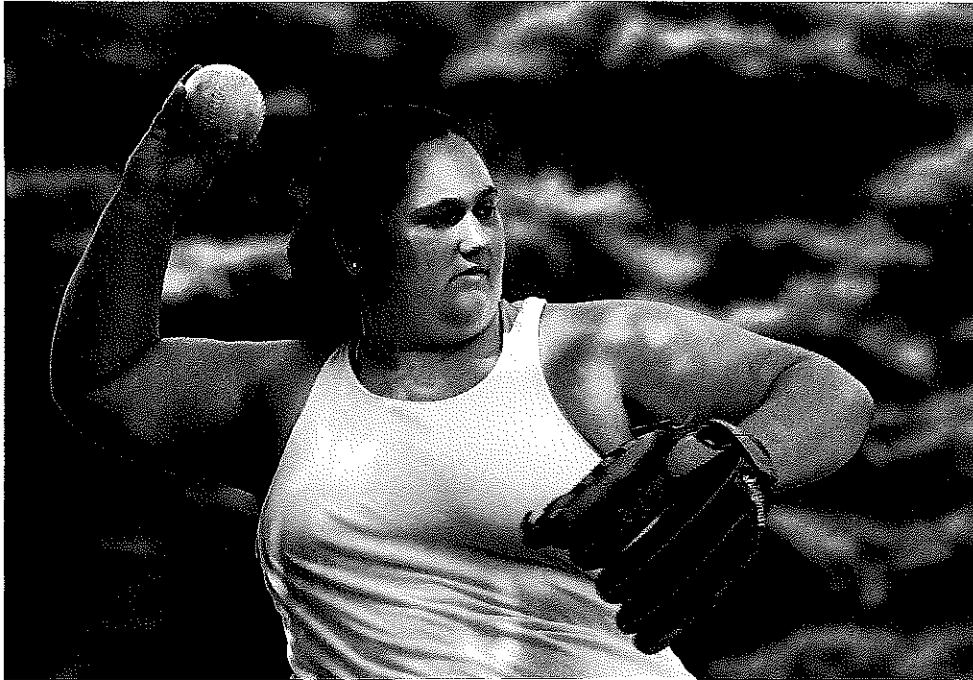
Behavior modification is taught at the camp, but it's hard for a teenager to make health-conscious choices when her skinny friends are eating whatever they want. "After camp I would come home, and for the first couple of weeks I'd be really, really strict," she says. "I'd really try to focus on how I was eating at camp. But once I started going back to school and going out on weekend nights, and I had money in my pockets, whatever I would see, I just wanted it." What kind of foods? "Cakes, cupcakes, milkshakes."

How does she see herself? "When I look in the mirror, I'm not happy, but when I walk down the street and I look down at myself, I see legs and feet like anyone else. I feel normal when I'm walking, but when I see myself in the mirror, I know there's something wrong."



Mackenzie Wolfson in the cafeteria at Camp Shane with her prescribed day's worth of food. Dating back to 1968, Camp Shane is the oldest weight-loss camp in the country and is a heavy investment for parents. There are about 500 male and female campers housed in small cabins on shaded hillsides overlooking athletic fields, a small lake, and the camp's most important building, the cafeteria. "The food here is not bad. It's not what I would order in a restaurant," says 15-year-old Mackenzie. "You know, its been prepared low-fat, low-sodium, but when you eat it you're like, whoa, this isn't that bad. And it's really good for me... But before everyone goes, they pig out the week before. One summer I probably gained about five pounds the week before I went to camp."

Mackenzie, a natural athlete (top left), is an accomplished tennis player and a member of her school's varsity softball team. But in the heat of a hot summer afternoon (bottom left), there's no frenzy among the girls to join the fray in field hockey. "Off the fence, girls!" yells Coach Joey, but nobody moves unless it's time to sub out players. When the coach yells, "Subs!" relieved players run to the sidelines and try to give up their stick to a hapless substitute, with varying degrees of success. At right: After a no-second-helpings breakfast, the first activity of every day at Camp Shane is a stretching class for Mackenzie and 100 other girls.





1700

CHINA

Cao Xiaoli The Acrobat

ONE DAY'S FOOD

IN JUNE

BREAKFAST *Yipin Xuan* cake, 5.5 oz • Danone yogurt, kiwi, 3.5 oz • Apple, 7.2 oz

LUNCH IN SHANGHAI CIRCUS WORLD EMPLOYEE CAFETERIA Zha paigu (pork ribs, breaded and deep-fried), 2.8 oz; with rice flour noodles, 3.5 oz; and stir-fried cucumber, 5.4 oz • Tea egg (hard-boiled egg stewed in salted tea), 1.7 oz • Salty vegetable broth with green onion, 9.8 oz • White rice, 5.9 oz

THROUGHOUT THE DAY *Uni-President* bottled green tea, unsweetened, 16.9 fl oz • Boiled water, 23.7 fl oz

CALORIES 1,700

Age: 16 • Height: 5'2" • Weight: 99 pounds

SHANGHAI • Timing, balance, and precision of movement guide acrobat Cao Xiaoli's day in her practice studio at Shanghai Circus World. The 16-year-old spends most of each day balanced on one arm, gripping the rotating head of a two-foot stand. She sets a stopwatch and balances on a single hand for a half hour, watching her form in the wall-sized mirrors.

Her teacher, Li Genlian, a retired acrobat, adjusts the angle of the teen's feet, twists her at the waist, and uses a fingertip to guide her free arm until it's perfectly extended. The young acrobat lowers herself to the floor and stretches for a bit before her next half hour of balance work.

Xiaoli is focused. This isn't playtime for the teen, and hasn't been since she arrived here at age seven. The young acrobats live 10 to a room in the Shanghai Circus World complex. They practice daily, perform seven nights a week, and are tutored in schoolwork every other day.

Professional acrobat intersects with teenager only when she meets a dorm-mate in the employee cafeteria and they giggle together briefly, amidst lion tamers, daredevil motorcyclists, and the clerical staff.

Lunch choices include fried pork ribs, duck basted in soy sauce, stir-fried cucumber, and tea eggs. Xiaoli will eat something, but she

Cao Xiaoli, a professional acrobat, in the practice room at Shanghai Circus World with her typical day's worth of food. She started her career as a child, performing with a regional troupe in her home province of Anhui. At left: Xiaoli practices.

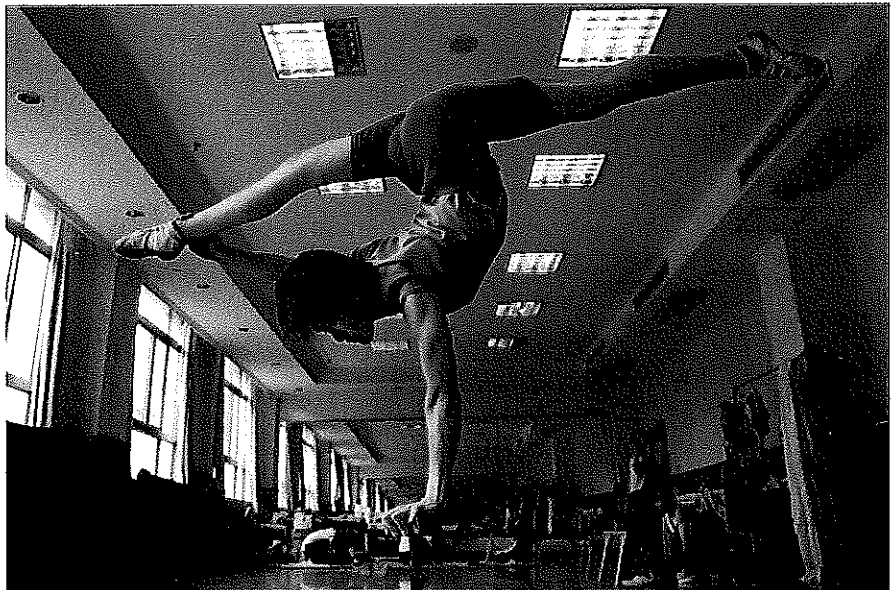
says nothing here inspires her to eat. She saves her appetite for when she's home with her parents. If she has a day off, sometimes her mother, a former acrobat, takes Xiaoli to Pizza Hut or a local Chinese restaurant, or makes her favorite dish, *tangyuan*—sticky glutinous rice balls with red bean paste in a sweet soup.

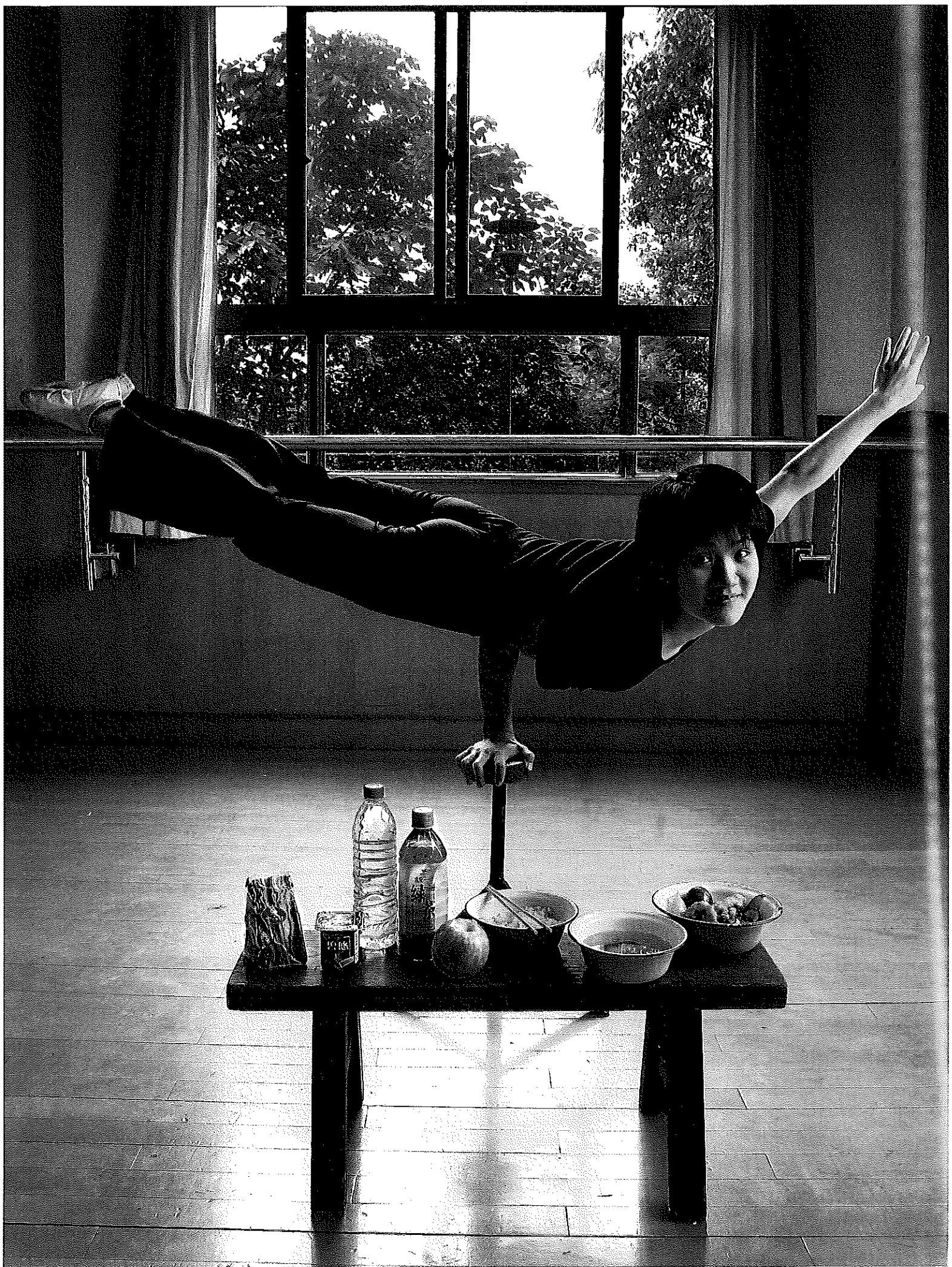
For breakfast Xiaoli and her friends buy yogurt, European-style cakes, and fruit. Xiaoli doesn't eat dinner, because most days there's a nightly show—her favorite part of the life of a professional acrobat.

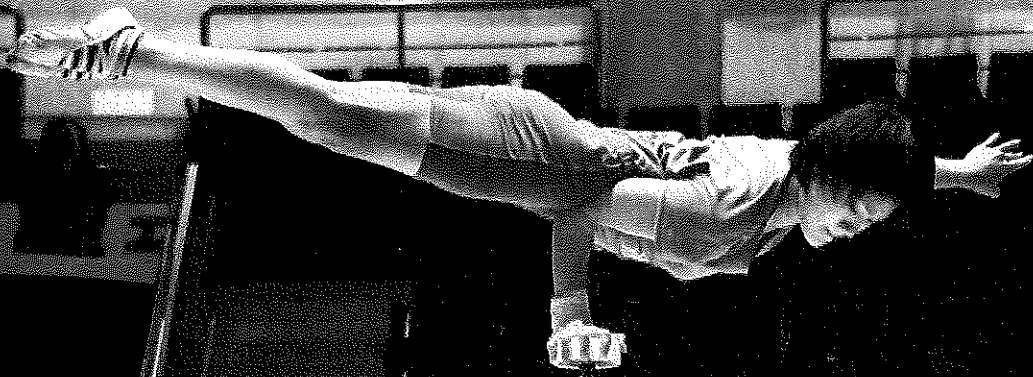
She likes the crowd's reaction when she executes a particularly perilous feat, but not

all of them come off as planned. At one time, Xiaoli was the acrobat who vaulted to the top of a pyramid of chair-balancing acrobats. But one night the pyramid collapsed and her safety harness broke. She crashed down on her head and spent months recuperating; Genlian says Xiaoli still deals with fear.

Now she works in a group of four girls who contort themselves inside an impossibly small porcelain barrel, then languidly roll themselves out to the amazement of the crowd. In her solo performance she sparkles—balanced on a pedestal that rises from the floor 20 feet into the air, in concert with music and light.









Cao Xiaoli practices five hours a day, lives in a room with nine other girls, and performs seven days a week. She says what she likes best is the crowd's reaction when she does something seemingly dangerous. At left: During the day's second practice at center stage, she concentrates on balancing on one hand. Top right: A troupe from Dalian tries out their cycling act. Bottom right: Shanghai Circus World's new domed building seats more than 1,600 people.

