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The hard-to-stomach decade

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NCR Today

With the end of 2009, a lot of people scrambled around, looking for something that defined the decade: the housing bust, the war on terror, perhaps Katrina. But none of that worked for me ? none crystallized in one clear moment what 00?s were all about.

And then I saw it.

In Sunday?s *Los Angeles Times*. Page One. An article about stomach surgery.

For so many reasons, the national obsession with weight seems to symbolize much about the decade just passed: too many Americans indulged in record amounts of processed calories and then sought the quickest way out. To the honestly desperate, the morbidly obese, that answer became stomach-reduction (or stomach-stapling) surgery. This took the need for control and discipline out of the hands on the individual and placed it in the hands of a willing surgeon.

But now, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, the not-mobidly-obese want in on the action -- people with some weight to lose but not a life-threatening amount or diabetics unable to follow a nutrition regimen.

Surgeons are all on-board for this, too ? testing a new procedure that requires no incisions and can be done in one hour on an out-patient basis. A truly quick and painless solution to a problem brought on by years of poor choices.

The Times quotes one New York doctor as saying, ?Surgery is grossly underused. If these procedures prove safe enough, people are going to start having them before their eating behavior gets out of hand.?

And there is the last decade, in a blink. No self-control needed. No analysis or examination required. Just

put yourself under (a pre-emptive attack so to speak), and let someone else take care of the problem.

Maybe the calendar is meaningless and the low-decade beneath us is not really over yet. But maybe it is: a New York Times/CBS News poll released Sunday revealed how Americans are dealing with hard times. Seems we are spending less money on stuff, and spending more time with ... each other.

According to the poll, Americans are forsaking video games and gizmos, to instead take more time doing things with the family: gardening, hiking, cooking, or ?organizational, civic and religious activities.?

People quoted by pollsters expressed the need to be more self-reliant, to take creative control of their free time instead of turning it over to the latest must-have electronic device of the moment.

Said one mother from Miami: ?I?m trying to teach my kids that you don?t need to have expensive toys to have fun.?

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That may be the prime lesson of the last ten years ? whether the toys were huge homes, fast cars, or big meals. Perhaps that mom-from-Miami has delivered words to live by in the decade ahead.

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