My First Half-Century in the Iron Game

ArthurJonesExercise.com

46

In 1969 I called Bill Pearl in an attempt to get him to help me with some research that I was conducting at the highschool in DeLand, Florida, where we used the football team as subjects for testing an early prototype of what later became the first commercial model of the Nautilus Pullover Torso machine. Bill was then operating a gym for hard-core body builders in Pasadena, California. When I told him what I was interested in, he at first hesitated, and then said . . . "Conducting research in a meaningful manner is very difficult." (or words to that effect) How right he was.

About twelve years later, after Nautilus was an established success, then the largest company in the field of exercise machines, Bill visited me in Lake Helen, Florida, where the Nautilus headquarters were located, and I took him on a tour of our facilities. Our largest building was a full two city blocks long and half a block wide, with two stories and a total of about 150,000 square feet of floor space. One room in that building was 150 feet long and 50 feet wide, a total of 7,500 square feet (as large as three good-sized houses), and it was literally filled with hundreds of prototype exercise machines that we had designed, built, tested and then rejected; in effect, these were some of our "failures," machines that did not live up to our expectations.

When I took Bill into that room he was literally stunned; because, I believe, he realized for the first time that we were very serious people. Prior to that visit he probably assumed that our machines were designed with little or nothing in the way of serious research, that they were based upon nothing apart from somebody's wild-eyed theory.

Now, twenty-five years after the first Nautilus Pullover machine was delivered to a customer, we are delivering MedX Pullover machines that are far superior to any of the many earlier models, or to anything similar on the market. In the meantime our competitors continue to sell very poor copies of machines that we introduced more than twenty years ago; and if any of these competitors have ever conducted research of any kind it has not come to my attention, although they certainly are not hesitant about making all sorts of phony and utterly ridiculous claims.

Cybex, for example. has been claiming for years that their machines are "biomechanically correct," while continuing to sell machines that require a position that makes it impossible to perform a full-range movement of the exercise they are supposed to provide. Their leg-extension machine has a seat that slopes backward from the knee position to the hip position, and that, they claim, puts you in a "biomechanically correct" posture for the exercise. Sure. And while a backwards sloping angle of the seat is in fact a good idea, it has nothing to do with providing a correct posture for the exercise. What really matters is the relationship of the seat angle to the angle of the back pad; which, in their machine, is 90 degrees, and which angle makes it impossible for you to fully extend your leg around the axis of the knee. Because, in that position, you are stretching the hamstring muscles across the axis of the hip joints and that produces tension of the hamstrings that makes it impossible for you to fully straighten your legs. A proper posture for that exercise, leg extension, requires you to lean backwards from an upright position in order to remove the tension from stretched hamstrings.

Sit down in a chair, then lean forward until the angle between your spine and your thighs is 90 degrees, and then try to fully straighten your legs while maintaining that posture. Lots of luck; unless you have been a ballerina since the age of about three you will probably find that it is impossible to do.

But even if you can straighten your legs in that posture, the function of the quadriceps is inhibited by tension from the stretched hamstrings, which will greatly reduce your strength in the fully-extended position.

The Nautilus Pullover machine, developed by me, was the first truly "intelligent" exerciser machine ever built; that is, it was designed in an intelligent manner rather than being based upon some half-assed attempt to duplicate a similar barbell exercise. All previous exercises for the largest muscles in the torso, the latissimus muscles, were limited by several serious shortcomings: one, none of these earlier exercises provided anything close to a full range of movement for the exercise; two, all of them involved the much smaller and weaker muscles of the arms, which thus limited the resistance that could be used for exercise; three, none of them provided the variable resistance that was required for proper exercise.

So-called "chinning" exercises provide a range of movement against resistance of less than 150 degrees of rotation around the shoulder axis; pullovers on a bench provide a range of movement against resistance of only about 100 degrees; any form of "rowing" movement provides a range of only about 100 degrees. But most people need, for full-range exercise, a range of movement of at least 240 degrees, and some few people can move more than 270 degrees in that plane of movement; two people that we have tested exceeded 290 degrees of such movement.

One of our current competitors in the medical-testing and rehabilitation market, a company called Isotechnologies, builds a machine they call a B-200; and they claim, among other ridiculous statements, that their machine can test full-range strength of the muscles that rotate your torso. Well, in fact, their machine provides a maximum range of movement of only 90 degrees in that plane of movement, while most people can move 120 degrees while rotating the torso. Just how, then, can you test strength through a range of movement of 120 degrees with a machine that can move only 90 degrees?

The same people are also claiming to test strength by measuring speed of movement rather than by measuring the output of torque produced by the force of muscular contraction; which, of course, is simply one more in a seemingly endless line of utterly stupid theories, and, in this case, a dangerous theory since fast movements unavoidably produce high levels of impact forces which can easily result in an injury. So, again, we see an example of an utterly worthless testing procedure conducted in a dangerous fashion.

And, you might ask, just why have so many supposedly intelligent people been hoodwinked by such stupid claims? Primarily, I suspect, because of a strong bias in favor of any "dynamic: procedure; the very word, dynamic, is, to many people, some sort of a seemingly "magic" symbol. To these poor, misguided fools, being "dynamic" means that it is "better," that it represents "real life" situations.

Having covered these point in rather great detail in previous chapters, I will not belabor them here, but the fact is that any dynamic testing procedure is utterly worthless for any purpose and is usually dangerous. If you believe otherwise, you are misinformed; and if, after carefully investigating the facts, you still believe otherwise, then you are stupid.

But, as it says in the Bible . . . "Cast not pearls before swine." So I am fully aware that any words of mine will frequently fall on deaf ears; nevertheless, unlike many of my opponents and competitors, I do not believe that everybody out there is stupid, so I continue to attempt to tell people the simple truth, in the hope that at least some of them will recognize the truth when exposed to it.

To what purpose, since I no longer stand to either gain or lose much of anything as a result of people's opinions of me? Which, unfortunately, is a question that I cannot answer even to my own satisfaction. To some degree I am motivated primarily by outrage, an outrage brought upon by the outright bullshit that I hear and read every day that passes. So, to a large degree, I remain a "voice in the wilderness," trying to communicate with a largely-deaf audience. Many of whom remain deaf to my words because I offer them nothing in the way of instant, effortless solutions to their problems.

For a long list of reasons that I have tried to cover in earlier chapters, I cannot tell you exactly what to do in order to produce the best results from exercise, and neither can anybody else, but I can, at least, tell you quite a lot of things to avoid, things that have no benefits and that are frequently dangerous; which, perhaps, is "negative" knowledge, but nevertheless has a very real value, may help you avoid problems that could result from following the stupid advice of many of today's supposed "experts."

Quite a large part of the supposedly scientific research papers that are published today are based entirely upon a review of such articles that have been published previously; that is, there is nothing "original" in most of these articles; instead, it is nothing but a restatement of a long list of lies and stupidities that other people published. If that is "research," in any sense of the term, then I simply do not understand the word.

Another problem with such articles is created by the requirement to list one or more so-called "references" for every firm statement that you make; in effect, you can say nothing without providing evidence that a lot of other people have said the same thing previously. Which, of course, makes it impossible to publish anything that actually is new.

Personally, I object to such a style of writing for another reason: just why should I bother to list a lot of utterly stupid statements and contrary theories? One result being that many supposedly scientific writers object to my style of writing; while overlooking just what I have to say, and while failing to understand much if any of it in any case, they object to the "style" rather than the "substance." In a sane society, which unfortunately we are not burdened with, people would utterly ignore considerations such as "source," and "style," while concerning themselves only with "substance." Who says something, or how they say it, is utterly irrelevant, or should be, while what they say should be given close consideration.

Most people who know me at least reasonably well would, I believe, agree that my style is straightforward to the point of being blunt; but, then, as somebody said many years ago . . . "I do not suffer fools gladly."