

Gym Rat Rantings

by Bob Ring



No Man is an Island

Hi, my name is Bob. I'm 66 years old and in reasonably good shape for an older guy. I think of myself as a male island in a sea of women. That's because I'm usually the only man in Lynne O's Building Bones class. Not to complain though – I came for the women, oops make that woman, my much younger soul mate. Pat started over two years ago and after a year had convinced me of the benefits of exercise. So I've been into this for over a year now; here's how I'm doing.

My fellow (can I say that in a class that's 95% female) students – some much older with histories of broken hips, kneecaps, and hearts - put me to shame three times a week. There is not an overweight woman in the class, they all look like they've been doing lunges and wall squats for 50 years. So am I intimidated by all this senior physical fitness? You bet I am, especially by 69-year old Clare, whose exercise station is just in front of me, and who tells me that she has a black belt in Aikido and loves to throw all the men in her martial arts class.

And then there's my instructor Lynne, superhuman Lynne. She must be superhuman because no matter how far back in the crowded classroom I get, no matter how many people I hide behind, Lynne finds me constantly to correct my form. Talk about intimidation, Lynne tosses around 10-pound hand weights like they were balloons. Somehow she has trained herself to give right-left directions while doing just the opposite herself while facing the class. (It took me six months to correctly choose right versus left, while moving.) Lynne constantly demonstrates another superhuman skill: she'll start a routine with 15 reps say, move off stage to correct someone's form, usually mine, and then back on stage to resume the count at the correct place.

I'm impressed with the enthusiasm and esprit de corps in our class. Some of us have suffered illnesses or accidents and returned to class to resume our physical fitness programs. We've all survived periodic shortages of equipment (chairs, dyna bands, exercise balls, hand weights, etc.). We steal what we need from next door. And we all enjoy the jokes that my Pat brings to every class – a chance to laugh a little. You know, come to think of it, the 17th Century poet John Donne was right when he said, "No Man is an Island." Even as the lone man in the class, I feel connected. And I'm sure that some day I'll stop cringing when Lynne barks, "Okay now everyone grab your balls ..."