

Aerobics is Dead: **An Inadvertent Admission** **by Michael Pollock, PhD**

written by Ken Hutchins

Approximately December 20, 1994, I completed and mailed a double issue of *The Exercise Standard*, the official publication of *The SuperSlow Exercise Guild, INC.* This installment (Volume 2, Issue 4—44 pages) of *The Standard* was dedicated to the condemnation of *aerobics exercise philosophy*. This condemnation included criticisms of running, jogging, dance aerobics, stair climbing, and most steady-state activities performed as exercise.

Over the following several days I mailed copies to all Guild members as well as to key authorities and associations within the fitness industry. Of these, I mailed a copy each to Ellington Darden, PhD, Michael Pollock PhD, Dave Carpenter, PhD, and Wayne Westcott, PhD.

Approximately a week later, I phoned my friend, Ellington Darden. I asked him if he had gotten the newsletter. In his familiar terse manner he answered, “Yep.” I then asked if he had read it. Again—“Yep.”

I asked, “What did you think?” Ellington responded with a 5-minute harangue against my use of all-encompassing words and phrases which he contended compromised my credibility in the eyes of some critical readers. He asserted that my statements against aerobics were much more palatable if I avoided words like *always*, *everyone*, and *never*. Ellington was correct about this and had scolded me for this before.

Ellington also asserted that he strongly agreed with the essence of the criticisms I provided against aerobics. He had read the entire newsletter twice and remarked that I should expect a strong letter of protest from Dave Carpenter. Carpenter had phoned Ell and was very upset about my criticisms regarding Michael Pollock, his coworker.

After the conversation with Ellington, I reviewed the passage I had written regarding Pollock. I had not stated anything as fact. I had merely reported a *supposition* by others from years before, *suggesting* that Pollock *might be* too crippled to ever *completely* grasp the benefits of

strength training. The essence of *exercise* is muscle strengthening.

Pollock is a past president of the *American College of Sports Medicine*, the author of several exercise physiology textbooks as well as textbooks on cardiac rehabilitation. I suppose that Pollock is more academically influential than his mentor, Kenneth Cooper, MD. He was one of the original team members of Cooper’s *Aerobics Clinic* in Dallas. In 1975, he was sent, along with Larry Gettman, PhD, to perform independent testing at the original *Nautilus West Point Study*. I also assume that Pollock has assisted directly or indirectly with the development of more exercise physiology degree programs than any other individual. In many minds, Pollock is the premiere exercise physiologist in the United States, if not in the world.

Much of Pollock’s academic work involved, if not directly revolved around, *maximum oxygen uptake testing*. Such testing is the major basis for the *aerobics exercise philosophy*, the philosophy on which almost all of the fitness industry is based.

A week later, Ellington phoned me and asked if I had heard from Carpenter and Pollock. I stated that the anticipated letter had not yet arrived. Ellington then stated that he did not believe that it would be forthcoming. I asked why not. He then explained that he, Ellington, had read the newsletter for the third time. In doing so, he had noticed that it did not seem so unbalanced. He suspected that once Carpenter sat down with pen in hand to write me, he would merely sigh and put his pen down after perusing the newsletter.

After asking for 3 additional copies, Ellington mentioned that Wayne Westcott had phoned and was mad as hell about what I had stated about him in the newsletter. Ellington said that he told Wayne to go back and read it again — closely. He predicted to Wayne that if he did so, he would see that what I had stated was correct. Ellington stated that what I had written was very important and that he wanted to help me in any way that he could.

On January 15, 1995, Ellington phoned to inform me he had met Michael Pollock at the MedX® Seminar on January 13, 1995. The

following is a paraphrasing of Ellington and Pollock's conversation:

Pollock: Ell, I was very offended by what your friend from Orlando said about my friend, Ken Cooper, in that newsletter that he publishes.

Darden: What was it that upset you, Mike?

Pollock: Hutchins just rambled on and never really made any conclusions.

Darden: Come on, Mike. If you are upset, you should be able to identify what you disagreed with in Hutchins' writings.

Pollock: OK. Hutchins accused Cooper of promoting the aerobics exercise philosophy with his Christian evangelism instead of science.

Darden: Well. Did he?

Pollock: Yes. I will have to admit that Cooper's faith overrides the scientific method.

Darden: Mike, I chided Ken for his use of all-encompassing language, but I agree with Ken on his scientific points. For one, we do not believe that maximum oxygen uptake testing is a valid test.

Pollock: You're correct, Ell. Maximum oxygen uptake testing is not a test of anything. Any variable data from this test is almost entirely a genetic aberration.

Darden: Also, we believe that all the aerobic activity and interest promoted within the fitness industry since the late 1960s has not fostered any long-term

vascular health. Instead, it has caused an epidemic of joint and spine injury. What do you have to say about that?

Pollock: I agree.

Darden: Then, Mike, what was it that upset you so much in Ken's newsletter?

Pollock: I guess it's just that Hutchins came off in such an inflammatory tone. You know, Arthur Jones would have a much larger following today if he hadn't alienated so many people in the early days of Nautilus.

Darden: Now Mike, are you going to expect me to believe that if Dave Carpenter had not become so incensed that he placed that newsletter under your nose and said, "Here, you'd better read what Hutchins is saying about you on page 10." — you would have read it?

Pollock: Probably not.

Darden: Mike, I want you to do a favor for me. I want you to go back and reread Hutchins' writings and highlight those scientific points with which you disagree. I want to know what they are.

Pollock: Ell. I don't have time to do that.

I challenge Pollock to confirm these statements publicly to his colleagues in the fitness community. I believe that doing so will ultimately make him more prestigious than he is already.

Copyright © 1995 by Ken Hutchins

The foregoing was printed on 9/27/95. It was sent out as a drop out piece with the October 1995 *Exercise Standard*. Subsequent to receiving this Ellington Darden phoned me to report that Michael Pollock and Dave Carpenter were extremely angered by the following discrepancies:

- I inappropriately ranked Carpenter as a PhD.
- I inaccurately stated that Pollock was at the *1975 West Point Project*.

Apparently worse was the indignation that Pollock expressed in his assertion that I had published this piece “behind his back” (Darden’s words.)

When confronted on the content and implications of the published dialog, Pollock and Carpenter had no comments. They could not disagree. Is it not like the true bureaucrat to quibble over rank, position, and procedural rules rather than argue pertinent issues and principles?

I sincerely apologize for my oversights regarding Carpenter’s credentials and Pollock’s personal history. I am sure—tongue in check—that neither Carpenter nor Pollock have ever made such mistakes.

However, with regard to Pollock’s indignation, I only remind him that there is no secrecy involved as he was sent a copy as was every reader worldwide who downloads from our Internet Web page. I am under no obligation to ask his permission to advance arguments about exercise.

It is not illegal for me to think, theorize, hypothesize, conclude, or contend principles of exercise. The exercise physiologist ilk persists with the illusion that you or I must have degrees like their own feigned letters to be duly licensed to present exercise arguments. We will see about that. Among the many new vistas that the internet has wrought is real freedom of expression by anyone about anything. Thinking people no longer have to tolerate ideas supported merely by pedantic authority and pompous rhetoric. We will also discover who is sincerely interested in learning something about exercise.

—Ken Hutchins 9/13/1996.