



Pool Provides Powerful Workout

Combine the seriousness of Sgt. Vince Carter and deadpan humor of Bob Newhart, and you may come close to describing the instructional style of Larry Wood during his water aerobics class.

The class goes through a steady pace of exercises for 50 minutes under sunny skies and the beautiful natural surroundings of Savannah Center's sports pool.

Larry keeps the class going with a challenging regimen interspersed with light banter.

"Almost through with the easy stuff," Larry said, 14 minutes into the class.

The "easy stuff" is a combination of cardio, stretching and strength-building exercises labeled with colorful names like washing machine, cowboy kicks, rocking horse, Incredible Hulk and jumping-frog jacks.

"The rest period is almost over," he quips after four long minutes of jogging.

Larry's strong sense of discipline and drive from his military experience combines with a dry sense of humor to provide the positive atmosphere the exercise class needs to make the most of their water workout.

"I like to tease and harass them a little bit. You want to make it fun. We get a lot of laughs," Larry said.

Maureen Nelson, who has been with the class since Larry started teaching in July 2004, agrees.

"He's very consistent with the classes, and demanding, but very funny, too," Maureen said.

Larry has no problem admitting that he provides a high level of motivation in the class.

"I'm kind of a jar head out there. I keep the people going. I watch what they're doing and keep them motivated," Larry said.

Maureen believes that Larry's drive comes from his desire to help people.

"He's incredibly committed, a rare individual," she added.

"When I started the class, I was beginning to have problems with arthritis," the Village of Santiago resident said.



Above: Maureen Nelson raises the water weights high while counting out the repetitions. Left: Larry Wood leads the class in a long set of jumping frog jacks.

The workouts have helped reverse the pain and stiffness she was feeling in her joints, and Maureen feels good when she keeps up her workouts.

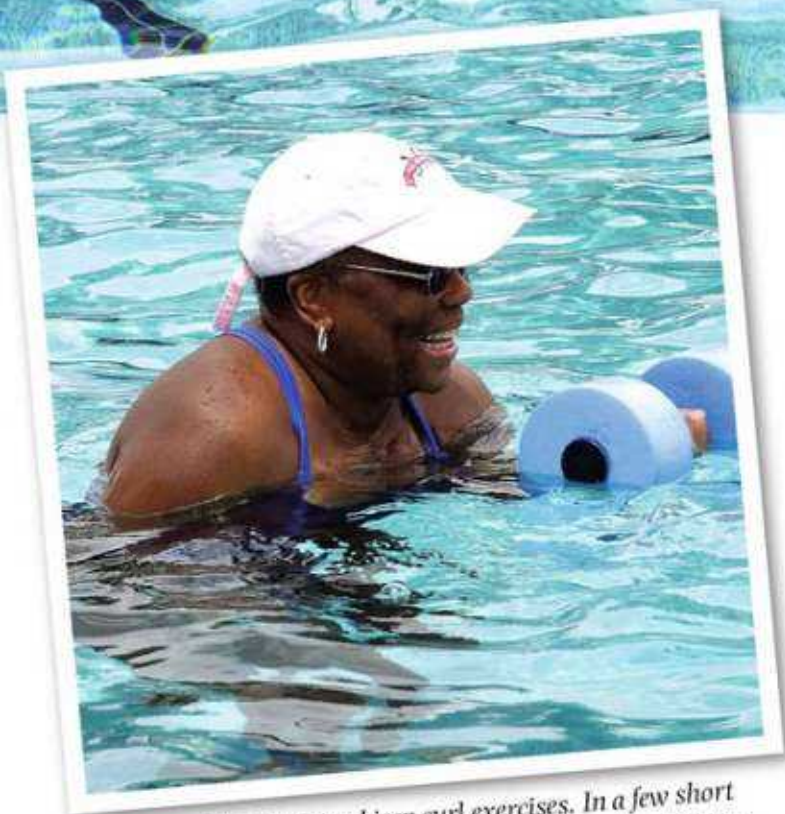
"I'm almost obsessive about being there," she said of her class attendance.

Many others in the class have had similar experiences.

"Everyone agrees that the workout is challenging but worth it. It's an integral part of our lives in The Villages to keep us going and keep us active," Maureen said.

Sylvia Klotz, of the Village of Lynnhaven, is a newcomer to Larry's Water Aerobics. She is no stranger to water exercise, but was looking for a more challenging class.

Sylvia appreciates the intense workout Larry provides.



Sylvia Klotz is doing bicep curl exercises. In a few short weeks, Sylvia noticed a positive impact to her health from participating in water aerobics.

"I love it. He's great. He really works you. I love the extra repetitions that we do," Sylvia said.

She also appreciates the convenience factor.

"I love the fact that all we have to bring is ourselves. The weights are provided by the center," Sylvia said.

She also noticed some positive results after just a few classes.

"I'm walking better, I noticed after the second time," Sylvia said.

Larry believes that effort directly relates to results.

"People that come to my class who have been to other water aerobics classes say my class is very challenging. It's an advanced level, but you can perform the exercises at any level. It's the amount of exertion you put into it that makes it difficult," Larry said.

"I tell them it's my reward to watch them suffer, but it's really to hear the good reports," he said.

Larry himself had a hip replacement about 18 months ago.

"If you've had injuries or surgery, this is a good rehabilitative exercise," the Village of Belle Aire resident said.

He noted that resuming his class was very helpful to him in completing his rehabilitation and resuming normal movement in his hip.

"When you've recovered enough to resume working out, water aerobics can provide a less stressful but challenging way to resume strength and mobility," Larry said. "It's easier on the joints. I can get a full-body workout without the stress on the body. There's less risk of injury. It's also a full cardio workout."

He believes that working out in the water rivals what can be accomplished in a gym.

"I like an intense workout. The workout program I use works every area of the body and it does it in a very logical way. Water aerobics is about as intense of a workout as you can get like in a gym using weights; the difference is you don't have gravity pulling you down, you have the resistance of the water," Larry said.

Safety is also a priority with any exercise class. Larry emphasizes knowing one's limits.

"I caution them when they start the class to listen to their bodies. If they feel they are overexerting, they need to stop and get out of the pool or rest in the water," Larry said.

Being outdoors adds enjoyment to the experience, but brings a few extra precautions. Participants need to protect themselves from the sun while being in the pool for the duration of the class.

"A wide-brimmed hat is a good idea. Sunglasses and sunscreen are a must," Larry said.

Larry stresses correct form rather than speed to get the best results.

"It's more important to do the exercises slower and more correctly than to go fast. Your pace will increase with time," Larry said.

Newcomers will have an adjustment period with water aerobics, just like any new fitness routine.

"If you're new to water sports, you may experience soreness, but that should subside," he said.

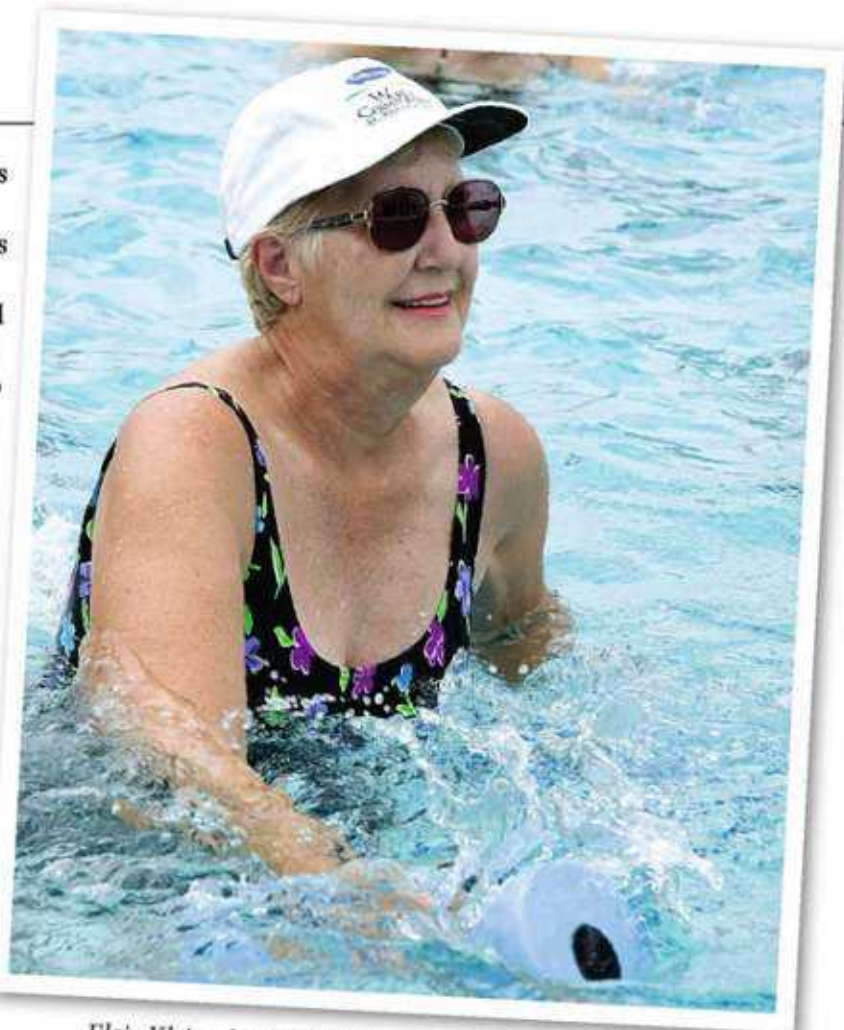
Larry said that the adjustment period is relatively short and that there is plenty of support for people who are new to the class or trying water aerobics for the first time.

Maureen agrees.

"Darlene (Larry's wife) is great about helping new people who join the class. People help each other out, too," Maureen said.

She added that the supportive nature of the group extends beyond getting people acclimated to the class.

"We reach out to members who are going through difficult



Elsie Kleinschmidt uses the water weights under water to provide resistance doing arm exercises.

times to try to give them support." Maureen said.

The class means more to her than providing an opportunity for challenging exercise.

"I look forward to the class times, seeing the familiar faces and sharing good news. That's what makes it special," Maureen said.

Every April the group celebrates Larry's birthday by sharing a cake brought by Darlene.

"It's a very dynamic and interactive group. A really nice group of people," she said.

Larry Wood's Water Aerobics
2 p.m. Monday,
Wednesday and Saturday
Savannah Center sports pool

For more information, please call
Larry Wood at 259-8950
or visit the class' Web site at
geocities.com/larrysaerobics.