

Photo by Jay Janner

Kirsten Brekken, manager at the Waist Basket, says the club offers the latest in weight machines, called Hydro-Fitness Equipment. Instead of free weights, the Hydro-Fitness machines use a person's own resistance and a hydraulic mechanism. Because passive hydraulic resistance is used, the bar stops immediately upon release making it safer and quieter than free weights. She said the women especially enjoy the machines because they tone rather than build up the muscles too much.

A three month membership is \$68 while a 12 month is \$17.25 per month that can be automatically withdrawn from a person's checking account.

Cathy Lyles, owner and instructor at the Jazzercise studio, offers a class with variations on the basic aerobic moves.

"Jazzercise puts a lot of jazz dance moves in the choreography," Lyles says. "It makes exercise more fun and less boring."

The Jazzercise classes are not divided into levels. The program combines aerobic dance with muscle toning and conditioning into a total fitness routine. It is designed for people of all ages because the moves are easily modified for those who want a tougher or lighter workout.

There are more than 3,200 franchised Jazzercise instructors worldwide. Founder of the world's largest dance fitness organization, Judi Sheppard Missett, still choreographs all the routines Lyles and the other instructors receive.

Lyles has taught in the Bryan-College Station area for 10 years, and today, 75 to 80 percent of her members are A&M students.

Classes are \$22 per month for two classes per week, \$30 for three times a week, and \$36 for unlimited classes. New members get one week free.

Owner Jay Kraak of Jay's Gym says his gym seems to attract the more serious weight lifters and body builders.

"It's not a social gathering here, really. It's quiet and the more serious trainers can get through their programs with no hassles," Kraak says.

Kraak says he tends to hire people who have worked on his machines for awhile so that they are better able to instruct the members. His aerobics

students, but all are certified and teach Low Impact, High Impact and Combination Impact classes.

Aerobic memberships are \$59, the gym membership is \$69 while both are \$79.

Michael Sessions, a weights instructor at Lifestyles Fitness Center, starts off most new members with the circuit training technique. Sessions said this training system is excellent for beginners to the weight lifting scene.

Lifestyles offers Low Impact, High Impact and Combination aerobic classes, also. They have an in-staff dietitian to help out with nutritional needs of their member.

Sessions says their Concept 2 Egometer rowing machines are very popular too because of their ability to build up the cardiovascular system. Racquetball courts are also available to members.

There is an initiation fee of \$60 for students and dues are \$24 a month. If members want the right to reserve racquetball courts up to a week in advance, their dues are \$32 a month.

Aerofit's aerobic program separates it's Low Impact class into Beginner and Intermediate levels. Classes advance upward in difficulty and include The Workout, a high impact class that includes a floor routine for toning abdominals and legs, and the All-Out Aerobics, one full hour of aerobic dance.

In addition to a full weights area, Aerofit offers indoor basketball, volleyball and racquetball, as well as a three-lane-wide track for power walking.

Student fees are \$95 per semester.

David Stringer, sales consultant at 24 Hour Gyms of Texas, says their aerobics are classified into five levels: Low Impact, High Impact, Beginners,

instructor Mendoza, one of the two male aerobic instructors at the gym, says he's noticed more males are fitting aerobics into their schedules.

"Compared with two and three years ago, a lot more males are interested in aerobics," said Mendoza, who has an Exercise Technology degree from A&M. "The fact that we have two male instructors reflects that interest."

24 Hour Gyms of Texas offers weight instruction in free weights as well as Universal, Nautilus and Icarian machines.

Craig Pitts, a weights instructor, is a Health major at A&M. Pitts says that weight lifting is no longer a male domain.

"Weights are becoming more popular with the women," Pitts says. "For example, five of the seven members coming in for weights instruction today are female. There's a lot of interest in toning up."

Aerobic memberships are \$69 per semester, membership in the rest of the facility is \$59 while both can be obtained for \$79.

The MSC University PLUS program also offers an aerobics program, but at greatly reduced costs to students and the public--\$18 per six-week session for students, \$20 for non-students. This is a twice a week class offered in Low Impact, Intermediate and Beginning levels. Classes are taught by certified instructors in the MSC basement near the Rumours snack bar. Registration is in the University PLUS office in the MSC basement or by phone at 845-1631.

If all of this starts to muddle your mind, or starts to turn you off of looking for a gym, don't panic. The Washingtonian's Good Bodies issue

when looking for a fitness club that suit your needs:

-Look for a location within 20 minutes of your apartment, dorm or workplace. If getting there takes too much time and effort, you're less likely to go work out.

-Remember that a "lifetime membership" is good for your lifetime or the club's. Health clubs do go out of business.

-Make sure to visit any gym or aerobics studio at the time of day you plan to use it. Some gyms are very crowded at lunchtime or right after work or school.

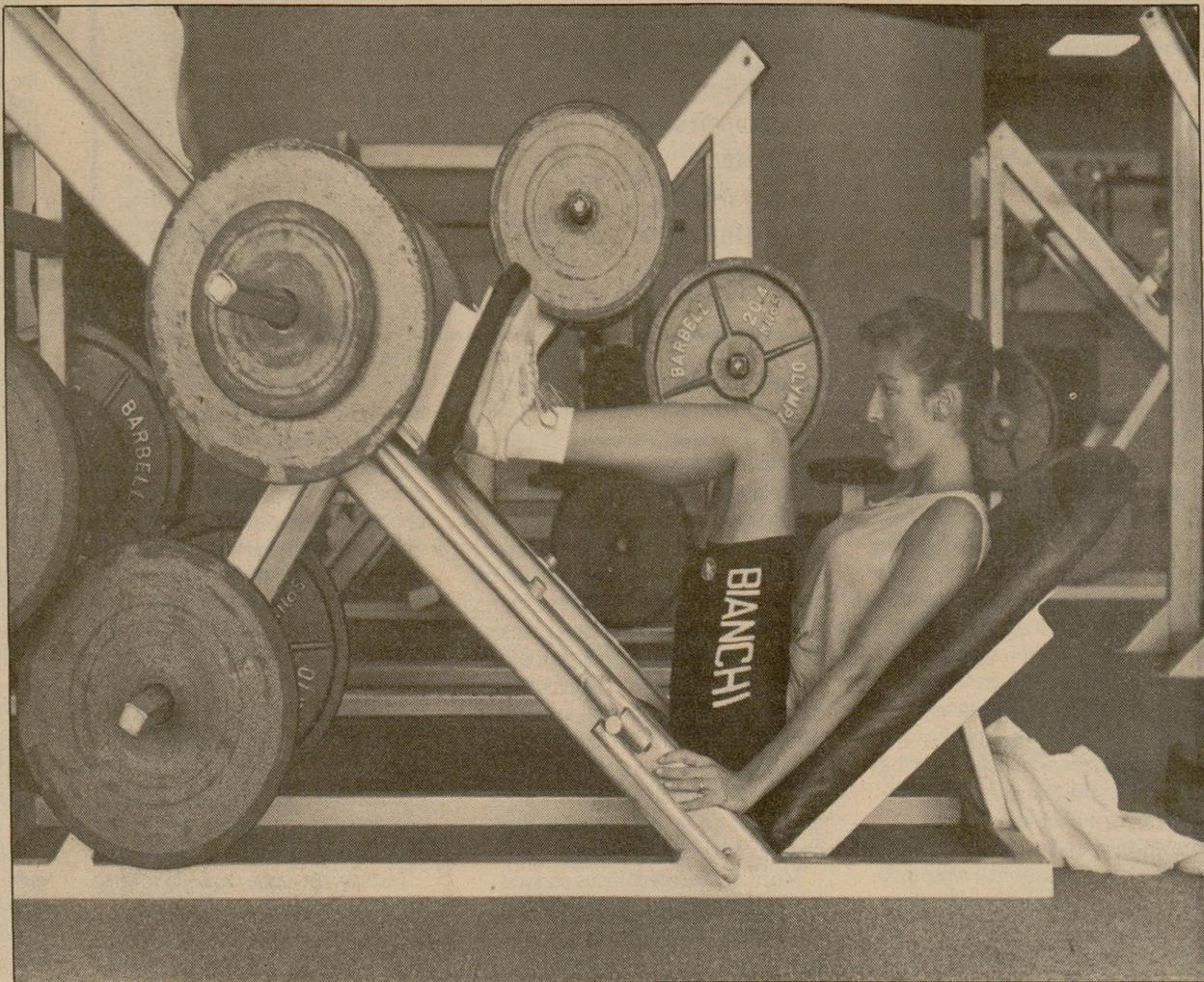
-Ask about the staff's training. Good instructors usually have degrees in exercise physiology, physical therapy, kinesiology, or a related field, or are certified by an organization such as the International Dance-Exercise Association, the American College of Sports Medicine, or the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America.

-Try to get a free first visit or pay for a single visit so you have an idea of what the facility offers. It's also a good idea to get feedback from several members on what they think of the club.

-Don't let high-pressure salespeople talk you into buying a membership you really don't want. If you do sign a contract, make sure it specifically states what facilities are available to you and when. Ask about payment plans, policy on missed classes, and hidden costs such as locker and towel rental.

If you are still in doubt about a gym's reputation, check with the Better Business Bureau or a local consumer protection agency.

Remember, keeping fit is now a matter of life or death.



A&M former student Tiffany Bryan works out on the leg press at Gold's Gym.

Photo by Jay Janner