

# **My Vintage Leg Workout**

**By**

**Alan Palmieri**

It was a hot September afternoon and I had set up my homemade equipment in the carport to work legs. Equipment is a real stretch of the word as all I really had was a Weider adjustable bench and a pair of my dad's wooden homemade sawhorses that I used for squat racks. That was rough going in the heat and having to start squats in the bottom position just to get the weight up didn't make things easier.

Looking back it was really a good time and a great atmosphere. In later years, talking with many bodybuilders from that era, we all seemed to have trained in one "dungeon" or another and all had fond memories. It was special, nothing chrome, no air-conditioning, no quality carpeting, and no special lighting could compare with the fresh air and rough homemade equipment.

My set up was crude, maybe unsafe and prehistoric by today's standards but back then I was training in the best gym in the world. I would read the various magazines and instead of focusing on the workout surroundings pictured, I would visualize being as big as the champions in the pictures. Dave Draper, Larry Scott, Reg Lewis, Harold Poole, Clarence Ross, Reg Park, Steve Reeves, Bill Pearl, Don Howorth, Freddy Ortiz and on and on and on. You know the story. No matter how good a bodybuilder gets or how advanced, all still have hero's. Even though some were my age they served as "role models."

Leg day, here we go... I would always start with a couple of sets of freehand deep knee bends for twenty five reps or so just to warm up. Sometimes I would perform Sumo Squats after the deep knee bends but most of the time it would be regular full back squats

that came next. I would squat down under the bar resting on top of the saw horses and rise up, step out and begin squatting. I had a total of 400 pounds of plates in various sizes and when I performed maximum squats in the carport, the plates would go all the way to the end of the bar. But I didn't use 400 pounds in my squats back then anyway.

Squats as bench presses were two movements I had to make certain I could complete. I had no safety racks and no spotter. Talk about guts. I remember loading the bar and having one heck of a time getting back to the position I needed to in order to come from under the load. If I didn't I would be in the world of hurt. The foolishness of youth tied with the determination, desire, and enthusiasm of a young bodybuilder is more explosive than some military weapons. I wouldn't do today what I did back then, not even once.

Four or five sets of heavy squats pumped my quads fully. I didn't have a leg extension leg curl unit so the only thing I could do for my hams were; stretching and leg curls with a dumbbell held between my feet. This was difficult to say the least especially since no one was around to put it between my feet. I was never able to use a heavy weight employing this method but I did the best I could when I worked out at home. It was different when I went to a commercial gym but back then the carport was my real main stay.

I would then proceed to Sissy Squats for four to five sets of around twelve to twenty-five reps. This varied as sometimes I did them free hand and other times I would use a bar or hold a plate on my chest. There are several different ways the Sissy Squat can be performed and even back then I incorporated the variations in my workouts.

Standing calf raises without a rack is tough to do but I did them. Resting the bar on the sawhorses as for squats, I would rise up, step out onto a 2x4 and begin to perform calf raises. Unfortunately this method required more concentration on balance than on the muscles being worked. Later on I discovered I could move in close facing a solid wall and the large plates could be pressed against the wall for stability as I went up and down.

This helped but remained a crude way of performing calf raises. I would sometimes get someone to assist and perform Donkey Calf Raises.

I can still feel the humidity and smell the dust from those days of hard leg workouts. For some reason the summer heat stands out more than the cold of winter. I guess because in the winter, squats and leg work actually brought about warmth and kept the cold at bay. The down side in the winter was heavy breathing the cold air; at times it would burn the throat and lungs. Ah yes, the memories that are etched in my mind. It's a love story and we all have one to share.

Time to stop reflecting on the past and focus on the future... time to squat, heavy – deep and in perfect form.

[www.PalmieriBodybuilding.com](http://www.PalmieriBodybuilding.com)

© 2006 Alan Palmieri