

# **Perfect Practice, Perfect Form, Perfect Biceps**

## **A Farmer and Logger's High Tension Approach**

**By: Nathanael Morrison**

When I was growing up in Northeastern Vermont, I was a farmer and logger. My brother, Lawrence Riendeau who is eight years older than me started bodybuilding and strength training when he was sixteen. When I got to high school we used to lift in his basement. Everything but the bars and the plates were home made. Lawrence is by far the best instinctive lifter I have ever known. He has always been a stickler for form and proper technique, a fact that his body displays well. On this particular day we were doing some heavy barbell curls Thanks to him, I was curling over 100Lbs in good form! But today he had something special in mind. I always dreaded this, and it always started out the same, "Hey Nathanael, try this...."

We have all seen those guys in the gym who load up a bar and they start to curl with the worst possible form! It's disgusting to watch! Well, Lawrence had a drill designed to put folks like that in their place. In the basement he had steel and concrete pillars that held up the center structures of the house. He had me lean against the pillar so that my spine from the head to the butt was straight and flat against the pillar. My feet were slightly forward to create pressure pushing me into the pillar. Then once he was satisfied that my position was right, he handed me a 45lb bar. "Keep the elbows pinned to your side, head straight, curl the bar up but do not let your elbows move. Squeeze your Bi's at the top, come down slow. Try it" I hated it when he said that! But I'll be damned if that wasn't the best Bicep work out I ever did! Years later I would learn just how good my dear brother was. He had stumbled upon high tension and periodization by himself years earlier and this was his latest creation, which I call the Pillar Curl.

Now normally I do not promote bodybuilding, let alone curling. But I know all too well that many of you out there are going to do curls anyway and I want you to do it right, do it safely, and get results! Are they good for combat fitness? Not a chance.

Here are the details of Lawrence Riendeau's **Pillar Curl**:

### **The Position**

Find a pillar, wall, squat rack, whatever. Lean back against it and get your back aligned and flat against it. Your feet will be spread apart slightly more than shoulder width apart and your feet will be 6-12 inches from the pillar/wall. You may keep a slight bend in your knees. Squeeze your glutes and tuck your pelvis under. You will feel your lumbar spine straighten out. This will probably allow you to scoot your feet back closer to the wall which is good because you don't want to interfere with the bar and the range of motion. Once you are comfortable and confident that you can get in and out of this position, get the bar.

### **Begin!**

With Bar in hand, get into the position. Now, imagine there is a steel rod that connects your elbows, going right through your body. No matter what, your elbows are fixed in place! Now, squeeze the glutes, inhale and brace your abs as if you are going to take a punch (this can be arranged!). Grip the bar with a death grip, curl your wrist slightly, and flex your lats. You will notice now that the entire body from the Pelvis up is tensed. Keep it that way! Now, curl the bar as far as you can. Remember the elbows may NOT move! Be sure to use power breathing by forcefully exhaling on the way up. Do not exhaust the entire breath on the way up. Martial artists call this "matching the breath with the force". Just don't run out of air on the way up.

At the top you may pause, release the rest of the air, inhale again, pressurize again, and do the same thing on the way down. Be sure to pause at the bottom! Reset for the next rep and do it again. It is vital that you lower the weight slowly and under control. If you just drop it you will possibly injure your self and/or drop the bar. Do not be sloppy! Be tight and controlled!

This drill may also be done with dumbbells. Just keep your legs closer together.

### **Kettlebells**

Gireviks rejoice! This drill can be used with Kettlebells as well. In fact, those of you not satisfied with a mere curl can turn the Pillar Curl into a great multi-joint compound lift. My favorite is adding a military press to the mix. At the top of the curl, rotate your palms in and you are in position for the press. Get a breath, pressurize and press overhead. If you want to add a new dimension of misery to the mix, do it with two KB's. Worse still, with two KB's, curl and press one, hold it at the top and bring the other one up. Bring the first one down to the curling start position and play with the various combinations of torture for your repetitions. Be sure to bring it down slow because there is little or no cushioning here.

### **Reps and sets**

In accordance with Russian thinking, Gireviks and those seeking strength should only do 3-5 sets, 3-5 reps. Those looking for size should increase their reps to 6-12 but I encourage you to stay away from failure. In this drill it can be dangerous if you drop the bar on your legs!

Comrades, ENJOY!