

UNL students brainwashed by tide of daytime TV

By Jeff Unger

From light-hearted moments to those of utter despair, the lives of doctors and lawyers, lovers and louses form the core of a genre of television program that draws views of all ages.

Morning through afternoon each weekday, millions of women and men stare at a rectangular screen as a soap opera's plot thickens or unravels.

Although plots are slow to change and often bizarre, soap fans continue to watch. This addiction can be found in Nebraska Union television areas.

The sets, often tuned in to a channel showing a soap, are the focal points for numbers of students as they read, write, eat or just hypnotically stare at the screen. Some come and go during the show and others rarely move their eyes, even during a commercial.

In search of the answer to "why do students watch soaps?", I sat in each of the television areas and inquired of others there, sometimes wishing for more commercials so I could get more attention.

"I don't know why I watch them, partly out of habit, I guess," said Pam Keeler, a UNL junior. "I like to sit down and watch them after I eat. It's an escape for an hour before I go to class."

Gail Kitto said she watches soaps because it is something to do between classes and said that after awhile they are addictive.

As another reason for watching them, she said "some deal with everyday life."

"Some are so far-fetched, and others hit real life situations," said another woman, who asked not to be identified. "You can watch other peoples' problems instead of your own."

Mark Pyke and Keith Thomas had other reasons for watching. Pyke said that in high school, he and some friends would watch soaps during study hall and that he became attached to one of the characters and has been watching the show since.

"They're not for me," Thomas said, as he occasionally stared up at the screen. "I think they're very unrealistic even though some people would argue with me. The only thing I like about them is that some of the people wear some pretty nice clothes."

He said that he does not know any soap opera names but watches them because they are on when he is in the union.

Facing possible chastisement from friends or family seems to be the least worry of soap fans.

"Yes, I get comments, especially from guys," Keeler said. "Some people even call them garbage shows, but they are just as believable as 'Happy Days' and 'Laverne and Shirley,'" she said.

Pyke said he receives little ribbing and that he knows many people, men and women, who watch soaps. He also said that soaps are unique.

"You don't have to watch soaps everyday. Other shows you can watch any time and not feel lost. You can miss soaps once in awhile and not lose track of a character."



Photo by Mark Billingsley

Tara and Chuck are in love, but Donna got hit by a train, not to mention Samantha, who is disfigured for life, but at least it brought Brad and Jenny back together

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