

Arts & Entertainment

Lifeguards watch TV on their day off

By Lise Olsen
Senior Reporter

Perched high above the pool, with bleached hair and a deep tan, the stereotypical lifeguards twirl their whistles. From behind those Foster Grants, four UNL student lifeguards provide an inside look at the poolside panorama.

Sam McFarland, a senior secondary education/math major recalls her first week at Eden Pool, 46th St. and Antelope Creek Road, as a childhood dream come true, and a time of revelations. On her first day on the job, a friend of the pool manager's stripped down to his birthday suit and began bouncing on the board, McFarland said.

"I just kind of hid my head," McFarland said.

Peggy Hart, a junior math major has also had some surprises in her two

summers at Elks Club Pool, 1700 S. 70th St. Most swimmers have noticed flies in the "chlorine soup", but recently the Elk's staff rescued a large spider and made it a pet. Other items that have "drifted in" include a bicycle, a bar of Ivory soap, along with less sanitary buoyant objects, Hart said.

Last summer, during a bout with boredom, Hart learned to swing her whistle from each of her fingers and toes.

"Once a brother and sister brought in a whole roll of fishing line and unraveled it underwater," Hart said. "You'd swim and you wouldn't see it and get caught. It was tangled all over the place."

The occasional diversions can help to alleviate the monotony, Hart said. However, boredom is a job hazard, lifeguards agree.

When it gets dull at Arnold Heights pool, 4000 N.W. 46th St., Adam Amland, a sixth year undeclared senior, plays Trivial Pursuit, listens to the radio and plays practical jokes on co-workers. Occasionally the antics are extreme. Once Adam and some friends put a dead frog in a fellow lifeguard's water jug. She took a big thirsty swig before noticing the amphibian, he said.

"She was kind of pissed off at us for awhile," Amland said.

Last summer, during a bout with boredom, Hart learned to swing her whistle from each of her fingers and

toes. "It's not easy to do and get a good rhythm going," Hart said.

Another job hazard is sunburn, especially early in the season, McFarland said.

"My nose has peeled already about ten times," she said.

Even in midsummer heat a guard might sit in the sun for nine hours or more. "You feel zapped of energy," McFarland said.

Despite the drawbacks, all the guards said that job benefits outweigh the burdens. "You can be outside and get a tan, but you're actually getting paid for it," McFarland said.

Hart, a former lifeguard, enjoys the freedoms of being a pool manager even more.

"Part of what I do for a job is what people do on their days off," Hart said. "On my day off I watch T.V. inside."

However, the fun is tempered by responsibility. Hart, McFarland and Amland have all been involved in assisting "swimmers" to safety.

"It's good to know that you're needed," Hart said.

Enforcing rules, even rules they personally disagree with is another part of the lifeguard's duties.

"I get really sick of yelling 'walk, don't run,'" Amland said.

Sometimes when they're really feeling like spoil sports, the Elk's lifeguards will tease the kids. "Our big thing now is 'No smiling!' or 'No having fun!'" Hart said.

The most irritating part of Woods Pool lifeguard Doris Spieker's job is repeating rules over and over to kids who know what they are supposed to be doing, she said. Because of the size of the pool and crowded conditions, rules



David Bourke/The Nebraskan
Angi Gonyea, a UNL sophomore accounting major, lifeguards at Woods Pool on a hot day last week.

at Woods have to be more strictly enforced, Spieker, a senior home economics major, said.

Despite their position as "enforcers" most guards find time to make friends with their mostly youthful clientele.

"I've gotten a few proposals from 12-year-olds," McFarland said. "All lifeguards have their groupies."

In her younger days, lifeguards were her personal poolside gods, McFarland said. After four years of chlorine bugs, sunburn and nose cote, she no longer sees her job through rose-colored glasses (although she does have a neon pink pair.) Yet, the veteran lifeguard plans to return for a fifth summer before looking for a job in the "real world." "I wouldn't want to do anything else," she said.

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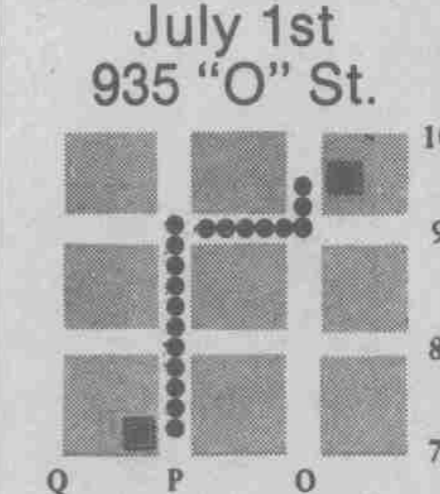
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