

CHEAP

Thrills

STORY BY JASON HARDY  
PHOTO BY MIKE WARREN



HANNAH VOELKER, 14 (left), Elizabeth Lee, 14, and Rachael Wells, 14, all from Lincoln, ride the Cliff Hanger at the Nebraska State Fair in Lincoln. This is the first year the Cliff Hanger has been at the fair, and all three girls said they thought the ride was "a lot of fun." "You feel like you could fly right off the ride," Wells said. She said she had been on the ride five times.

Fair fun comes with side effects

B.F. Skinner became famous for a theory that said learning is basically a change in behavior resulting in an individual's response to stimuli.

Skinner found that mice would learn not to press a button that gave them an electrical shock.

While the mice learned their lesson, I obviously did not.

On Saturday night, I went back to the Nebraska State Fair for yet another night of corn dogs, cotton candy and incredibly nauseating rides.

Of course, this time was to be different than trips in the past. This time, I was to test my new theory: It is impossible to enjoy the attractions of the State Fair midway without spending a small fortune.

My findings were definitely mixed.

It doesn't take long to fall into the money pit otherwise known as the Nebraska State Fair. From the get-go, parking was a pain. The cheapest lot cost \$2 and wasn't all that close.

I found a lovely residential area to park in and walked an extra five blocks or so. I figured it was worth it,

because if someone wanted to pay me \$2 to walk five blocks, I would definitely do it. So far, so good. No money spent yet.

Then, of course, I got to the gate. Admission for adults was \$5. I decided well before I arrived that I was putting a \$20 cap on all spending for the evening. With \$15 left to spend, I headed for the midway.

This year's midway had all the charm of years past with a few extras to boot. Not only does it still have a number of corn dog and funnel cake stands, it now has a place called "Ninja Beef" (that also sells ninja chicken) and a place that sells the anti-Christ of health foods - fried candy bars. As always, you can find just about any meat product stabbed

on a stick.

Just past the food vendors are the kiddie rides and games, which I quickly passed over in pursuit of something bigger.

However, one thing caught my eye at the last stop of the kiddie section. It was a giant bouncy balloon slide shaped like the sinking Titanic. Kids were climbing up the middle cabin

section and sliding down the deck into a soft, warm and bouncy representation of the North Atlantic. "Weeee. I'm a gonna die."

I bought 20 tickets for \$12 from a lady who kept saying stuff I couldn't understand. She didn't have many teeth.

Please see FAIR on 12

Dancing Grannies shimmy way to audiences' hearts



JANET TAYLOR (LEFT) and Jean Granlund of the Omaha Dancing Grannies twirl umbrellas and tap dance to "Singing In The Rain" in the Open Air Auditorium at the Nebraska State Fair.

SHELLEY MIKA  
Staff writer

Grandmas in blue sequins and high heels aren't a typical sight, but the Omaha Dancing Grannies wear this lavish fashion well.

On Saturday, the Grannies performed at the State Fair in the open air auditorium.

Ranging in age from mid-50s to mid-80s, these grandmothers and great-grandmothers tap danced their way through songs from the '20s, '30s and '40s.

The volunteer group, formed 15 years ago, is lead by Pat Leitch. The group meets on Mondays for about two hours and performs two to four times a month.

The group entertains mostly for senior citizen activities but will perform anywhere, Leitch said, including weddings and bar mitzvahs.

Some of the 10 members have been dancing their whole lives, while others were dancing on Saturday for the first time.

At the beginning of their State Fair performance, the Grannies waltzed onto the stage loaded with props and plenty of energy. Their first number, performed to "Puttin' on the Ritz," included top hats and canes.

But it was during "Singin' in the Rain" that the

cheering started. Here, the Grannies formed two lines, the front row twirling multicolored umbrellas to the right, the back row twirling left.

Hoots and hollers might seem inappropriate, but compared to the act before (an old man and his daughter droning religious tunes), it was an exciting moment.

The audience, not surprisingly consisting of mostly senior citizens and parents with kids on leashes, also enjoyed the Grannies' version of line dancing. The Grannies perked up this number with red bandannas and straw cowboy hats.

The climax, though, came when the ladies donned boas and modestly introduced the next dance as their "comedy number."

"The gentlemen usually get a kick out of this one," Leitch said.

And when the classic stripper song came on, the audience knew it was in for a treat.

The Grannies were having a good time too, which was entertaining in and of itself. But I have to admit, the pelvic grinding and shimmying did get a little creepy when I thought of my own granny. It also made me wonder: Do they do bachelor parties, too?

It makes me think: If I can still move when I'm 80, maybe I can form a group. Perhaps "The Break Dancing Grannies," or even better, "Electric Blue Hair Boogaloo."