

Sports Feature

Drownproofing: Proven Life Saver

Drownproofing, the art of self-preservation in the water, is not a new technique but does have recent developments. It first received nation wide publicity last summer via CBC Television News. Because of the wealth of information and interest concerning drownproofing on campus, as well as its pressing need for public awareness this feature is presented.

by Larry Duignan

During the latter part of May 1962, Martin Iftody, a U of A student and a non-swimmer, was fishing at Bonny Lake, four miles north of Vilna. The boat he was in capsized and Martin Iftody's life was in peril.



INHALE

A similar situation occurred on July 30, 1961. Godfrey Chevigny, 56 years old, also a non-swimmer, was in a boat with a companion on Lake Wabamum. This situation resulted in a more tragic ending. Mr. Chevigny's companion drowned. However, Chevigny, a non-swimmer in every sense of the word, managed to reach the boat 75 feet away.

These two forementioned situations and others like them have one thing in common. The techniques used to traverse the distance to safety were identical. The technique used is a method known as drownproofing. In its civilian application it has been developed by Fred Lanoue, associate professor of Physical Education at Georgia Tech.

DROWNPROOFING RESPONSIBLE

Martin Iftody had taken a course in drownproofing during the summer session of 1961 at U of A. Godfrey Chevigny, on the other hand, had seen a six minute film on drownproofing the week before on a local TV station.

The person largely responsible for having this technique taught in Canada and helping the U of A become the first university to instruct this technique to non-swimmers in Canada is Murray Smith, associate professor of P.Ed. at the U of A.

Murray Smith, University of Alberta Physical Education professor, is responsible for introducing and distributing the technique in Canada. While he refuses to accept any recognition for its development, indeed Smith has contributed much to methods of instruction.

Accompanying photos are underwater scenes, the work of Carl Nishimura.

—B.J.R.

The basis for this method is Archimedes' Principle of Buoyancy. The specific gravity of the average male is .98, which suggests that 98 per cent of his weight when the lungs are full of air, is submerged while the other two percent is above the surface.

BUILDS CONFIDENCE

Essentially it differs from conventional swimming methods in that it places major emphasis on body buoyancy and submerging as much of the body as possible in order to gain maximum buoyant support in the water. In addition, it separates the propulsion aspect of swimming from the breathing aspect by having two distinct cycles. Perhaps the greatest boon of this technique is the fact that it tends to build confidence quickly through learning to relax completely in the water.

In addition the ratio of rest to that of work in drownproofing is about 9-1. In other words one can be below average in condition and still accomplish this simple feat. A 70 year old man in reasonably good health could swim a mile in about 1-1½ hours without undue strain.

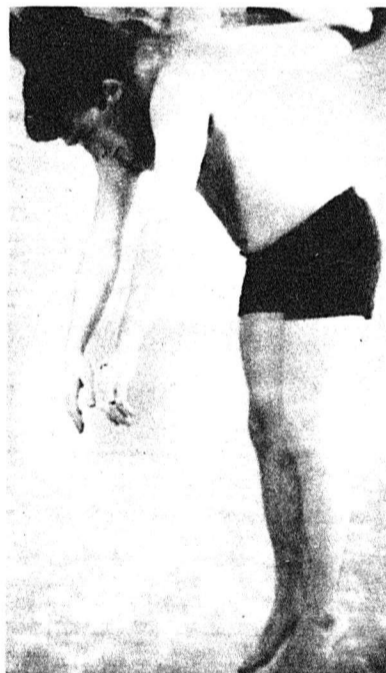
This method has been endorsed by the YMCA, various school boards in North America, and great emphasis is being placed on it by the Canadian Red Cross.

BREATHE OR SWIM

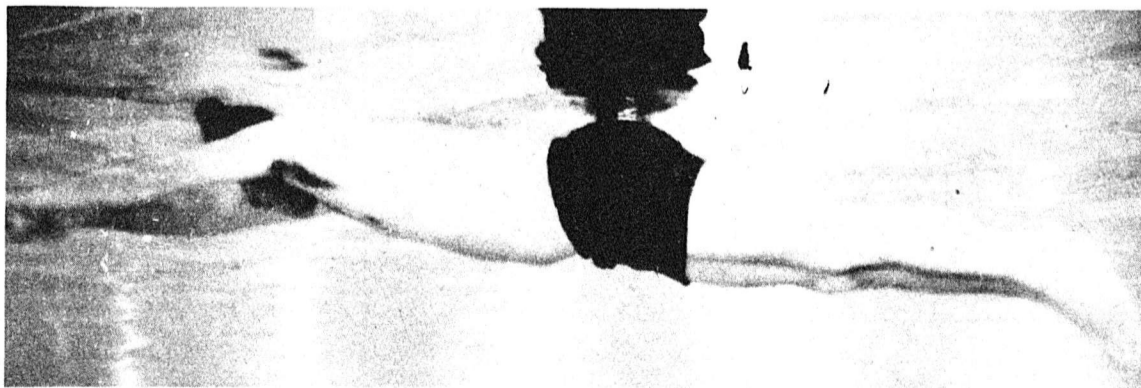
The emphasis on buoyancy means the swimmer does not require use of all four limbs. He can breathe in place, or swim with legs only, arms only, one leg



RECOVERY



VERTICAL REST



GLIDE AND BREATHE

and two arms or vice versa, one arm and one leg, or even just one limb. Thus people unable to perform conventional strokes, whether through physical handicaps or as a result of an injury in a water accident, may find drownproofing very much within their scope.

Since 75 per cent of North American drownings occur within 50 feet of safety, this easily learned technique could save many lives.

The University of Alberta has scheduled instruction on drownproofing to be included during the winter swim program.

Students may obtain general information on this topic at the P.Ed. general office.

As Murray Smith has pointed out, the mere reading of instructions may not be sufficient to master the technique. One must practise it in order to achieve complete confidence in the water. Further reading on this matter can be found in Fred Lanoue's book "Drownproofing."

DROWNPROOFING

1. **Vertical Rest**
 - a. Take a deep breath, sink vertically.
 - b. Relax entire body, let chin drop to chest, arms hang.
 - c. If water enters mouth, spurt out through pursed lips.
 - d. If you swallow water, cough it out underwater.
2. **"Ready Position"**
 - a. Leisurely cross arms in front of forehead, angle outward, forearms together.
 - b. Raise one knee to chest, and extend other foot behind in a stride position.
 - c. Keep head horizontal with back of head out of water. Lifting head or moving limbs too fast will cause sinking.
3. **Exhale**
 - a. Maintain "Ready" position while smoothly lifting face up. Stop while chin is still in water. Start exhaling while face is in water, continue in air.

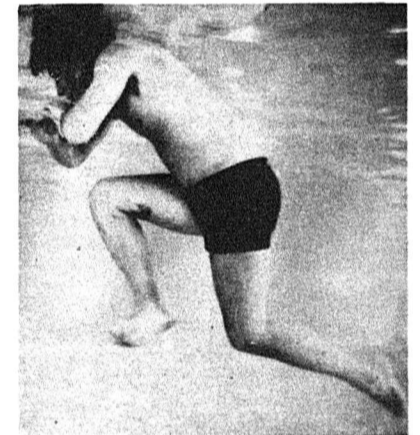
b. Fully open eyes out of water. Arms and legs remain at "Ready".

4. **Inhale**
 - a. Gently and smoothly sweep arms outward while stepping down on water with both feet. Use MINIMUM effort.
 - b. As arms and legs move, inhale through open mouth. Take in only normal amount of air.
5. **The "Stay-On-Top"**
 - a. Legs are together after inhaling, let arms drop to hanging position as you sink in water.
 - b. As head sinks below surface, relax neck, let chin drop. Repeat No. 1-2-3-4-5.

TRAVEL STROKE

(Begin at end of Step No. 5 of "Drownproofing" Technique)

1. **Recovery**
 - a. As head submerges, tip it forward and open legs to the "Ready" position.



READY POSITION

- b. Extend arms, hands together, in front of head.
2. **Kick and Pull**
 - a. As arms reach full extension, kick by scissoring legs together.
 - b. As feet squeeze together, sweep hands apart and continue arm action until hands reach thighs. Move slowly, easily, keep head down.
3. **Glide and Breathe**
 - a. As body glides forward, keep hands at sides, exhale easily through nose.
 - b. Return to "Vertical Rest" position by bowing back and GENTLY lifting knees towards chest.
 - c. When vertical, use "drownproof" method for changing breath. Alternate 1 drownproofing cycle with 1 travel stroke cycle.

Photos by
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