

Flotation Tanks—liquid relaxation

by **Rachelle Henderson**

For \$15, Greg Bungay will deprive you of your senses. Bungay owns and operates a saline solution sensory deprivation tank, or a "think" or "flotation" tank.

This tank is designed to deny the body all sensation. It contains 10" of water salty enough to keep a person or "tankhead", (as they who use the tanks are called) afloat. The water is skin temperature, the tank is completely enclosed and dark, and one's ears are submerged so very little is felt, seen or heard.

Once these sensory distractions have been eliminated according to Bungay, the brain is free to concentrate unencumbered. "You're putting your body in the sleep state while your mind is still awake".

Bungay said the "tankhead" usually experiences a continuous flow of thought through his mind while "floating". Most, then, are able to find solutions to their problems in the tank because "floating tears down the fence between the conscious and the subconscious". The subconscious always supplies the answer, he explained, but very subtly, so, depending "where your head is at", it may take a few "floats" before a "tankhead" recognizes his enlightenment.

The physical effects are not often immediately noticeable either, he said. In fact, it is not until they begin to wear off between one and three weeks later that the "tankhead" realizes just how profoundly

relaxing the experience was. Bungay said, however, that most users are aware of feeling energized and refreshed while in a state of total relaxation. This, he said, is "intensity in tranquility".

For some, it seems, the effects may be a little more dramatic. Bungay quoted one satisfied customer: "I didn't recognize my face when I came out. I haven't seen that much joy in it for 15 years".

Although scientific evidence supporting the claims of "think" tank owners is rather tenuous, the trend may prove to be more than just another "self-discovery" fad. According to Bungay, businessmen will probably start making these tanks available to their employees to help reduce costly stress-related absences and accidents.

Bungay said members of the medical community may hesitate to endorse "flotation" tanks, though, because they fear the competition. "They make a lot of money selling valium", he said.

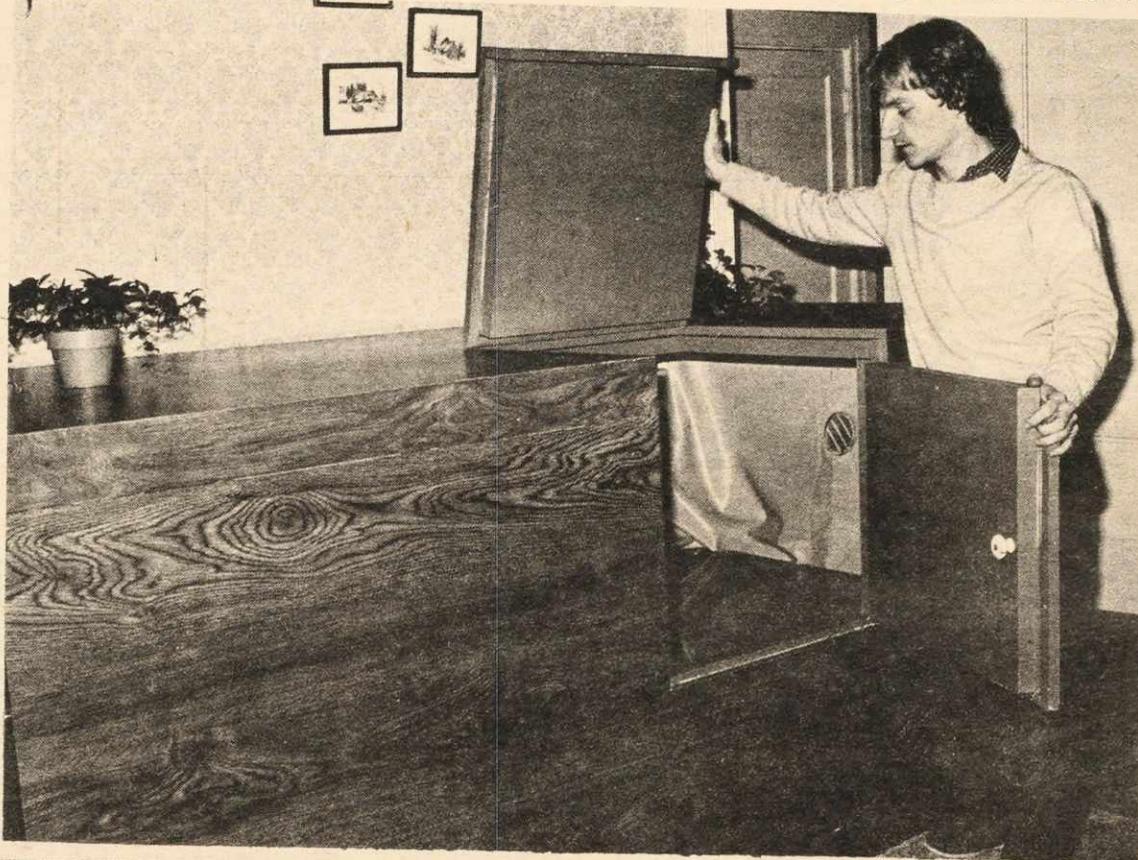
Bungay's "Float to Relax" parlor has been open on Brenton St. only two weeks but already he has had 27 customers, some of them students from Dalhousie, he said. "Floating" should appeal to students and other creative types because it "optimizes one's creative potential and makes one more productive," he said. Despite the \$15 fee for a one hour stint in the tank, Bungay said all his customers told him they would be back for more. Bungay's is

the only tank of its kind in the Maritimes.

Pamphlets extolling the merits of "floating" claim it is the ultimate weapon against

stress. "The pinnacle of modern science and technology has been met to form a tool enabling us to better combat stress in our lives". The

effectiveness of this "tool" may be wholly up to the individual, though, for as Bungay himself admits, "it is only as good as you make it".



EYLAND/DAL PHOTO

Flotation Tanks are all wet

by **Rachelle Henderson**

I have showered, my clothes are draped carefully over a chair and I'm wearing one of his bathrobes. It is time. Timidly, I approach, lift the hatch and peer in apprehen-

sively. The robe slips to the floor and as the hatch falls into place above me, I gingerly lower my body into the warm, salty bath.

Very nice. I bob gently up and down and "ping-pong"

off the sides before settling in the center of the tank. Laying on my back, completely relaxed, I eagerly wait the expected surge of enlightening thought.

And still I wait. I begin to worry. Maybe my head isn't "at" where it should be.

Suddenly I feel it coming. A tremendous surge indeed—of irrepressible giggles. What am I doing in here?! What a bore! I decide to play while I await revelation. I propel myself to one end of the tank and push off with my feet. Whee! How much longer do I have to go, I wonder.

Please God, I think, the hour has to be up. (By now I have salt in my eyes and am desperately trying not to claw them out). I thankfully recall one of the many conditions outlined on a sheet I had to read before entering the tank:

"You may enter or leave the tank at your own will". Slowly I pull myself up into a sitting position—slowly to get used to gravity again—, open the hatch and then blindly, frantically clutch for my towel.

I shower again and dress. Bleary-eyed, hair sopping, and feeling decidedly less dignified than I did upon arriving, I go bid my host farewell.

"How'd it go?" he asks. "Well, uh, yeah fine." I say, trying to sound grateful. "Very relaxing."

He nods his head knowingly. "You'll be back", he says, grinning. I wonder.

Mount construction makes students run chemical gauntlet

Halifax (CUP) — Noxious fumes, explosive chemicals and showers of sparks greet students and staff passing through construction at Mt. St. Vincent University's Rosaria Centre.

The university's newest building, providing athletic and social facilities, is nearing completion, but connecting passages at the Mount campus are not being closed while construction continues.

Signs posted on the lower floor of the new building warn against smoking in that area because of the chemicals used in the floor of the new gymnasium. A flooring finish, called "Plad," is composed of a polyurethane diluted with Xylol, which is highly explosive. The fumes may cause headaches and nausea if inhaled for a long period of time. The material was poured a week ago and takes six days to dry.

Michael Merrigan, executive assistant to the university president, said the university administration is fully aware

of the dangers involved, and took special precautions to ensure the safety of campus users during the work.

Ventilation systems were installed in the gym specifically for the pouring of the floor to prevent the spread of the harmful fumes throughout the building. However, there were reports of seeping fumes as far away as the campus residences following a recent power outage.

Merrigan said the centre's hazardous flooring was poured on a weekend, at higher expense, to avoid high traffic during the job. He said although occupants may have smelled the chemical in the area, he doubted anyone would be affected simply by passing through the area without any prolonged exposure.

The student grocery store, bank, bookstore, registrar's office and residence cafeteria are adjacent to the area affected and all involve lengthy lineups.

Merrigan said the university

was well within its legal rights in keeping the building open during the flooring work. The general requirements of the construction contract allow the administration to use any area of the construction site "providing it does not interfere with the contractor's work."

The company which poured the gym floor said it was the first time they had worked in an open building.

"This is the first time we have poured a floor in a building that was occupied," said Arwood Gestenberger of Nova Scotia Tile and Terrazzo. He said warning signs were posted to keep people away from unopened cans of chemicals.

Merrigan said the university needed partial occupancy of the new facility "for survival."

"That, of course, brings in problems."

He said essential services, such as the registrar's office, had to be in place for the beginning of the year. "We did more than we had to do to ensure safety."

However, the site still offers problems with continual arc welding work. The welding flames are harmful to the eyes, according to a construction inspector with the province's department of Labour and Manpower. He said there should be a protective shield surrounding the welding site.

In one instance, students lined up to receive grade reports were showered with sparks. Merrigan said the presence of shielding was a responsibility of the contractor, not the university. He warned students to avoid looking at the welding as they pass.

Foreman George Oickle said he was the only construction official in favour of leaving the building open during construction. He said the architects and construction officials wanted the building closed.

However, Merrigan said there was no controversy over having the building remain open.