

Altering your state a bit disappointing

by Nancy Weatherley
Battalion Staff

I'm lying suspended in a place of total darkness, with only the sound of my heartbeat for company.

The place is a flotation tank at Float to Relax, 505 University. As the name implies, the concept behind floating is giving your body and mind a chance to relax.

Senses — sight, sound, touch, smell — are isolated in the tank, which is filled with water saturated with over 600 pounds of Epsom salts to allow effortless floating.

I had read a lot about flotation tanks and was excited about being able to float in one without having to first drive to Austin,

I began thinking of all the things I should be doing instead of floating in lukewarm water.

but after I saw the tank I was a little apprehensive. It resembles a day-glo time capsule with a hatch in the middle.

If nothing else, the tanks are sanitary. Customers are required to shower before and after using the tank, and water is filtered after each float.

After taking my shower, I got into my tank. This sounds rather basic, but with so much salt in the water, I helplessly bounced around trying to regain my balance.

The salt creates the illusion of anti-gravity. My body seemed to hang in mid-air and I could easily imagine myself in space.

The water temperature is the same as normal skin temperature, so after initially getting wet, I really couldn't feel the water. And so, I really felt like I was in mid-air.

The suspension played havoc with my sense of balance and right after entering the tank I felt as though my body were rotating downward.

When this initial sensation subsided, I became aware of the darkness. I tried the hand-in-the-face trick and really couldn't see it — I was in total darkness.

The 'absence' of sound was not impressive — with my ears underwater I admit I couldn't hear much, but you can get the same effect putting your head under water in a bathtub. When

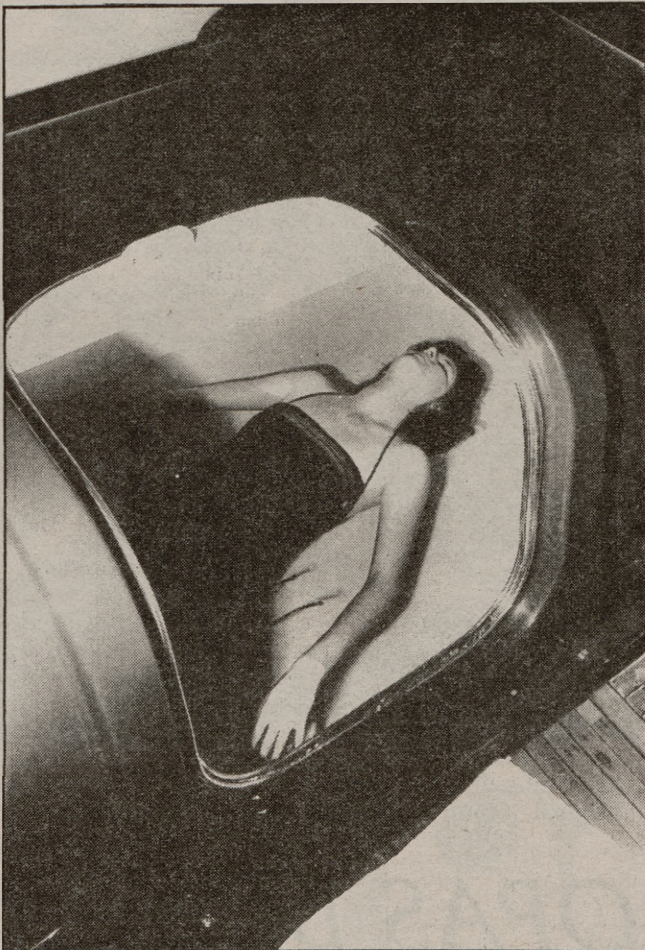


photo by Todd Woodard

Weatherly at the beginning of her float.

I lifted my head above the water, I could hear conversations in the hall and the circulation fan come on in my room.

Float to Relax charges by the hour. One hour is the usual float, but you can stay longer; and if you suddenly develop claustrophobia, you can get out any time you want.

The first time I floated, the hour seemed to drag by. It was interesting at first, discovering the different sensations in the tank, but after about 20 minutes I got bored.

I've decided that it's hard work to relax, especially for a generally high-strung person such as myself. I get bored easily if I'm not doing anything, and while in the tank, I began thinking of all the things I should be doing instead of floating in lukewarm water.

Since I had heard several stories on the wonderful, sometimes spiritual encounters that people have reported from using the tanks, I felt I had missed out on something. Maybe it was

the mood I was in when I when to the place — maybe I just have generally lousy karma.

I decided to go back and give the tanks one more chance.

I'm glad I did. The second time was better and I felt more relaxed when I left. The tanks are equipped with a sound system, so I brought a cassette to

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play while I was floating — this was a lot better than the semi-silence.

Also, I think I brought fewer expectations to my second visit. I knew what it was like, and hadn't been that impressed, so I wasn't expecting anything great to grab me.

Without this 'hope' I could really relax — which is, of course, the purpose behind Float to Relax.

U.S. big bubbly buyer

United Press International

NEW YORK — The United States became France's biggest customer for champagne in 1981, importing 7.9 million bottles of bubbly. This was .8 million more

bottles than in 1980, and .1 million above the previous record that was set in 1979.

Until recently, the U.S. was the fourth largest champagne market, following Great Britain,

Italy and Belgium. It displaced Belgium in 1979, according to the Champagne News and Information Bureau.

France exports champagne to about 140 nations worldwide.

Top Ten

The latest fads

Flotation tanks may be the latest campus fad. Anything that promises relaxation is bound to be big with college students. It sounds a lot healthier than swallowing goldfish, easier to master than Frisbee and lonelier than Volkswagen packing. It's worth a try. You may wither up a little, but you probably won't drown.

If floating doesn't catch your fancy, don't worry. Focus has prepared a list of contingency fads to occupy your time.

- 1 — Build your own flotation tank in the bathtub. All you'll need is a few hundred pounds of Epsom salts and warm water. Be sure to think of a good story for your roommate to tell your mom if she calls.
- 2 — Organize a wake-up service. For a small fee, offer to go to someone's room and throw a bucket of water in their face and bang cymbals early in the morning.
- 3 — Blackmail people by threatening to tell their parents where they really sleep. For a large fee, don't.
- 4 — Plan a paper ship regatta in Rudder Fountain, and a paper airplane throwing contest from the top of Rudder Tower.
- 5 — Throw one big party that includes every theme you ever wanted to use but didn't get around to: hats, Valentine's, sunglasses, Christmas and kegs.
- 6 — Play Russian Parking Roulette. See who can park illegally the most consecutive days without getting a ticket.
- 7 — Fight the Prep Syndrome: dress like a nerd. Wear a calculator on your belt, and carry your pens in a plastic thing in your pocket. Be sure your pants are too short and your socks have fallen down around your ankles. Wear cheap cologne and sit near a Prep.
- 8 — Instead of throwing copies of The Battalion at basketball games, strip and throw your clothes. Paint your body with maroon and white "Gig 'Em" signs.
- 9 — Go on a penguin-free diet. Put Sbisas out of business.
- 10 — Throw confetti whenever your prof says something worthwhile. In between times, tear your notes into confetti so you'll have something to throw.

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