

Student death at pool brought back to light

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ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

For one former UNCW student, the recent "Lord of the Rings" movie trilogy sparked memories of an old friend, and an old mystery.

Sept. 16, 1986 marked the drowning death of Stephen Praisner, a former UNCW student.

"It was a real shock. I heard about 'the guy who drowned in the pool,' but had no idea it was him. A day or two later, I saw his photo on the front page of the Seahawk," said Roger Alford, who knew Praisner. Alford attended UNCW as well.

"Stephen used to swim laps every night in the pool. One morning, just a few months after the fall semester of when the pool was opened, he was found at the bottom of the pool," Alford said.

Patricia Leonard, vice chancellor for student affairs, was on staff when the inci-

dent occurred. According to her, lifeguards were on duty at the time of the accident.

"Absolutely no foul play, alcohol or drugs were involved," said Leonard. After the accident, friends said that someone holding his or her nose under water to see how long he or she could go without breathing could black out while doing so. Leonard thinks that's what happened to Praisner.

When the lifeguards closed down for the night, they did not see Praisner at the bottom of the pool.

The night before, Praisner, who was an avid swimmer, was in the pool with lifeguards around and "was fine." Students found him dead the next day.

"It was tragic. Everybody felt horrible. It's one of those things you don't know why it happened," Leonard said.

The University Police Department responded to the accident.

Dr. William H. Wagoner, chancellor of

UNCW at that time, voluntarily turned over all reports to the district attorney's office for their review. The drowning was an accident.

Alford, who now lives in Raleigh with his wife and two kids, wanted to find out what happened with the investigation of Praisner's death after seeing "The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King." Praisner had encouraged Alford to read the "Lord of the Rings" book.

"When I told him that I'd never read Lord of the Rings, he told me that I absolutely had to read it. I bought all four books (starting with The Hobbit)." Praisner "always thought Lord of the Rings would make a great movie," Alford said.

When the films came out, Alford thought about Praisner. Alford had begun an article on Praisner's encouragement to read the books, but never finished because he did not know what the investigation yielded.



Page Gambill/the Seahawk

According to sources, lifeguards were there when the pool claimed Praisner's life.

www.theseahawk.org



Begin your preparation for Easter
this year in prayer!
Lent begins on Wednesday
February 25, and all Christians
(and any others interested) are
invited to attend an on-campus

Ash Wednesday Service

Warwick Ballroom
12:15-12:45 pm

A Service of Word and Music
and Distribution of Ashes

Your particular campus ministry
may have additional services
scheduled—please check their
calendars or websites!



Free tax help offered by MSA students

SARAH BRODERS

NEWS EDITOR

It's tax season again.

To help ease the tax preparation process, the department of accounting and business law in the Cameron School of Business is offering volunteer income tax assistance free of cost to all UNCW faculty, staff and students.

"I think this is good for the community. This is a service that the students offer to the community, and it's a great way for the university to reach out to the community," said Gloria Sasser, of the department of accounting and business law.

Sasser said that people in the community had been calling to ask if the department would be offering these services to the community again this year.

The volunteers are certified to fill out IRS forms 1040EZ and 1040A. They will also be able to calculate education credits and deductions, dependent care credit, earned income credit and child tax credit.

One form that students should look for in particular is the form for the Hope Credit, IRS form 8863. If a student paid out-of-pocket money for tuition and does not make over a certain amount of earned income, they may be eligible for a Hope Credit which can dramatically reduce your taxes and may increase your refund.

The only things the volunteers will need



Photo illustration by Nolan Dean/the Seahawk

Gina Santore and Isaac Bigness are both graduate students in the Masters of Accounting program, which will be offering free tax assistance this tax season.

are all tax forms, W-2s, 1099s, information for all tax deductions or credits, information for any other earned income and a copy of last year's (2002) tax return.

The volunteers preparing the taxes are UNCW MSA students. These students will benefit as well from the project. "The students are masters degree students, with at least three or four courses in taxes," Sasser

said. "It allows them to experience first hand and get a feel for what they've learned in class."

The free tax assistance services will be offered at two locations, one on-campus and one off-campus, for added convenience. Services will be offered on-campus in the Warwick Center, room 138, on Feb. 20 and April 2, from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. Services will be offered off-campus at the YWCA on

Market Street on Feb. 21 and April 3 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"Considering how hard taxes can be to figure out and prepare, I think it's a wonderful service to offer," said former UNCW student, Amanda Barbee. For questions or additional information, contact Gloria Sasser in the accounting and business law department at 962-3509.