

THE Filthy Lucre

All About The Hamiltons

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The Drowning Pool

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Our faithful readers of the previous school year are already well versed in the political intricacies of Northern's swimming pool; for the rest of you, here is a quick primer.

Back in 2006, the then-current Capdeville Administration decided that, as a cost-cutting measure, the Olympic-sized swimming pool attached to the Armory Gym was hemorrhaging money, allegedly to the tune of \$4,000 monthly in heating costs. Rather than shutting down a fully functional swimming pool, it was decided by shadowy consensus to simply cease maintaining the heating and pumping system, and let time and thermodynamics do the rest.

In February of 2007, the pool's ancient boiler gave up the ghost, and the facility was "temporarily closed for repairs." In truth, there were never any plans to fix or retrofit the pool; Vice-Chancellor Jensen reportedly declared during a faculty meeting that "there is no f—ing way we're reopening that pool."

Plans were quietly in the works to fill in the pool, build a new floor, and convert the space into a fitness center; minimum estimated cost to fill in the pool, not counting the construction and equipment costs of creating an exercise center? \$12,000.

After the Capdeville Administration dissolved and new management came on the scene, the pool's future (and its water) became cloudy; Intirim-Chancellor Groseth, himself an accomplished swimmer, at one point promised that the pool would reopen before the end of 2008, a statement that has since been recinded.

And that about covers the situation up till this point. Now, according to our brief research, the original claim that Northern's swimming pool cost \$4,000 dollars a month is almost certainly a warm, moist pile of verbal compost. Even without specific data regarding the exact size of the pool, its relative energy loss to ventilation and evaporation, and the price per kilowatt hour that the University pays, there is no rational way an indoor Olympic-sized pool should cost more than \$5,000 to heat *annually*.†

Was the swimming pool heated by burning dollar bills in an iron pot-belly stove? Were rare breeds of workhorses used to turn a wheel to operate the water filters? At this point, it's difficult to get a straight answer.

But it's time to stop grouching about the past, and start looking forward. Options do exist, and have been put forward, to varying degrees of non-enthusiasm from the current Administration.

Recently Trygve "Spike" Magelssen, Northern's resident mad-scientist, and other concerned university staff have been pursuing the possibility of operating the pool using a solar heating system. The initial investment to install such a system is relatively low, and under the right conditions, can potentially cut the costs of heating the pool by more than 50%.

The Lucre understands that a feasibility study is underway by one of Mr. Magelssen's classes, independent of the University's management, which has thus far been completely apathetic to the project, apparently out of some sort of bureaucratic inertia rather than active malice, as with

†www.rlmartin.com/rspecl/software.htm

the previous administration. We eagerly await the feasibility project's findings, and will update our readers as they progress.

Looking forward, one might wonder where the money to fund a solar heating project might come from. Although state-wide university funding has increased recently, Northern's administration continues to insist that our fine university is completely incapable of paying for anything, and has been sticking to its slash-and-burn policy of cutting services and budgets across the board.

But wait dear readers, salvation may be at hand, at least where the pool is concerned! Northern is sitting on a half-million dollar donation made to the school by a friendly corporation some time ago; the catch is that the donation can only be used for additions to the Armory Gym, not for anything as boring as repairs or general upkeep. Therein lies the important trick; a state-of-the-art solar heating system for the Gym and swimming pool would be a significant addition, and as such should be entirely in line with the conditions of the donation.

All this is to say nothing of the potential publicity and public relations benefit to Northern for leading the way in renewable energy and conservation. And although the Filthy Lucre has neither the staff nor the connections (not to mention the interest or enthusiasm) to explore the available federal or state grants or tax credits regarding green energy development, we suspect the possibilities are significant.

Stay tuned for future developments on this and other energy-related issues, and keep your swimming caps at the ready!

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