

Life on the cool patrol can be all wet

by SHARA'DEEN ANDERSON

Friday, 4:00 p.m. — My partner and I have been called to investigate a disturbance on the Sandy River. There are rumors a stash of undiluted cool may be found there. Black market value: priceless.

4:30 p.m. — We approach the beach disguised as a mild-mannered couple with two children. (We could have used five for further camouflage, but budget cuts have nearly eliminated accessories.)

We walk the length of the beach, scanning the crowd for concealed weapons. We discover nothing is concealed. My partner suffers an attack of lock-jaw, rendering him briefly incoherent. I make a note: Officer in-

capacitated due to glare. Blinders to be standard equipment on all subsequent missions.

4:45 p.m. — There is evidence of a major cool-off all around us. Dripping hair, wet towels, drenched swimwear. If the rumors are true, there is a river nearby. We continue our search.

My partner is taking surveillance readings: 105 degrees; humidity, low; exposure, high; approximately 500 people, eight black bikinis, five purple, 12 blue tones, seven stringed-backs, three striped ensembles, numerous above the thigh cuts. . . I make a note: Assign officer to refresh course on necessary details of surveillance.

5:00 p.m. — We have discovered the source of the

alleged cool-off. We board our innertube and wedge ourselves into the river, pretending to have a good time so as not to attract attention. We smile as lethal frisbees flick within an inch of our temples. We giggle delightedly as we're caught in the torrential wash of a nearby water fight. We grin as we endure flailing arms and legs of would-be marathon swimmers.

But we need more evidence. Is this really a hard-core way to cool off?

Our junior assistants say it is. They squeal with unabashed joy at the thought of nearly drowning as they voluntarily slip off the safety of the innertube into the murky water. They claim this truly is great fun as they cough, sputter and wince sand from

their eyes. I make a note for the lab: Could ingesting yellow-gray water cause mass hallucination of happiness?

I also note a request that the junior assistants be cleared of any charge of corruption by association, in consideration of their inexperience. After all, they have no reference to clear, sparkling, unpolluted retreats. Those naturally chilling, uncrowded reservoirs and streams of yesteryear. Still, everyone here seems to be enjoying themselves. I add a note for the law library: Does pretense of relaxation constitute illegal cooling-off?

I turn to my partner for collaboration of evidence. He is nowhere within sight.

5:35 p.m. — Disappearance of fellow officer duly noted and reported. Investigation has begun.

6:00 p.m. — Partner discovered rendering assistance to apparently innocent victim of dunking. Pretty, blonde, skimpily clad in black on white stripes — a notorious type, no doubt. I circle behind them to warn my partner of the ensuing danger. I toss a large rock on his foot. He misses the clue.

I kick his footing from beneath him to divert his attention. As he is swept into the current, I make a note: Officer missing in action. . . To which I add the sad commentary: "Done in by too much cool."

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