

Water babies take to pool with a minimum of tears



Nine month old Timmy Lavell seemed a little puzzled to find himself floating around on a lifesaver. He is held by his mother, Loretta. — John Montgomery

The thought of babes-in-arms swimming would have horrified people a few years ago but it is an accepted practice at Stouffville Pool.

Infants ranging in age from nine months to three years have been participating, with their mothers, in two week swim programs.

Four two week "Moms and tots" courses are offered during the summer for a half hour session each day.

Sharon Todd, the course instructor, explains the program is not to teach youngsters to swim but to get them accustomed to being in the water.

"We teach them to blow bubbles, get them to duck their heads and kick their feet. They are by no means swimming but if they are not crying after two weeks we figure we've done well," explained Miss Todd.

Earlier the better

She feels the earlier a child is started the better. She says nine months is a good age as "they have no fear at all if they start that young." It is important, she says, if a child is started in the water that young that they be kept at it or they will forget everything and will have to be started all over again.

Most children, according to Miss Todd, are not afraid of the water naturally but have it instilled in them by their parents.

The children should be ducked under the water right away at the first lesson she feels but she says most of the mothers are a bit hesitant at first.

The training pool which is only four feet at the deepest spot is used for all their lessons. The lessons consist of a variety of activities designed to make the youngster more at ease in the water.

Different games

Different games are played, some involve singing which relaxes the babes, and others involve pushing a cork or ball around the pool. This exercise gets them to reach their arms out instead of just holding on to their mothers.

All the participants in the last session, which ended Friday, appeared to enjoy it tremendously although many of the tots seemed a little sceptical when first put in the water.

The courses, which cost five dollars for the two weeks, still have some vacancies. The instructors are very tolerant of missed lessons and allow the mothers to make these up during a later session if they so desire.

As an extra bonus each successful graduate receives a "diploma" and a sucker for their efforts.

Photos By John Montgomery



Kathleen Miki seemed less than happy about her aquatic career when this picture was taken, but she soon calmed down and took to the water with a vengeance. She appeared to be one of the most active infants in the pool.



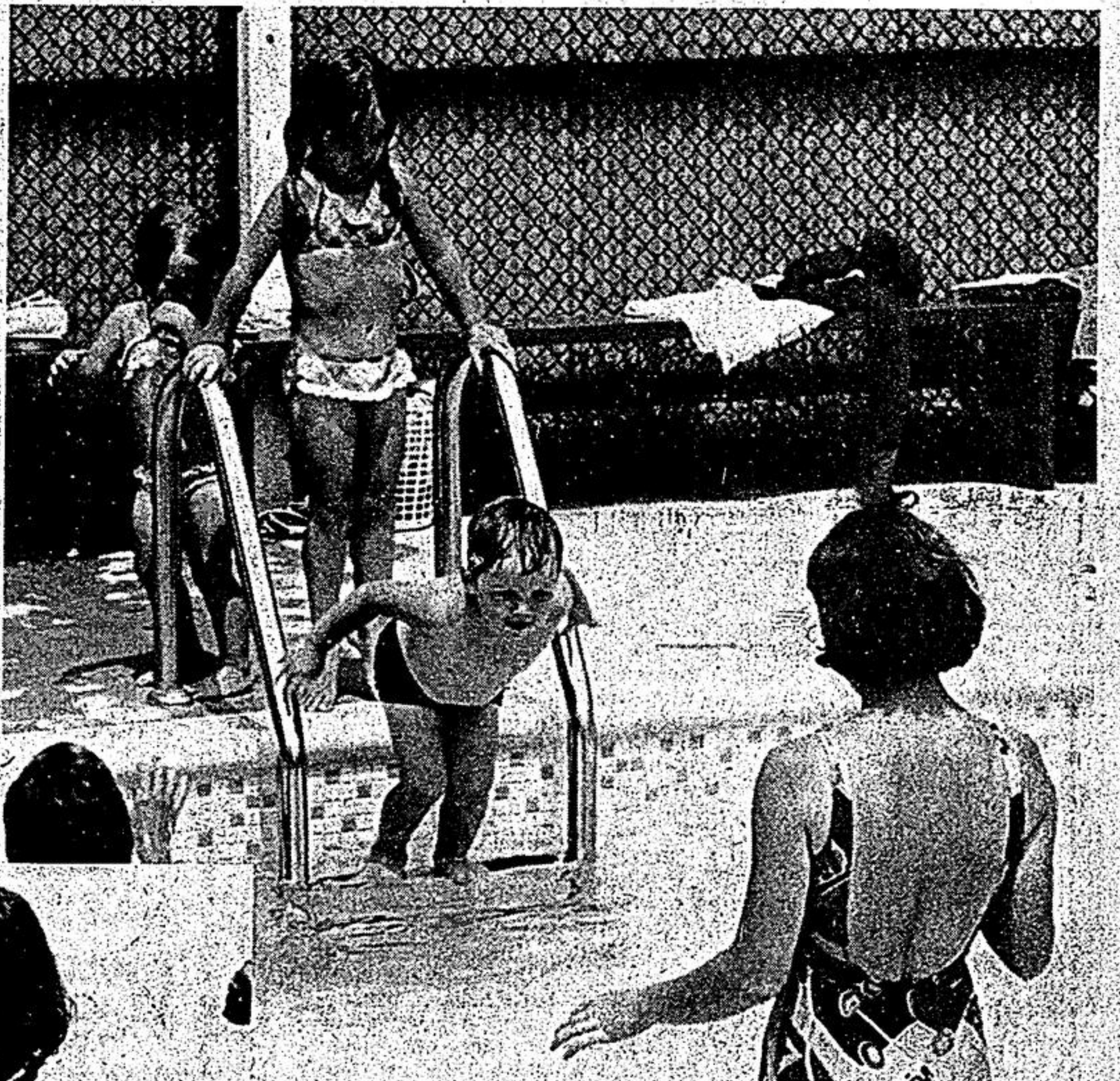
One method of getting the babies accustomed to the water is by having them push either a ball or a floating cork around the pool with their arms. Ricky Paisley, with a little help from his mother Pat, managed to keep the ball moving.



Contrary to appearances, Nancy Turner (top) is not drowning her son David. All the mothers took turns ducking their children underwater so they would become ac-



customed to it. Marlene Grove (left) appears to have just pulled her daughter Tammy out, and Derek, son of Carole Lemon, had his turn too. There were surprisingly few tears.



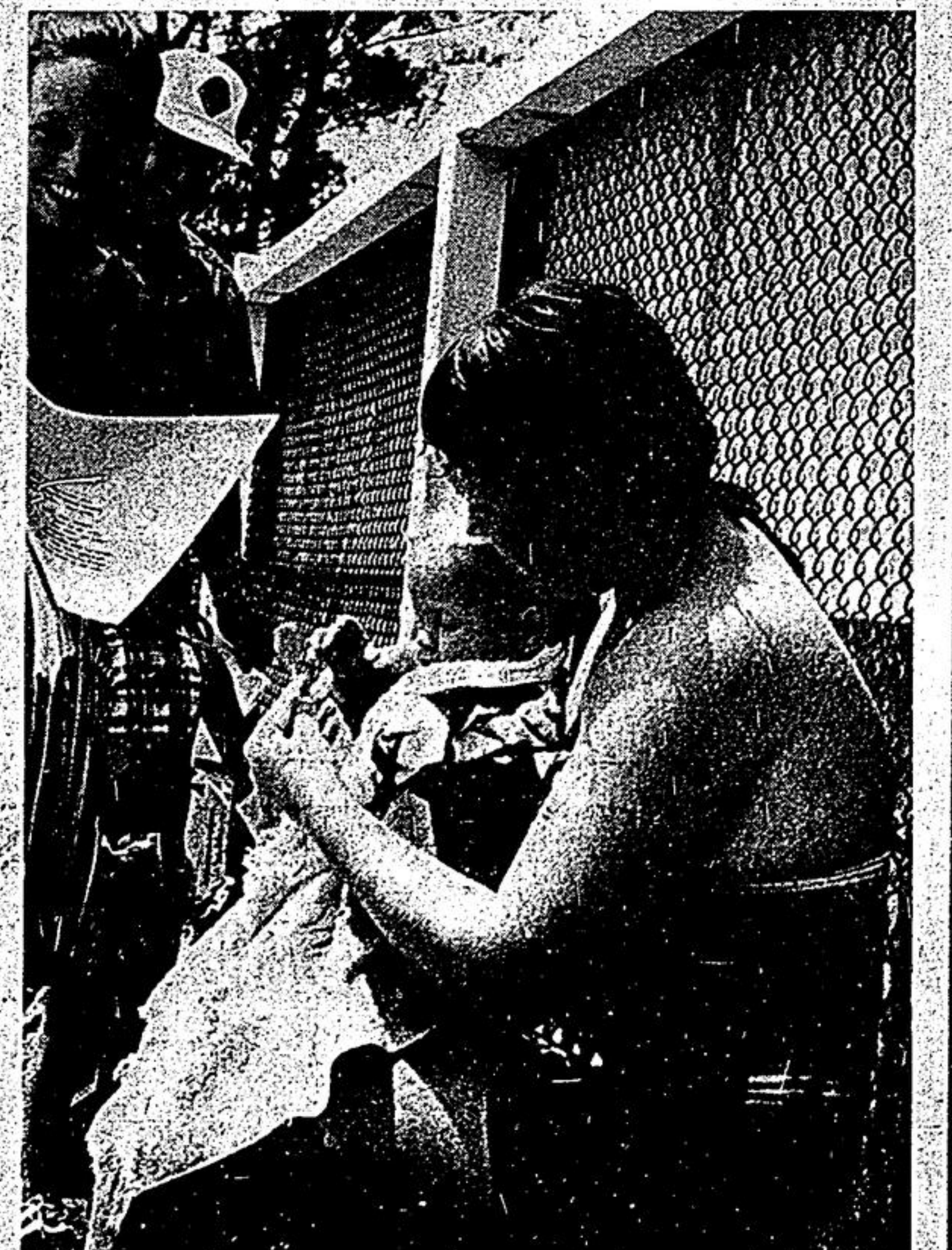
Ricky Paisley (centre) takes a flying leap into the safety of his mother's arms as his sisters look on. Pat Paisley turned out to be a reliable catcher and the child was in no danger of going under.



Kathleen Miki seems about to take off here as she splashes up a storm. She is held by Carolyn Sheridan.



David Turner takes a leisurely float across the pool with a little assist from mother Nancy. The half hour swim lessons provided lots of time for a variety of activities.



At the end of the course the moms and tots receive a "diploma", and a sucker for their efforts. Kathleen Miki (centre) wasn't overly impressed with the diploma but was quite eager to get her hands on the sucker held by babysitter Carolyn Sheridan while holding her daughter's "diploma".