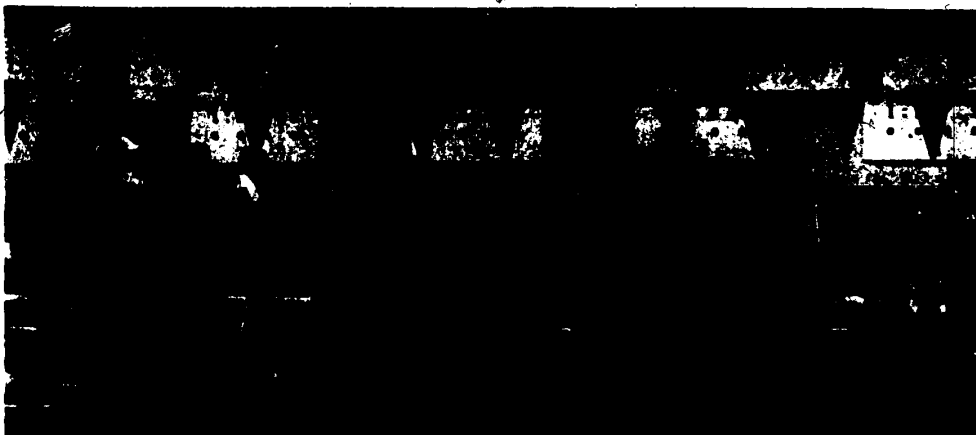




Pulling for more

By ZINA MEGGAS

"Timers, clear your watches. Swimmers, listen to the starter."

Such are the sounds of a swim meet. For Polly Bailey and Barb Knappenberger of North Farmington High School, being a timer at a swim meet means much more than just timing races. It means cheering for their school, yelling, worrying, jumping up and down, and often crying.

North Farmington High hosted the Northwest Suburban Activities Association's Conference Swim Meet Feb. 28 and March 1.

Several records were broken at this meet. And the timers, because of their job, were the first to know.

A swimming contest of this size and importance requires a minimum of 18 timers, three per lane. One or two additional timers serve as alternates, to insure an accurate time if a watch on a given lane doesn't start.

These 18 or 20 girls see many moments of swimming competition invisible to spectators—the last words of confidence from a

coach, to the joy of swimmers after breaking a conference meet record.

But timers also see frustration and disappointment. On occasion, they see swimmers sit down on the pool deck and cry.

"You see them climb out of the pool, sometimes disgusted, sometimes dejected, sometimes joyful," said one timer. "Lots of times you don't know what to say to a guy that just lost a race by one 10th of a second."

Timers at North Farmington High give swimmers their total support. A timer will yell and scream at the top of her lungs to boost a swimmer's emotional state and help him swim faster.

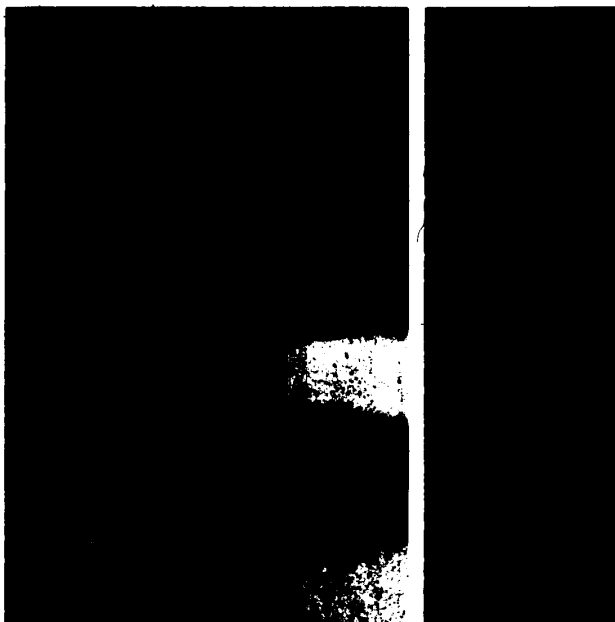
Swimmers notice the timer's support. Mark Holcomb, senior and co-captain of North Farmington's team, said: "When everyone is behind me and I'm up on the block, I'm one big lump of adrenaline."

Holcomb went on in the meet to break two of the previous conference records.

While timers' primary function is timing, they also throw themselves into the emotions of the race.



Photos by
Craig Newman



Barb Knappenberger, left, and Polly Bailey anxiously hold their stop watches while at

the same time cheering their swimming heroes on to victory.