BGCC

**Context:**

The Bellingham Golf and Country Club was where I first learned to swim and eventually, also where I had my first job. I worked at BGCC for four summers, from midway through high school to my freshman year in college. I started out as a lifeguard and slowly worked my way to a swim instructor. I mostly taught the beginner class- the three and four-year-olds, though I sometimes taught the five and six-year-olds as well.

**Reflection:**

As my first job, I learned a lot during my time at BGCC. One important thing I learned was about being assertive. The BGCC pool had many rules, more rules than most pools. As a lifeguard I had to enforce those rules, which often times meant telling people no and standing my ground. It was hard, especially the first summer. I found that I have a tendency to want to tell people yes, which I obviously could not do. However, many of the swimmers we talked to were kids and were younger than me, so it was not too hard, but telling adults they could not do this or that was difficult.

I admit, I am not a naturally assertive person and this job did not magically turn me into one. But I learned a lot about learning when to step in and intervene in a situation. I learned how to say politely no and explain why. I learned how to manage less-than-happy people while maintaining my ground. However, assertiveness is something I still struggle with and something I know I need to work on, especially in unfamiliar situations. But I think this job gave me the foundation that I needed to know how to politely assert myself when needed.

This job taught me a lot about people. A lifeguard is primarily paid to people-watch and at a small country club, with a small membership, it was interesting to watch families interact and grow up over the years. I learned a lot about parenting styles- perhaps too much. I find that I now have strong opinions about parenting even though I do not have any kids. But as a lifeguard and swim instructor, exposed to hundreds of different families over the years, it is easy to identify patterns.

A part of learning about people is learning about class differences. Naturally at a country club, there are those people who are wealthy. I grew up in a middle-class neighborhood and was surrounded by mostly middle-class friends. While there were certainly some differences between the middle-class people I grew up with and the wealthier people that at the pool, many of the families that I regularly saw were those who honestly just wanted a place where their kids could swim and not have to worry about them drowning. The regulars at the pool usually were more concerned with their kids than any demonstration of money.