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Waterfront

By AQUA Editors
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Noteworthy observations from the world of spas and pools: Something Old, Something New; No Swimming Allowed; Dry Spell; Pools Aid In Fighting Fire; Forget Lassie

Something Old, Something New

Century-old high-school-turned-condo complex houses pool on roof

After 42 years in the business, you'd think John Spoelstra would be ready to call it quits. But he keeps taking his work to new heights, specifically, four stories in the air.

Union High School, built in the late 1890s and located two blocks from downtown Grand Rapids, Mich., was recently converted into condominiums after spending 10 years in limbo as the location of a variety of projects. The owner of the building wanted to add a pool and hot tub combo on the roof of the old gym, which was added to the building right before the Great Depression.

"We poured footings and ran steel beams from the ground all the way up through the four stories to hold the pool in place," says Spoelstra, owner of Spoelstra Pool & Patio, the builder of the pool/spa project. "Everything is concrete. The pool and the hot tub have 8-inch concrete floors with a 10-inch concrete wall. It's reinforced 6 inches, 1/2-inch rebar, 6 inches on center.

"We had to walk up four flights of steps because none of the elevators were working," says Spoelstra. "All the heavy forms and steel were picked up by a crane, and all the cement was pumped up with a cement pump."

But, says Spoelstra, getting everything to the roof wasn't the most difficult thing. Leave it to the Midwest weather gods to surprise Spoelstra with a snowstorm in April.

"We poured the floor on a beautiful April day, which was 45 degree and bright sun. And 20 minutes after we started pouring the floor, it snowed 3 inches!"

So how does Union Square handle the Michigan winters? Spoelstra completely drains the pool during the winter months, but keeps the hot tub open year round for those brave enough to sit on the roof in temperatures that can go below zero.

"They had probably 20 people in the hot tub on New Year's Eve," says Spoelstra. "I think all the people splashing and partying drained half the water out of it, but its got an automatic water fill so it keeps filling up."

