

Weather: Partly sunny today. High near 90 with winds from the southeast five to fifteen mph. Tomorrow evening will be partly cloudy with a low near 70 and a 20 percent chance of thundershowers. Wednesday will be partly cloudy with a high near 90.

Batman T-shirt shunned by pastel downtowners

Arts & Entertainment, Page 7

Local research firm aids teams in player selection

Sports, Page 6

Daily
Nebraskan

July 8, 1986

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Vol. 85 No. 162

Mortuary a job, home

By Steve Thomas
Staff Reporter

He probably could flip hamburgers with the best of them. He could wash a car or paint a house with his shirt off. He could even deliver pizzas to obnoxious collegians at 2 a.m. But Leonard Wood chose something a little different.

Wood, an accounting major at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is one of four students that work the night shift at Roper and Sons Mortuary, 4300 O St.

'It's great to be able to study on the job, too. It's always going to be quiet — that's for sure.'

— Wood



Paul Vonderlage/Daily Nebraskan

Leonard Wood

By Wood's own admission, his job isn't one commonly sought by the average student. A quick glance at the "help wanted" board in the Nebraska Union confirms Wood's belief — the night shift is nowhere to be found. A well-kept secret.

At 5:30 p.m. Wood dons a coat and tie and heads for work. Traffic and parking aren't problems. He leaves his room, climbs a flight of stairs, goes down a hall and he is at work. The mortuary is Wood's home — year round — and it's a big advantage, he said.

"Myself and the other students who work and live here don't pay any rent," Wood said. "It's great to be able to study on the job, too. It's always going to be quiet — that's for sure."

Wood's first four hours of the night shift are spent at the main desk. He said his work involves answering the phone, showing people to their deceased family member, and leaving messages for the funeral directors. But don't think it is all kids' stuff.

"This part of the job isn't real easy," Wood said. "We often have to deal with people who are crying and getting emotional. It can be tough at times. You really learn how to deal with people in a hurry."

But not all the people Wood works with are emotional, crying, breathing beings — they're dead. It's this part of the job that puts a look of astonishment on the faces of those inquiring about his job, Wood

said. "After 9:30, we're on call until seven in the morning," Wood said. "That means having to pick up the deceased at hospitals and homes. It's usually not too bad, but sometimes a suicide or something can get pretty ugly."

Just as in any business, work comes in spurts without warning. Wood said the mortuary received five calls one night to pick up dead bodies.

"It's usually pretty slow," Wood said. "Sometimes we'll go a week or two without having a single call."

The students are always accompanied by a licensed funeral director on their nighttime calls, Wood said.

Wood said he became interested in the job when he heard of an opening through a friend.

"I asked myself, 'Am I going to like dealing with dead people every day?'" Wood said. "It took a little while to get used to it, but it's pretty routine now. It's not something a person should jump right into, though."

Wood said his job reaps a variety of reactions from curious peers.

"Some say, 'You do what?'" Wood said. "Others are apprehensive about

leaving my room in the mortuary, but there are those that think it's great, too."

Wood calls the night shift as being "very educational," but something he does not wish to pursue in the future.

"It just doesn't appeal to me, but I think it has caused me to view life a little differently," Wood said. "You learn that people can die unexpectedly all the time. It kind of changes the way you go about your life."

Wood said dealing with the death of someone close to him would be easier now because of his work experience.

The mortuary is probably not the place to go for the latest one-liners and knee-slapping pranks, but Wood said laughs are not a rare occurrence at night.

One night, a woman deputy sheriff added some life to Wood's job. Wood said he entered the hospital, wheeled a body out on a cot only to discover his station wagon was gone. Wood's panic turned to laughter when he learned the deputy was the prankster.

Laughs within the mortuary have their place, too. Wood and his co-workers rented the movie "Night Shift" and other mortuary films one night to play the part.

Petition drive fails, no charges filed

By Colleen Kenney
Senior Reporter

Citizens To Restore the Constitution failed in its repeal drive to collect enough signatures to put Initiative 300 on the November ballot. By the deadline last Thursday, the organization had collected about 50,000 of the 55,000 valid signatures needed.

"It was a little too late, a little too short," said North Platte Sen. Jim Pappas, backer of the repeal drive.

Pappas said bad press and "intimidation" by Larry Hall, president of the Nebraska Farmers Union, were among the reasons the drive failed.

Initiative 300 prohibits non-family corporations from operating on Nebraska farm and ranch land. Initiative 300 was added to the Nebraska constitution by a 1983 vote.

Hall filed a complaint with the attorney general in mid-June on behalf of the Nebraska Farmers Union and other support groups. He said Citizens To Restore the Constitution illegally paid petition circulators, many of whom were UNL students, to collect the needed signatures.

Gene Crump, deputy attorney general, said that if it could be proved the petition circulators were paid salaries and not reimbursed for only expenses, it was a violation. No receipts were kept by the petition circulators.

If the 55,000 signatures had been collected by Thursday, Hall said the farmers' groups would have pressed charges against Citizens To Restore the Constitution, claiming many of the signatures were invalid because they were

collected illegally.

Sen. Pappas said that Hall's group "got all the good press." Many volunteers were scared they would be subpoenaed to appear in court, so they stopped collecting signatures before last Thursday, he said.

"The threats by Larry Hall were really childish," he said. Volunteers were paid only expenses, he said.

Hall said circulators wouldn't have been fined for their part in collecting signatures if the issue had gone to trial.

"If petition circulators were paid only expenses, they were doing nothing wrong," Hall said.

Hall said the main reason the repeal drive failed to collect enough signatures was that many people were "turned off" by the fact that petition circulators were paid for more than expenses.

A former UNL student who attended meetings for petition circulators told the Daily-Nebraskan in June that she could be paid up to \$20 for working one night. Many of the petition circulators were UNL students who were told that how they calculated their expenses was their "own business," she said.

Groups against the repeal are the Nebraska Farmers Union, the National Farmers Organization, Women Involved in Farm Economics, the American Ag. Movement, the Grange, Nebraska Pork Producers, the Center for Rural Affairs, and other farm support groups including some churches, said Hall.

Sen. Pappas said Citizens To Restore the Constitution will "definitely" try again in two years to repeal Initiative 300.

NU Foundation president fired; reason not given

By Colleen Kenney
Senior Reporter

William Wenke, president of the University of Nebraska Foundation for the past two years, was fired Wednesday by the Executive Committee of the Foundation's board of trustees.

"It was in the best interest of the Foundation," Warren Johnson, chairman of the Foundation's board of trustees, said in a UNL press release. Johnson could not be reached by the Daily Nebraskan for further comment.

Wenke called the announcement "a real shocker." He said he was not informed ahead of the decision and has not been told yet why he was fired.

This past year was a record for the Foundation, receiving \$30 million in gifts, almost doubling the amount of donations collected the year before, also a record year.

The Foundation's assets jumped from \$108 million to the present \$155 million during the two years Wenke spent as Foundation president.

Wenke, 57, graduated from UNL's College of Law in 1952. He practiced law in Newport Beach, Calif., for 32 years before returning to Nebraska to join the Foundation June 1, 1984.

Wenke was in charge of the Foundation's entire operation, including ad-

ministrative functions and fund raising.

Wenke said his future is undecided. "We sold our home (in California) a month ago," he said. "We thought we were here permanently."

"As far as my plans go, I don't know," he said.

Foundation Executive Vice-President Edward J. Hirsch will take over as acting president until a new president is named. Hirsch said he did not know when a new president will be named or why Wenke was fired from his position.

D.B. Varner will remain chairman of the Foundation's Board of Directors.

The Foundation announced last week that their goal of collecting \$10 million for construction and maintenance of the Lied Center for the Performing Arts had been reached.

Wenke said he hopes UNL meets with continued success in the future.

Hirsch said Wenke's firing was decided at an Executive Committee meeting June 24. Eleven members of the Foundation's Board of Trustees comprise the Executive Committee.

Thomas Ash, UNL director of publications, was also fired at the June 24 meeting.

The two firings are not related, both Wenke and Hirsch said. Ash declined to comment.