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# Police play 'Whirlybirds'

The new police helicopter flies over the University every day, but only on its way to and from work, according to police inspector Robert Sawdon.

Stored and serviced at Duncan Aircraft at Lincoln Air Park, it must fly over the campus until a landing pad is installed on the County-City Building, he said. The helicopter can make deliberate passes over campus, though. If Lincoln police receive a call for help from University officials the helicopter could be used on the campus, Sawdon said.

For example, the snowball fight last January brought a call for the helicopter to illuminate the disturbance. A report of a prowler on University buildings might also bring the chopper to campus.

But, the majority of complaints about the helicopter are from criminals, Sawdon noted. "We've received several phone calls from the average citizen concerning the noise," Sawdon said, "but 85 per cent of them were just inquiries."

The success of the helicopter, which has been on patrol since January, has been encouraging to the police. "We're still sketchy on the actual per cent of decrease in crime, but it has definitely been noticeable," he said.

One reason for the success has been the potential criminal's fear of the chopper. "Undercover agents have reported that most criminals are afraid of the helicopter. They feel the odds are too much against them."

"It has an observation rather than an apprehension function," he said. The officer in the helicopter radios for



ground help when he spots trouble. The flying machine only lands as a "last resort in an emergency," he said.

Although the helicopter flies in the afternoon, its major use is at night when it patrols Lincoln's warehouse district at about 700 feet and shines an \$8,000 spotlight on the area.

"That spotlight makes it look just like daylight," said Sawdon. "We can see anything

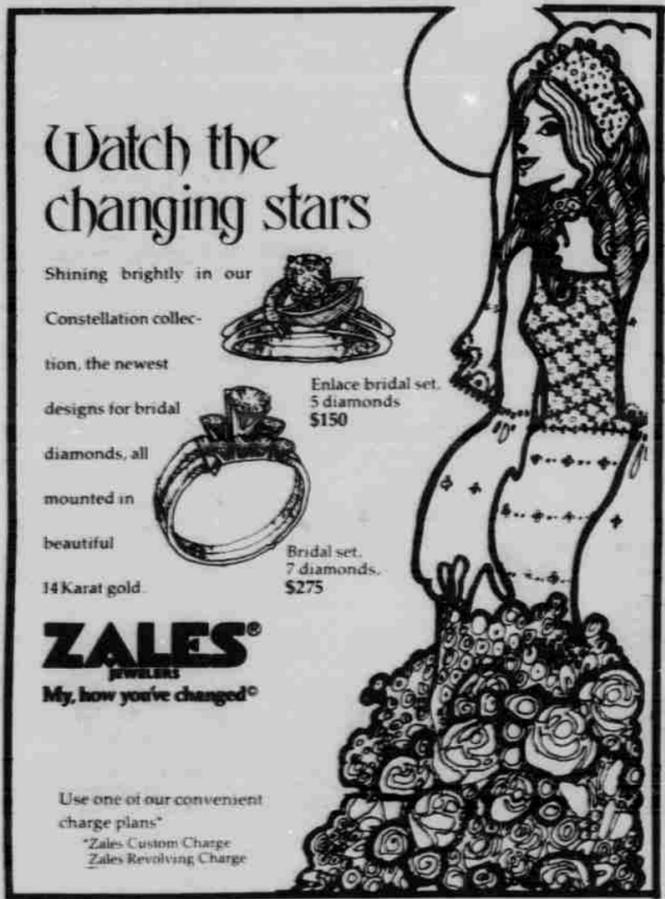
that's going on.

"The amazing thing about the helicopter is that it doesn't cost the city anything," Sawdon said. "A grant from the federal government takes care of the major portion of the expenses."

The aircraft is owned by Duncan Aircraft of Lincoln which supplies the pilot. One police officer rides in the helicopter at all times. "We are training our own pilots," Sawdon said.

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