

Rodgers conquers arrest record, bad publicity

by Jim Johnston

Eight months ago, Johnny Rodgers wouldn't have given a thin ham sandwich for his chances of winning the Heisman Trophy.

It was Friday, April 28, 1972, six days after Rodgers and a friend were arrested for suspicion of possessing marijuana. Although no charges were filed against Rodgers, the publicity hurt. And Johnny Rodgers knew it.



Rodgers . . . talks with Des Moines Register sportswriter Maury White.

It was the second strike against him. He had pleaded guilty a year earlier to larceny from a person in connection with a gas station robbery.

Rodgers sat at a table in the kitchen of his off-campus apartment that Friday afternoon, writing a statement on notebook paper which he wanted distributed to the wire services and the Lincoln and Omaha newspapers. It was to be his first public statement since the arrest.

"I want people to understand me," Rodgers explained while writing the statement. "Man, people must think Johnny Rodgers is really a bad person. All they hear about me in the spring are the bad things. And they're always on page one."

Rodgers' off-the-field problems had received mention in every major newspaper across the nation. It's the type of story which would find its way into the wastepaper basket at most newspapers if Johnny Rodgers was just an average football player.

But Johnny Rodgers was not just an average football player. He was one of the leading candidates for the Heisman Trophy the next fall. And that's one reason Rodgers was concerned about the publicity he was receiving.

"I've always thought about winning the Heisman Trophy," Rodgers said, "but it doesn't look very good now. Somebody is out to get me. I don't know why, but somebody is trying to hold me back. Maybe I should just forget about trying to get ahead in the world and winning the Heisman Trophy."

But Rodgers didn't forget his goals. He was too competitive to be a quitter.

When the 1972 college football season opened, Johnny Rodgers was a different person. He was more serious. He wasn't always the happy-go-lucky guy of his sophomore and junior seasons. "I've matured," he said.

Rodgers started a one-man campaign to erase his bad guy image. He visited patients in hospitals and made at least one trip a week to a Nebraska grade school.

"I did it because I wanted to do it," Rodgers said. "It wasn't to get publicity. I wanted to meet people and let them judge me for themselves. I didn't call the papers and tell them to take pictures. They came on their own."

Rodgers talked little about winning the Heisman

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Glover third in Heisman balloting

Nebraska flanker Johnny Rodgers received 1,310 points from electors Tuesday to win the 1972 Heisman Trophy. Oklahoma halfback Greg Pruitt was second with 966, followed by Nebraska middle guard Rich Glover with 652 points.

The announcement was made by Neill A. McAllister, president of the Downtown Athletic Club of New York, which sponsored the 38th annual award. Rodgers is the first Nebraska player ever to win the Heisman Trophy.

Louisiana State quarterback Bert Jones finished fourth with 351 points, Alabama quarterback Terry Davis was next with 338 points and quarterback John Hufnagel of Penn State was sixth with 292 points.

Rodgers was the top vote getter in all sections of the nation.

Other high finishers in the election of a successor to Auburn quarterback Pat Sullivan as the recipient of the Heisman Trophy were George Amundson of Iowa State in seventh with 219 points; Otis Armstrong, Purdue, 208; Don Strock, Virginia Tech, 144; Gary Huff, Florida State, 138; John Hannah, Alabama, 75; Tony Adams, Utah State, 73; Brad Van Pelt, Michigan State, 71 and Howard Stevens, Louisville, 66.

Rodgers, who is in New York with the Kodak All-American team to film a special television show with Bob Hope, was at Glover's house in Jersey City, N.J., when the announcement was made Tuesday noon. The two appeared at the banquet later in the afternoon.

Rodgers will attend a banquet in New York City Dec. 14 to accept the trophy.

Courts expert Kunstler raps judicial system

by Steve Arvanette

At a news conference in the Nebraska Union Tuesday, widely known defense lawyer of the "New Left" William Kunstler was asked by the mother of David Rice to intervene on Rice's behalf. Rice has been convicted of murdering an Omaha policeman.

After urging her to write his New York City office with details of the case, Kunstler moved on to the Union Ballroom to speak to a crowd of nearly 700.

"I want to talk out against the courts and what they do to society," Kunstler said at the outset. He said the operation of the courts and how it affects people is his area of expertise.

"The courts are the one branch of government people are afraid to criticize," he said, possibly because people consider them the "backbone" of society.

Kunstler's appearance on the University campus included a 30-minute taping for a Nebraska Educational Television program and several classroom appearances before his address and question and answer session in the Union.

He had been scheduled to appear on the UNL campus last spring for the World in Revolution Conference. However, a court case prevented that appearance.

Kunstler, who has defended "Chicago Eight," Dr. Benjamin Spock and Daniel and Phillip Berrigan currently is concentrating his efforts on the murder trial of H. Rap Brown.

Brown is charged under a 24-count indictment for murdering a police officer.

"They have a case against Rap, but they are screwing it up," Kunstler said. Brown, he said, is convinced he will be acquitted.

For the last 15 years Kunstler said he didn't know if his clients were guilty or innocent of the crimes

they were charged with. "I don't ask them," he adds. "And if a lawyer asked me, I'd fire him."

Commenting on the "Chicago Eight" case, Kunstler said he doubts if the government will attempt to retry the defendants after their convictions were over-turned three weeks ago. Judge Julius Hoffman who tried the case is being pictured as the villain by many, he said.

"He's not the real villain—the government set the state to use Judge Hoffman's vanity to assure convictions," he said. The prosecutors were the ones that were "pushing and goading" the judge, he said.

Much of Kunstler's address concerned crimes of conspiracy which he termed a "crime of fantasy." Such crimes need two elements—an informer and one overt act which could be fully legal.

Many of his recent cases have been what Kunstler says are political trials instigated primarily by the government. The purpose of such trials, he said, is not "to punish or deter crime."

The purpose of political trials, Kunstler said, is to "get rid" of the offender and his followers and "crystalize the silent majority behind the government."

One of the most classic political trials was that of Jesus Christ, he said. "Christ was saying some pretty frightening things to society," Kunstler said, adding the same thing would happen today as did nearly 2,000 years ago.

The most recent conspiracy trial which Kunstler is involved in concerns a group of Vietnam Veterans

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