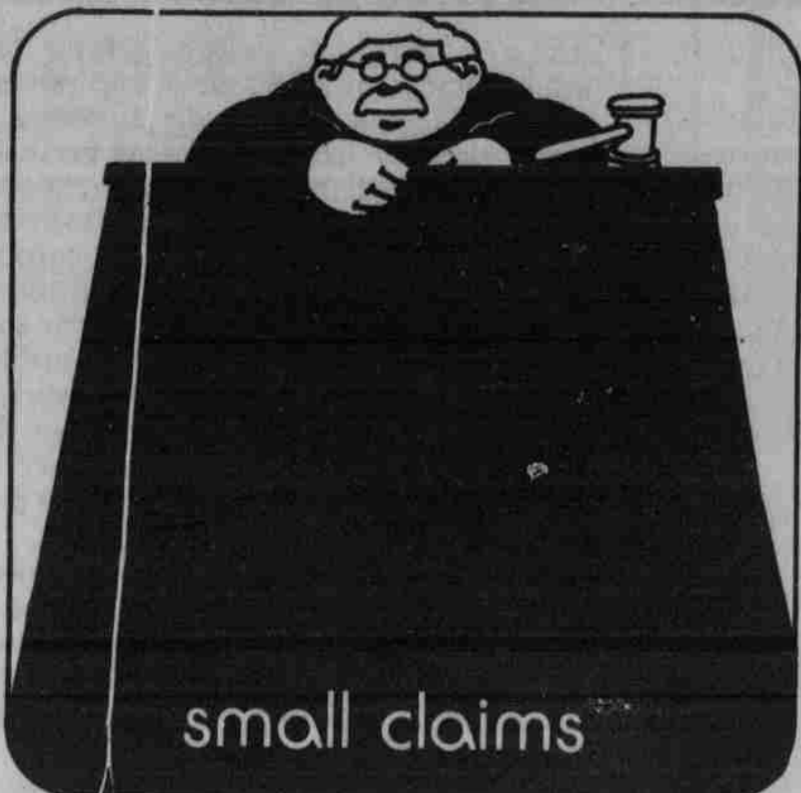


## Tenant disputes find home in new court



by Tim Anderson

Trouble frequently erupts between landlords and tenants, oftentimes students, concerning rent payments or the return of damage deposits.

But a new court system enacted in Lancaster County—the small claims court—may help settle some of the disputes.

Lancaster County's small claims court, which held its first hearings last Wednesday, provides a method of settling legal disputes involving \$500 or less, according to Lancaster County Judge Jeff Chevront.

"These small claims acts are being enacted everywhere with just this kind of dispute in mind—the tenant versus the landlord and oftentimes the landlord versus the tenant," Chevront said.

In his first day of hearings, the judge listened to three disputes, one of which was a tenant-landlord fight.

A student alleged he had paid \$245 rent and damage deposit to a Lincoln landlord and that the landlord had rented the property to another person and never returned the student's money.

The student presented his case (lawyers cannot be used in the informal court) with evidence and witnesses. He then was questioned by the landlord.

The evidence was examined, the witnesses questioned and cross-examined. The

defendant delivered his testimony concerning the incident.

After questioning both parties and examining all evidence, Judge Chevront ruled in favor of the student and ordered payment of the money.

"The most important part of this case was the evidence. This young man had receipts for two payments and witnesses for the other," the judge said. "I'm afraid that many people are going to come in here without good evidence."

In the small claims system, the plaintiff completes a claim form, which may be either delivered to the defendant by the county sheriff or by certified mail. The defendant can then file a counterclaim or a setoff.

In a counterclaim, the defendant says the plaintiff is at fault rather than the defendant. In a set off, the defendant says he may owe something, but that the plaintiff also owes something to him.

The defendant also may ask for a jury trial. If he does, the case will be transferred out of small claims court into the county court, where the parties may have lawyers.

"I can't say that this system is going to solve the problems of landlords not returning damage deposits or tenants not paying them, but at least it will give people a chance to have their case heard by a judge," Chevront said.

by Adella K. Wacker

"They were adults—they were drawing straight lines between two points," former UNL Nebraska Opportunities for Volunteers in Action (NOVA) director Gene Harding said Friday. He was describing first year NOVA volunteers. Many are students again.

Thirty-two students left in the fall, 1971, bent on changing lives and working with low income people, minorities and the disadvantaged throughout Nebraska. Second semester 10 more volunteers joined them in the field.

The volunteers talk about the cultural shock they feel back on campus, Harding said, where the pace is slower.

The volunteers didn't say they always felt power and purpose in NOVA.

Volunteers John Mangimeli and Vickie Zessin said "frustrating" in describing working between the city of Alliance, Nebraska Indians and the schools, and between Beatrice youths and the parole office.

"It was a very frustrating experience and I expected that—it was a great learning experience and I expected that," Mangimeli said about his 11-month term as an Alliance public school staff member.

He joined the second semester NOVA volunteers and returned to UNL in January 1973.

He was a counselor and tutor in a town which had never graduated an Indian from its high school, he said. He and two other NOVA volunteers worked not in the schools but in the Community Guidance Center.

Sometimes only four Indian children a day came to the center which was originally designed for studying. The NOVA volunteers turned the center into activities rooms—television, movies and games—designed to teach Indians about their Lakota Sioux culture and to also help them study. After the changes, Mangimeli said as many as 40 people came to the

## NOVA: dealing with reality

center each day.

Mangimeli said he had experience and ideas about Indian feelings gained from two years of tutoring Winnebago Indian children.

Now, he said, he feels he's lost some of the qualities it would take to return to a similar job.

"I've learned more about myself than about what's out there," he said.

There were times when he wasn't sure what he needed to know, he said, such as explaining math methods.

That was part of NOVA learning, Harding said. Both Mangimeli and Zessin stressed, "When you come back, you know what you're going to need, and you get it."

Harding used adjectives like "self-sufficient, independent and competent to describe NOVA volunteers who come back from the field.

"The real payoff is in the lives of the 42 participants," Harding declared. "I don't think that's selfish."

NOVA volunteers are perhaps more "abrasive," he said, "Well, at least not passive."

At the same time, Harding said, the volunteers themselves felt that they'd mellowed during their year in the field.

Large numbers of the volunteers left as opponents, seeing the government and law as oppressors of the poor, but then learned to see both sides of the question, he said.

"They've learned to deal with the reality they find," Harding said.

Zessin, who worked for the Gage County Juvenile Court, said learning to deal with law agencies was an integral part of her NOVA year, and she learned the government is human and changes are slow.

After being an assistant parole officer in the court, she and another NOVA volunteer reopened a youth center in the Beatrice auditorium basement and operated it 40 hours a week.

"When you think about it, she said, "it's crazy to think you went into a program for one year to help other people."

She said she realized in Lincoln that one has to change his lifestyle so that he's working all the time for change.

Zessin said NOVA didn't change her goals but it did change her sense of the importance of time.

She went out with the first semester NOVA volunteers and returned in March to her former nurses aide job at Tabitha Home. She's now taking licensed practical nursing courses at Lincoln Technical College instead of attending UNL.

Zessin has senior standing in the UNL Teachers College and said she thinks she'll earn her teaching certificate in English.

Mangimeli said he learned that truly opening up and accepting Indians probably means not being close to them, because it means honoring and not trying to change many value differences.

He said he found a few cases of housing discrimination against the Indians he was aiding.

During his 11 months, Mangimeli said, the Alliance townspeople and Lakota Sioux became more to him than "redneck white and drunk Indians."

## Documentary about typical city—Lincoln

Lincoln and several UNL students have been chosen as subjects for a 90-minute National Education Television documentary. The program, which will be televised tonight at 7 p.m. on channel 12, will examine the impact of the Vietnam War on what a spokesman called "a typical American community."

According to Jim Jaffer, associate producer of the program which is called "America '73", interviews have been conducted this week with many Lincoln citizens. The tape will be shown to a random audience of other Lincoln citizens and students.

Area citizens interviewed for the show include Diana Betts, the wife of a dead serviceman; ex-serviceman Robert Kerrey, who received the Congressional Medal of Honor; UNL ROTC Cadet Commander Galen Jackman; UNL's Army ROTC chairman Robert Pazderka; Police Inspector Robert Sawdun; Lt. Gov. Frank Marsh; and Beatrice (Mike) Seacrest of Lincoln and her son Ted, a draft evader living in Canada. Jaffer said the people in the film will attend the afternoon showing also, so that audience reactions can be answered for directly.

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