

Campus security rounds no pleasure cruise

By Mark Hoffman

The UNL campus security headquarters received a call about 10:30 on a Sunday night.

The Smith Hall residence director reported an attempt to break into the vending machines in the Smith basement.

Less than five minutes after the call, Sgt. Maurice Schuknescht was in the Smith lobby talking to residence director Dori Bush. A few minutes later he had stopped two students in the Schramm Hall lobby.

A tire iron was found in the basement, identification was made by the Smith resident who first had seen the two students and confessions were obtained.

Such incidents are rare, but they are the type that cruiser patrol officers are prepared to handle, according to an officer who worked with Schuknescht that night.

Many students might know the cruiser patrol only as traffic cops—the officers that keep students from running red lights and going 25 in 15 m.p.h. campus speed zones.

Besides traffic control, cruiser officers patrol parking lots, answer calls for assistance and handle incidents ranging from fraternity rock fights to finding stolen cars.

When campus security started patrolling UNL parking lots instead of cruising the streets waiting for something to happen, theft from cars was greatly reduced, he said.

He credited student participation in reducing incidents of major crime on the UNL campus.

Earlier this year, a dormitory resident spotted someone stealing tires off a car in a dormitory lot. He called campus security, and a cruiser arrived to stop the theft, although the would-be-thief escaped.

There also was the Smith resident who reported and identified the two students in the vending machine break-in attempt.

According to Schuknescht, it is the job of campus security to reinforce a feeling of cooperation between UNL students and campus police.

In dealing with campus security, the attitude a student develops toward an officer might be the attitude toward law officers he keeps for the rest of his life, Schuknescht said.

"What would we gain by throwing every student in jail for being drunk?" he asked. If that student applies for a civil service job later on, he might be rejected because he has been in jail, he said.

Campus security, however, does not turn its back on violations such as drug use, Schuknescht said.

"I took an oath to uphold the laws of the city, state and the (U.S.) Constitution" when he became an officer, Schuknescht said.

Failure to do so could result in a \$10,000 fine and dismissal from duty, he said. He said he would be risking too much by not acting if he came across students using drugs.

A 15-year campus security veteran, Schuknescht said campus security's job is helped by students' attitudes about college.

"Students are here for an education," he said. He attributed UNL's lack of serious crime to a general honesty among students and concern for others' rights.

So far this year, only one major crime—a theft from a dormitory room—has been reported, he said. The person involved was not a student, he said.

He said dormitory theft decreased after the beginning of the semester because students were able to recognize who did or did not live on their floors. He said students were more cautious about leaving their doors open if a stranger was on the floor.

Distinguishing students from nonstudents is a preventive measure, and prevention is 90 per cent of police work, according to campus security officer Merlin Howe.

"If a person is on campus at 2:30 a.m., we (campus security) want to know who he is," Howe said.

If a person is a student, nothing is done, he said. If the person is a nonstudent, campus security will ask him why he is on campus, he said.

Nothing will be done to the nonstudent who has a reason to be on campus, even if he only is there for a walk, Howe said. If the nonstudent does not have a good reason for being on campus, campus security escorts him off campus, he said.

Campus cruisers patrol 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"If a thief sees campus security every direction he looks, he probably won't come back," Howe said.

