

Ron Lahners, county attorney

Grand jury could fail to settle doubts

By George Miller

Lancaster County Attorney Ron Lahners said Sunday that a grand jury investigation of the Sherdell Lewis death may not satisfy doubts many people may have about the shooting.

Lewis was shot Sept. 24 when 12 lawenforcement officers went to his residence to serve a search warrant for drugs. Lewis died early the next day in a Lincoln hospital.

Lahners, speaking to a gathering at the First United Methodist church, said a grand jury would only decide whether or not there was probable cause to bring anyone to trial in connection with the shooting. He said that if a grand jury decided to issue a "true bill" and bring someone to trial or not, the report of the grand jury and its proceedings would remain secret.

Both Lahners and Lincoln City Councilman John Robinson addressed about 130 persons at a public discussion sponsored by the political action task force of the church.

Lahners said the same information he used in his investigation of the shooting would be the same information the grand jury would get.

However, he said he would be reluctant to spend \$50-\$60,000 of the taxpayers' money on a grand jury.

A petition drive is currently under way to gather enough signatures to call a grand jury to investigate Lewis' death. The petition requires 4,850 signatures, or 10 per cent of the registered voters in the last gubernatorial election.

Robinson said there is "a whole array of questions" concerning Lewis' death and that the ultimate decision left to the people is whether they will be satisfied with Lahner's report on the shooting.

Lahners had said that he could find no evidence to justify calling a grand jury on the shooting or to press charges against anyone connected with it.

Robinson said a grand jury investigation is the "only viable solution" to satisfy the public.

He said there was "a serious coverup" in the case because very little information from Lahners' investigation was made public. He added that the controversy surrounding the case could have been avoided if "we had had more input and more information into the case."

Lahners said that he had answered all questions from the press concerning the case except to give the names of the police informants who told police that Lewis had cocaine in his residence, leading to the serving of the search warrant.

Robinson said "it is unfortunate we find (deputy sheriff Rodney) Loos in his situation. The law enforcement system throughout the county should be brought under question."

Loos is the Lancaster Deputy Sheriff who fired the shot killing Lewis as he allegedly came to the door carrying a rifle.

"Loos just happened to be ambitious, over-zealous and enjoyed the action," Robinson said.

Lahners said no complaint was filed against Loos in the shooting because the evidence did not justify charges against him.

Loos was "a lone, scared police officer when he was looking down the barrel of Lewis' gun," he said.

Lahners said he could think of alternatives the officers could have used when they saw that Lewis had a rifle, instead of shooting him. However, he said the officers had a duty to deliver the search warrant before Lewis could destroy any drugs he may have had in the house.

UNL 'visits home'

Some UNL students will spend part of their Christmas vacation telling high school students about the university.

UNL Builders, which sponsors spring and fall orientations for high school seniors, will hold a two-hour orientation Tuesday for UNL students interested in telling high school students in their home towns about campus life.

Last year 100 UNL students participated, according to Phyllis Vance, program cochairperson.

"We want to show them (high school students) that the university isn't as impersonal as some people think," she said.

Orientation will be at 8:30 p.m. in Nebraska Union. The room number will be posted.

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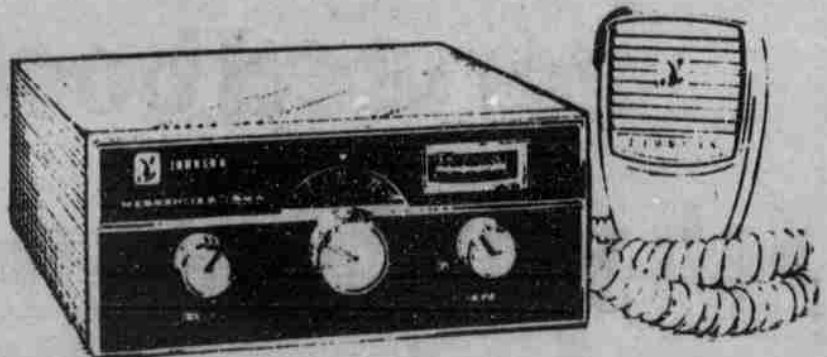
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