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Prior associates laud Roskens

By Maxine Kubicek

Newly appointed NU President Ronald Roskens is characterized as a builder and as being open by those who knew him as chancellor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO).

His leadership as chancellor was instrumental in improving UNO's image, said persons who had contact with him at UNO.

In appointing him Saturday, the NU Board of Regents cited his aggressive leadership as interim NU president. Roskens was UNO chancellor from July 1972 until he was appointed to fill in for D.B. Varner.

"There was a myth around Omaha that UNO was really 'West Dodge High,' but after he (Roskens) came, you didn't hear that saying much any more," said Rusty Schwartz, 1972-73 UNO student body president.

Schwartz, now executive vice president of Metropolitan Omaha Builders Association, said Roskens was open and aggressive in his leadership as UNO's chancellor.

"The thing that impressed me most about him was his candor," Schwartz said. "If something was happening on campus that the student government didn't know about, he made sure we got all the information. He was very direct and laid it on the line."

Schwartz cited Roskens' handling of an apparent parking problem at UNO as an example of the former chancellor's manner of dealing with conflict.

Parking myth

"There was a myth of a very serious parking shortage at UNO and a group had been formed to do something about it," Schwartz said. "Roskens had a study done on the parking situation which showed real parking problems only two or three days out of a semester."

Roskens presented the results of the survey to the

group to show them the extent of the parking problem, he said.

David Krajicek, editor of *The Gateway*, UNO campus newspaper, said Roskens was interested in the students "as a rule."

Krajicek said that as UNO chancellor, Roskens made a point of keeping in touch with the students by teaching a class every semester, including a public speaking class. He also initiated a bi-weekly "chancellor's rap session" to give students an opportunity to express their opinions, he said.

Interim UNO chancellor Herbert Garfinkel is continuing the program at UNO, Krajicek said.

Impact

UNO's incorporation into the NU system after existing as a municipal university may have had more impact on its academic and financial improvement than "the work of one man," Krajicek said.

Dick Ulmer, *Gateway* editor in 1974, said Roskens seemed "shell-shocked" when he first arrived at UNO from Kent State University in 1972.

Ulmer, a reporter with the *Omaha Sun Newspapers*, said Roskens seemed to relax after his first year and worked extensively to bring UNO closer to the community. However, he said some students think Roskens was "not as student oriented as he might have been."

"Personally, I'm glad he was appointed president. He was just what UNO needed," he said.

Justin Stolen, UNO faculty senate president, said Roskens excelled in communicating with people and in considering all sides of a problem.

"He is essentially honest and above board," Stolen said. "He never springs things on people. I think he made every effort to handle problems fairly and communicated well with the students, the community, the Legislature and the university as a whole."

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