



Death penalty debate lives on

By Tam Lee

The question of abolishing the death penalty is being kept alive in the Nebraska Legislature, even though the bill was killed Monday on a 24-23 vote.

Senators spent an hour Wednesday debating a resolution, LB63, sponsored by Lincoln Sen. Wally Barnett. It would allow

voters to decide whether the Legislature should set the penalties for first-degree murder, treason, and impeachment, Barnett said. No action was taken on the resolution.

Some senators have said they could support a move to abolish the death penalty if they could be assured that those convicted of first-degree murder would serve

long sentences.

The Board of Pardons now has the power to reduce sentences. According to Barnett, if voters give the Legislature the power to determine sentences, the pardons board will have no authority to reduce them.

One of the arguments for keeping the death penalty is that prisoners serving a life sentence often get out of prison within a few years. The proposed constitutional amendment to take the power of commuting sentences for first-degree murder out of the hands of the pardons board would insure that a criminal sentenced for 30 years would serve 30 years, with no possibility for parole and no provision for good time, Barnett said.

Omaha Sen. Ernest Chambers, who sponsored a bill to abolish the death penalty, said he would fight to keep the death penalty issue alive.

"You can kill every bill I have before you. This issue is more important to me than any other," he said.

"I am trying to save lives, I am trying to keep the state from killing four of its citizens."

Sen. John DeCamp of Neligh, who favors the death penalty, said the death penalty should be retained because it is a fundamental part of the state's judicial system.

"If you start tampering with the judicial system, pretty soon you won't have one," he said.

Omaha Sen. Neil Simon replied, "The barbaric way we have of executing people is upsetting our judicial system."

Last year, Chambers introduced LB64, which originally would have abolished the death penalty. In a final attempt to get enough votes to pass the bill Monday, Chambers agreed to amend it to put a one-year moratorium on state executions. The bill was defeated by one vote, with two senators absent.

Falls City Sen. Nelson Merz, one of the senators absent during the vote, offered a motion Tuesday to reconsider LB64 on the condition that it be amended to put a moratorium on the death penalty until LR63 is acted upon.

The resolution is scheduled to be debated again today.

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Students slip-slidin' away on sidewalk ice

Members of the UNL sidewalk ice skating team (which includes anyone who dares to venture onto UNL's campus) are participating in this rapidly growing sport without medical coverage.

Persons injured in falls on icy sidewalks are entitled to sue the university, but chances of collecting damages are small, according to NU's general legal counsel.

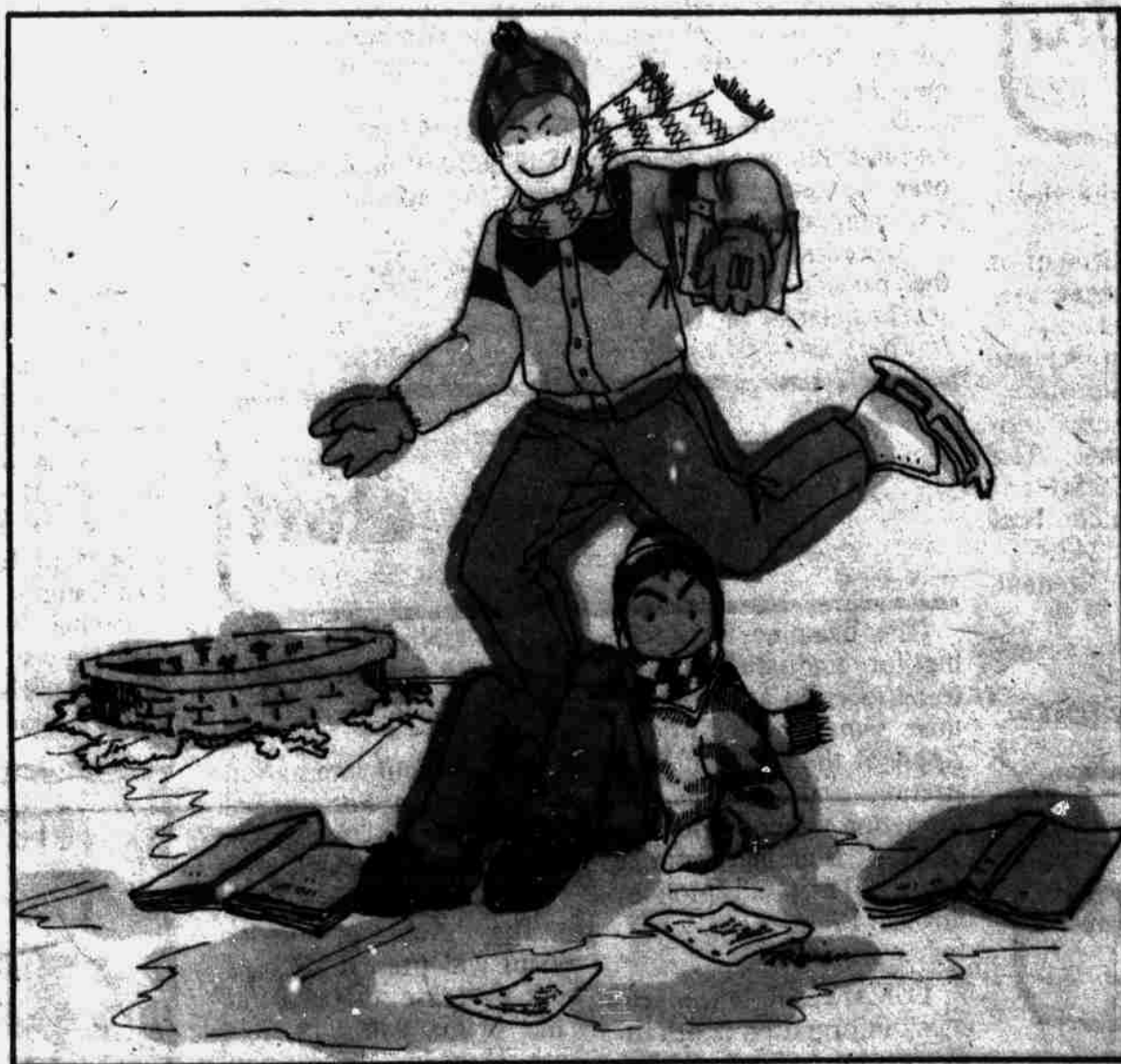
John Gourlay said Nebraska case law in "slip-and-fall" suits indicates property owners are not responsible for nature's accumulations of ice and snow.

An injured party must show negligence by the property owner to win a suit, he said. The courts assume a person is able to see and avoid danger, Gourlay said.

As of Monday, 20 tons of sand and gravel had been spread on campus streets and sidewalks after a weekend ice storm, said Jay Schluckebier, assistant grounds department director.

Schluckebier said the department has run out of the salt normally used on sidewalks, and the department has hesitated to use road salt because of danger to grass.

Although the department sands sidewalks on campus daily, he said, the sand soon blows away.



'Mom' has no favorites

By Mary Fastenau

Only a mother could watch a basketball game and wear that beaming smile of pride. Those wringing hands and nervous stomping feet must belong to a mother.

She calls them all by name with motherly affection, but the UNL basketball team does not call her, "Mom", they call her Nancy Williams.

Williams, an attractive brunette, is Joe Cipriano's personal secretary, the basketball secretary and an enthusiastic basketball fan.

Williams is like a mother because she has no favorites.

"I think it would be impossible to have favorites," she said. "They are all favorites."

She admitted that she feels close to Brian Banks and Carl McPipe because all three were new to Lincoln at the same time.

Williams sits behind the team, always dressed in red. She has almost as many

moves as a player as she fidgets through the game.

She calls each team member by name as she yells from her seat. Her remarks are rarely derogatory as she encourages "her boys." She says she never tries to coach, she just provides encouragement.

Williams says the players tell her they can hear her yelling, and it seems to help.

In a tense situation McPipe is on the free throw line. He misses the first shot, and Williams yells, "Come on Carl, we need that."

The second shot drops through the net. Williams grew up in Kansas. While living in Topeka she said she attended both Kansas and Kansas State basketball games. She said basketball was the sport which attracted the most attention.

"I wasn't used to the football fever," she admitted.

Though Williams is a native Kansan, she said there was no question as to which team she was supporting.

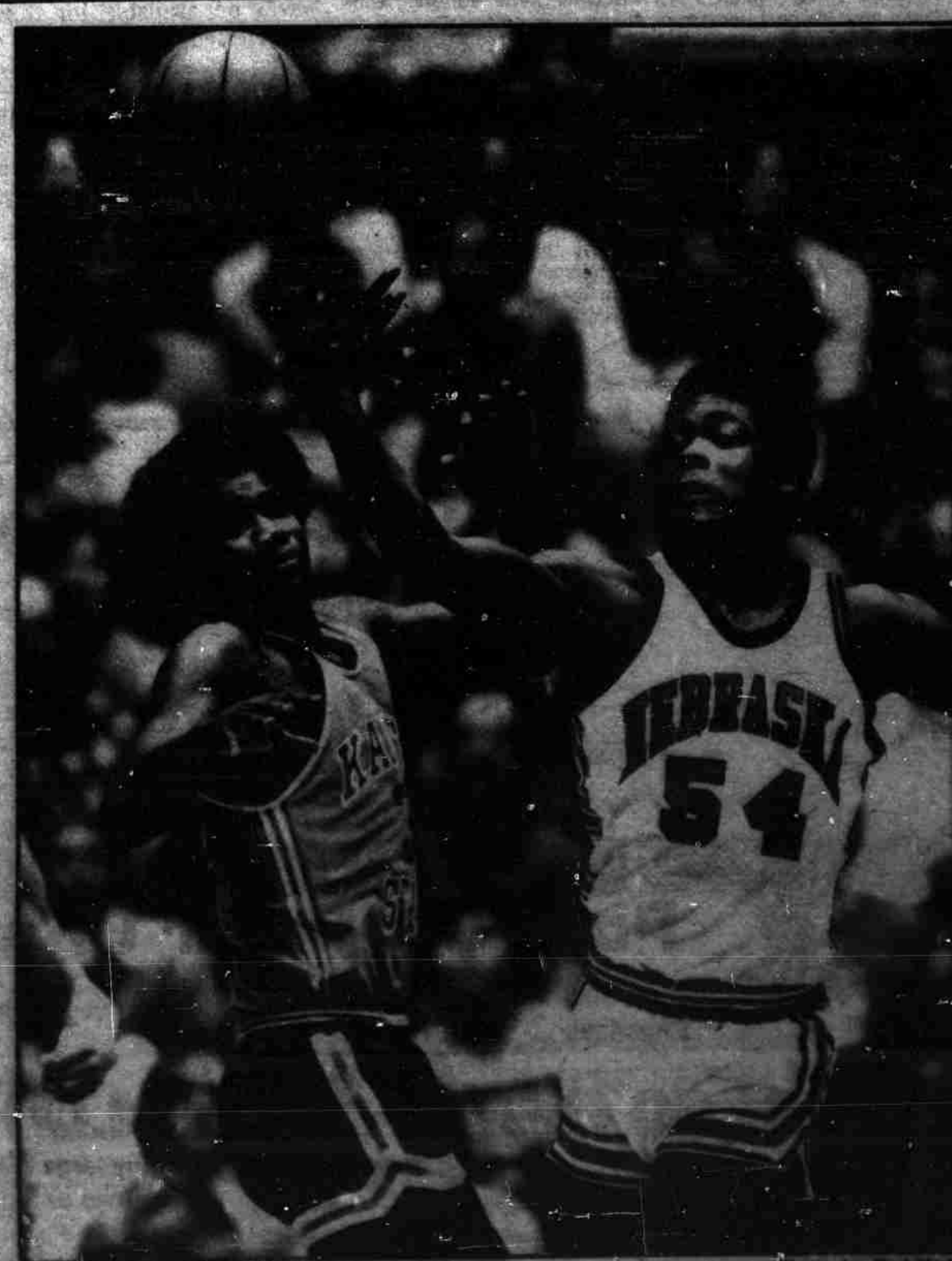
"Look, I don't have an inch of purple on," she said.

She has worked in the basketball department for three years, she said. She graduated from the Lincoln School of Commerce in 1971 and was working for a law firm in Topeka when she discovered the job.

"I used to be a legal secretary, so I went from legal terms to basketball terms," she said.

Williams said the reason she gets "so crazy" at games is because she thinks the enthusiasm from the crowd can really make a difference in a basketball game.

Williams enjoyed halftime festivities including a sweeping race between two men, George Brown and Harry Bruns, who the announcer said had "been around almost as long as the basketball program."



Nebraska center Carl McPipe and Kansas State forward Curtis Redding battle for a loose rebound in last night's game in the Sports Complex. The Huskers subdued the Wildcats 63-50.

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