

Local exotic pet ordinance could constrict boa owners

By Randy Essex

A proposal by the city-county Health Department that would ban "exotic" pets in Lincoln has been called "silly," "absurd" and "too general" by persons with interests in exotic animals.

The proposal defines an exotic pet as "any poisonous or potentially dangerous animal or creature not normally considered domesticated." It includes monkey, tarantulas, boa constrictors, skunks, raccoons and a multitude of other creatures.

Because of the proposal's general terminology, Ron and Diane Kolarik, owners of the Gateway Pet Center, fear that any animal could easily be included in the ban.

"It's written so whoever is in charge at the time may interpret it to include almost any animal," Diane said.

Law needed

Alan Bietz, director of the Lincoln Children's Zoo, had not seen a copy of the proposal, but said the wording could be reworked "so the law would be more suitable to everyone." Bietz said such a law is needed because the freedom and happiness of the animal is at stake.

"People aren't going to change their life to suit the animal," Bietz explained. "It's the animal that will have to change."

"I personally think the proposal is absurd," said Willie Sapp, 623 N. 30 St. Sapp is the owner of a 3-foot Burmese python which would be illegal for him to keep if the proposal becomes law.

"It's silly to impose a ban on these animals when many times more people have been bitten by dogs than snakes," Sapp added. He said his snake is kept in a

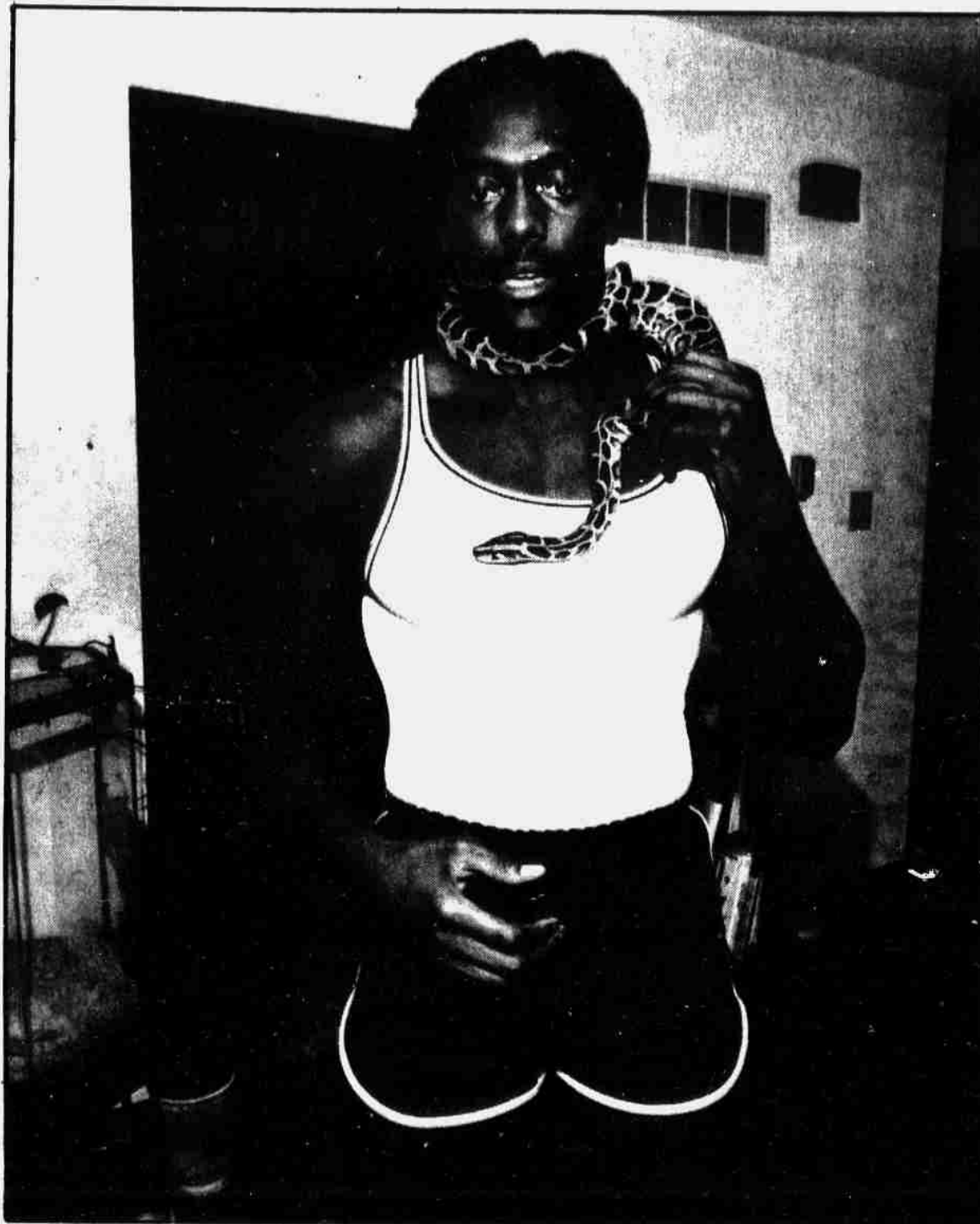


Photo by Ted Kirk

Willie Sapp, the owner of a Burmese python, would have to give up his pet if a proposed ordinance banning exotic pets is passed by the City Council.

glass aquarium, and is never in a position to harm anyone.

Animals harmful

Some animals classified as exotic have harmed people, according to Craig Schainost, the city's chief animal control officer.

"We'll have cases where someone's pet skunk or raccoon will turn on them and bite people in the neighborhood," Schainost said.

The Kolariks charged that any skunk or raccoon that goes wild was taken out of the wild illegally. They explained that pet stores can only sell the animals if they have been captive for a specified period of time.

Schainost said the animals are impossible to domesticate.

The Kolariks also said tarantulas are not lethal; their bite is like a bee sting.

Lawrence Parrish, a UNL sophomore and former tarantula owner, said he had been bitten by his pet, and agreed with the Kolariks concerning the effects of the bite.

Bietz, however, said he would prefer a bee sting to a tarantula bite.

Weird calls

"We get some weird calls," Bietz said, "like, 'There's a tarantula loose in my basement, what should I do?'"

Bietz estimated that there are more "exotic" pets in homes around Lincoln than in the city's zoos. He said although there are federal restrictions on many animals covered in the proposal, "there are always loopholes.

"There are similar ordinances around the country. Omaha has one. The state of California has a book of regulations," Bietz stated.

"I wouldn't mind seeing some things controlled, but this proposal isn't the answer," Ron Kolarik said.

The proposal will be subject to public debate before the city council acts on it.

Speaker sees no conflict between ERA, homemaking

By Kim Wilt

Anne Follis, national president of Housewives for ERA, says she doesn't see any contradictions between being a homemaker and favoring ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

"I am a homemaker, a Christian, and a patriot, and for these reasons I support the ERA," she said. She says she believes her job as a housewife is "one of the most important jobs in the country."

The wife of a Methodist minister, Follis says her church backs her in this issue.

"The Methodist church is the most supportive group in the country of the ERA," she said.

Scriptures agree

She has studied the Scriptures, and said she feels the Christian way for people to act toward each other is "mutual submission.

"Paul told wives to submit to their husbands," Follis said, but adds that he also told husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church. "Jesus Christ submitted himself to the church," Follis says, so husbands and wives should submit to each other."

Follis said many housewives have a

"false sense of security" and do not believe they need the ERA.

"They think they have a bag full of wonderful rights, and the ERA will take them all away." But that's just not true, according to Follis.

Constitution 'sexist'

The Constitution was never intended to include women, she said, and the 14th Amendment, which states no state can deny any person equal protection under

the law, was intended to refer to black men, not to women. She said the Supreme Court has interpreted the amendment to mean that discrimination on the basis of race and religion is illegal, but not on the basis of sex.

Ms. Follis says a homemaker has no property rights, and no benefits in her old age.

"You are at the mercy of your husband," she says.

Housewives for ERA was started in 1973, in Evanston, Ill. In 1976, Follis became the first state president, and in 1978, she was elected national president.

"I believe we have touched a nerve," she says.

A full-time housewife, and mother of three, Follis says she tries to limit her speaking engagements so she will not be away from her family any more than necessary. Being a homemaker is her career.

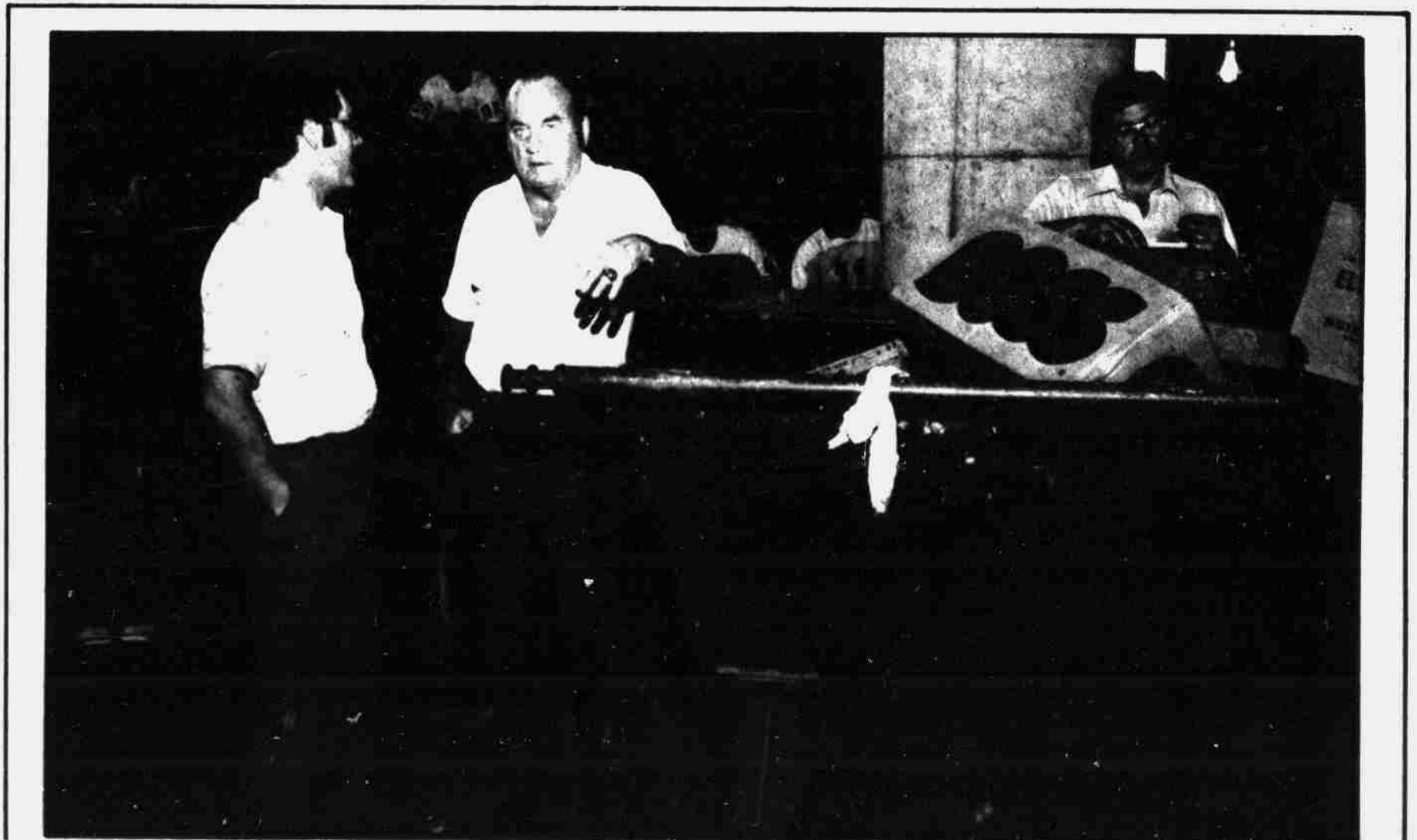


Photo by Bob Pearson

The Big Eight Skywriters, sports reporters who take a tour to observe Big Eight football teams, left Memorial Stadium Saturday without any doubt that Bob Devaney is in charge of football in Nebraska. For more on the skywriters visit to UNL, see page 22.

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