

## Former cell mate testifies Ellis said he 'killed once'

By Val Swinton

A former inmate who served time in the same jail cell with John Ellis testified yesterday in Lancaster County Court that Ellis told him he had once killed a person. That testimony came during the second day of Ellis' preliminary hearing.

Robert T. Burns, of Plattsmouth, said he spent two to three weeks in the Cass County jail with Ellis, a UNL graduate who's accused of killing another UNL student, Debra Forycki. Her skeleton was found last month in an old tank wagon near Elmwood, nearly four years after she disappeared while on her way to work in downtown Lincoln.

Burns said he was serving 30 days in the county jail for driving with a suspended license. Ellis was serving 75 days on an assault charge. Both were in jail in January of 1977. Burns testified that one day, Ellis began talking about the Elmwood area, where the Forycki skeleton was found. Ellis reportedly told Burns he knew of a quiet spot where he liked to go and meditate sometimes.

"Mr. Ellis said, if you ever happen to kill somebody and you ever wanted to hide their body, it was a good place, the police would never find it," Burns testified.

"He asked me if I had ever killed anybody, I said no, and he said, well I have," Burns said. He said he told Ellis he shouldn't be talking about things like committing a murder, and Ellis replied, "Well I did."

### Macho talk

Under cross examination, Ellis' attorney, John Stevens Berry, asked Burns if Ellis had mentioned he was an ex-marine, and suggested that type of "macho talk" is common in jail cells. Burns had said earlier he didn't take the remark seriously, and Berry pressed the point, asking him why he didn't take the remark seriously.

"He seemed very serious. . . ." Burns said.

At that point, Berry interrupted him, and then County Attorney Ron Lahners interrupted Berry.

"Let him answer your question," Berry replied.

Then, Judge Jeffre Chevront intervened. "He is too answering your question. Let him continue."

"He was deadly serious," Burns continued. "He looked me straight in the eye and asked me that," Burns said, referring to the question about whether Burns had ever killed anyone.

Two area women also testified yesterday that Ellis had attacked them at knife point, Lyn Miserez, of Lincoln, said Ellis called her in June of 1976, and asked her out to supper. Miserez said she had first met Ellis two years earlier.

She said that when he picked her up, he told her they were going to a barbecue at a friend's house near Elmwood. Instead, she said he drove to a farm field near Elmwood. "I was ready to turn to him and tell him we should leave, when I felt a knife at my throat," she said.

### Calmed down

Miserez said, "I told him he didn't need the knife, he could do anything he wanted as long as he didn't hurt me." She said he seemed to calm down, and dropped the knife out the window of the car. The weapon was never recovered.

"He said he was sorry," she testified, "and wanted to know if I wanted to beat him with a stick. He said he was sick and forcing his will on someone turned him on."

Miserez said she insisted that they leave, and he got angry again, tying her hands behind her. She testified that she began to scream, and Ellis untied her hands. "He talked for a while again about being sick and wanted to see a psychologist," she said.

Miserez said she escaped from Ellis when they drove to Elmwood, and he left the car for a minute.

Berry, who had continually objected to Miserez's testimony, asked her if it was not true she was employed part time by the county attorney's office, and that she had been hired about a month ago. She said she was, and also said she had talked with members of the county attorney's office about the case.

"Berry then made another motion that her testimony be stricken from the record. "This witness is incompetent to testify," he told Judge Chevront, who denied the motion.

### Both UNL students

Berry then asked the witness, "You had an affair with John Ellis, hadn't you?" At that point, Lahners objected, and after a conference in front of the judges bench, Berry was prohibited from continuing that line of questioning.

Carol Nelson, a Lincoln telephone company employee, said she met Ellis in October of 1974, when they were both

UNL students. She said at the time, he did not tell her his real name, but said his name was John Tronzowski. Nelson said he invited her to have breakfast with him at a friend's house. She said he had permission to use the house while his friend was gone.

Nelson said while at the house, Ellis twisted her arm behind her, and stuffed a hankerchief in her mouth. She said she pleaded with him, and he finally replied, "I can't do it," and let her go.

She said she was not aware at the time that Ellis was married or what his real name was. She said police told her later the house did not belong to a friend, but was his own residence.

Today, Lahners said Ellis' ex-wife, Martha Dickerson, who arrived in Lincoln from Oklahoma yesterday, may be called to the witness stand, as one of the last witnesses in the hearing.

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I think that I shall never see, a thing as lovely as a . . . telephone pole.

Photo by Mark Billingsley

## Little-known Nebraska oil wells add to U.S. production

By Bob Lannin

Nebraska—home of the Cornhuskers, Buffalo Bill Cody, Chimney Rock and 1,382 oil wells.

Yes, oil wells in Nebraska.

According to Ray Burchett, professor in the UNL Conservation and Survey Division, Nebraska had 1,382 active oil wells as of 1977.

Total production from these wells, according to Burchett, was 5.9 million barrels of oil during 1977.

Before heading out to the Panhandle to seek your fortune in oil, realize that this production represents about one percent of the total U.S. oil production, according to Paul Roberts, director of the Nebraska Oil and Gas Commission.

Stan Juelfs, president of Stanco Petroleum in Kimball, said single wells in Texas can produce the same amount



of oil as Nebraska does in one year.

### Three Nebraska areas

Roberts said there are three major oil producing areas in Nebraska. The first is located under Richardson County, the

second is the Cambridge Arch, where oil is refined on either side of an arch running from Chadron to McCook.

The largest oil producing area is the Denver-Julesburg Basin, which covers most of western Nebraska and includes all the Panhandle counties.

Most of the refining is done by independent companies, according to Roberts, but most major oil companies are represented either by holding leases on some land or in production of some oil.

Burchett said some of the major oil companies represented in Nebraska are Skelly Oil, Marathon Oil, British-American Oil, and California Oil.

Juelfs said it was uneconomical for major companies to drill in Nebraska because of the expense involved. In 1976 Nebraska had over 13,000 inactive wells compared to an estimated 1,300 producing wells.

Burchett said it still was economical for independents to drill however, because "the price of oil has gone so high it doesn't take a whole lot of oil to make it economical."

The price of leases in Nebraska is far less than that of other major oil producing states, according to Burchett.

A lease in Texas costs more than \$200 per acre, whereas most Nebraska leases run about \$2 per acre, Burchett said.

The largest oil company in Nebraska is the Beren Corporation of Denver, which has about 30 wells in western Nebraska, according to Roy White, production manager.

Its Nebraska operation represents about one-third of its total operation, White said.

The company's drilling activity in western Nebraska has increased greatly during the last couple of years because of new finds, White said.

### Half successful

The company attempts about 15 to 20 drillings per year, White said, with about a 50 percent success rate.

Roberts said the oil drilling brings about \$60 million in revenue, but also is subject to a 35 percent real estate tax, along with other state taxes.

## ASUN refuses support to speaker group

By Pat Gentzler

Although a few clouds are in the forecast, the storm that began three weeks ago when ASUN took its first step in revising the student impact system at UNL seems to have passed.

ASUN's Wednesday night meeting was conspicuously minus any discussion or action on the new system. The last of ASUN's preliminary action was passed earlier this week to be followed by action when the Council on Student Life and the Union Board expire Dec. 31.

One related bill, which gives ASUN the authority presently held by the Council on Student Life after its termination at the end of the year, was brought before the Senate and sent to committee, to be acted on at a later date.

Suspending ASUN rules in order to act on a bill immediately, as the Senate has

done often the last few weeks, ASUN support of the Committee for Facts on Vietnam, a group that would like to circulate a petition in the Nebraska Union calling for an anti-Vietnam war speaker to balance the recent speech by General William C. Westmoreland, was refused.

Glen Maloney, of the Campus Activities and Programs (CAP) office, told the Senate that the group could file a letter of intent with the CAP office to have a booth in the Union without ASUN's approval. Although the group is not an actual student organization, and has faculty among its membership as well as students, it could be recognized as a student organization temporarily, he said.

Concern was expressed by Senate members that passage of the bill could be misinterpreted as ASUN's support of the group and its cause, rather than just

allowing the group to petition.

But after the bill was amended to change the word "support" to "allow," it was defeated.

ASUN Second Vice-President Scott Ballentine told the Senate that the emphasis last year on balanced speakers stemmed from the fact that speakers were funded through student fees, and reminded the Senate that they no longer are.

Senator Bruce Kendall said that he supported the issue of balanced speakers, but "that's not what this bill is for."

The petition drive could be handled through the traditional channels without ASUN support and still provide balanced speakers, Kendall said.

Senator Toni Ecklund pointed out that if the Committee for Facts on Vietnam could not file a letter of intent, any other student organization could.

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