

Police chief defends officers, criticizes administration

By Val Swinton

Lincoln Police Chief George Hansen last week defended his officers for their behavior during the bonfire prior to the Oklahoma game, and for actions taken by officers during the game.

In a four page statement released Wednesday, Hansen also criticized the UNL administration for not making public the policy concerning protection of the goalposts following the game.

Hansen said he could not find any "overzealousness" on the part of the officers in actions they took during the bonfire and game.

"The 'overzealousness' of the police response and unnecessary use of force are typical complaints following any police/mob confrontation," he said. "...we have not been spared these charges. But they are without basis."

Seventeen students were arrested during the bonfire, and at least one claimed to have received six stitches in his forehead after an LPD officer struck him in the forehead with a police baton.

Hansen defended the use of batons by his officers.

"They give an officer trained in their proper use an option between bare hands and using his gun," he said.

"In a less than perfect world, where police officers are subject to assault and attack," Hansen said, "the police baton remains an important tool."

At least one police officer received minor injuries when he was allegedly struck by a student during the Thursday night bonfire, according to police.

No crackdown

Hansen denied any "crackdown" on students at UNL, but said "we offer no special leniency because the offender happens to be a university student."

Hansen said he disagrees with the idea that, "we should . . . grant a special immunity to university students who commit offenses and not treat them like 'ordinary' offenders."

Hansen also was angry with police critics who said the actions of the students were motivated by the emotions of the upcoming football game.

"The attempt by some critics to excuse serious and substantial criminal offenses on the grounds that they were motivated by 'high spirits' and 'youthful enthusiasm' is equally reckless in my view," he said. "Arson, vandalism and assault cannot be ignored as mere playful behavior."

All of the students who were charged in connection with the bonfire pleaded not guilty to the charges, and most have

hearing dates during Christmas vacation. Several of the students said police were too forceful in making arrests during the bonfire.

In addition to the student who received six stitches, another claimed his glasses were broken when he was struck in the face by an officer's flashlight. Although officers from the UNL, Lincoln and Lancaster County law enforcement agencies were at the bonfire, students blame only Lincoln Police for using excessive force.

Hansen was also critical of the university administration for not making public their policy concerning protection of the goalposts following the Oklahoma game.

Protect Goalposts

"Newspaper reports and statements by university officials seem to have created the impression that the goalposts were considered inconsequential by the university administration. . . ." Hansen said in his statement. "The policy decision to try and preserve the goalposts was made by the university administration."

"I authorized this department to provide what assistance it could in reliance with this decision," Hansen said. "I am personally disappointed that the responsible university officials have not made the fact of this decision public."

Hansen added that the silence of the administration contributed to the belief that Lincoln Police and other agencies acted irresponsibly, when, he said, nothing could be further from the truth.

UNL Chancellor Roy Young said the decision made by university officials was to provide minimum protection to the goalposts, while providing maximum protection to the fans who ran onto the field following the game.

At least two persons were arrested following the game, and one of those, a student, filed a complaint with the police department over treatment he received during the game.

Forycki remains to be rechecked, released by court

By Val Swinton

The parents of Debra Forycki are expected to be granted custody of their daughter's remains on Dec. 8.

Forycki's remains were discovered in an abandoned water wagon near Elmwood more than two months ago, four years after she disappeared on her way to work in downtown Lincoln.

Authorities have retained custody of the skeleton while tests were made to determine the cause and time of death.

Although the Lancaster County Attorney's office presented testimony during a preliminary hearing last month from several witnesses who examined the skeleton, defense attorney John Stevens Berry has called in an expert to examine the remains. Berry is defending John Ellis, a UNL graduate accused in the death of Forycki.

During Friday's court hearing, Berry suggested that the remains not be turned over to the family until after Dec. 20, the date that an additional court hearing has been set to hear arguments of whether the case should be bound over to the district court.

Berry contested the finding of probable cause, saying there was no evidence that Ellis had committed the crime. He said if District Court Judge Herbert Ronin agreed, which would cause the charges against Ellis to be dismissed, then Berry's expert would not have to examine the remains, saving the county money.

However, Ronin told Berry he had already committed the county to paying the cost of Berry's expert, and he was concerned "about the evidence of anxiety of the family of the victim."

Berry said the expert, who is a lawyer and forensic pathologist, should complete his examination by Dec. 8. Berry refused to identify him, but said the man was coming from either Maryland or Pennsylvania.

The defense attorney said he is primarily concerned with grooves found in a finger and wrist bone of the skeleton, which the county attorney said could have been caused by a bullet wound. Berry added that the pathologist wants to examine all of the remains for additional evidence, not just the two bones in question.



Photo by Bob Pearson

Hey, this stuff is real! Cheri Mellott and friends sit in the snow after sliding down a hill near Southeast High School.

Sentence altered in recent story; apology offered

The *Daily Nebraskan* would like to apologize to our news sources, our readers and our staff for an error which appeared on page seven of our Nov. 20 edition in an article entitled "Area media, law officials agree to not publish juvenile's names."

A *Daily Nebraskan* backshop employee deliberately altered a sentence, defaming the reporter who wrote the story.

The sentence should have read "Sgt. Gary Hoffman, supervisor of the Youth Aid Bureau of the Lincoln Police Department, said he doesn't feel young offenders' names should be used unless the crime is a serious one, such as rape or murder."

The employee responsible for the incident has been fired.

Audit recommendations given by the union management staff

The Nebraska Union management staff last week made some immediate recommendations in response to the Touche-Ross Management Performance audit of union operations submitted in October.

The Nebraska Union Implementation Committee, a 10-person committee to investigate recommendations made by the Touche-Ross report met last Tuesday to hear the written response made by Nebraska Union Director Al Bennett and his staff.

"Our purpose at the meeting was to present in writing our response," Bennett said. "We outlined and sectioned the recommendations as adoptable and accomplishable."

Bennett said that hours of thorough study were put into the report before final recommendations were made.

Bennett said that a new accounting system, as recommended by the Touche-

Ross report would be too expensive, adding that additional personnel would have to be hired to maintain the system. In the other parts of the report, he said, there were many items inaccurate with his data or where not enough data was presented to work with.

"The bulk of the findings were valid and accomplishable," Bennett said, adding that he is not debating the report but trying to deal with the recommendations made by the Touche-Ross report.

Bennett said that his staff had reached a consensus on a variety of items in the report, including the central purchasing store system, a management action program and departmentalization in the Nebraska unions.

Bennett said at the meeting that additional study will be done on the unions concerning material uncovered in the Touche-Ross report.

inside monday

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