

# daily nebraskan

## Last year's drinking age bottleneck uncorked again

By Randy Essex

Grand Island Sen. Ralph Kelly, sponsor of a bill to raise Nebraska's drinking age from 19 to 21, said Wednesday the bill was not considered by the full Legislature last year because of influence exerted by the state's liquor industry.

"It hasn't made it to the floor (the last two years it was introduced) because the liquor industry has kept it bottled up in their Miscellaneous Subjects Committee," Kelly said.

Kelly would not elaborate, but said the members of the committee could try to prove his statement was not true.

Donald Dworak of Columbus, last year's Miscellaneous Subjects Committee chairman, said the liquor industry "did influence some members of the committee, but not five (a majority)."

### Not convinced

Omaha Sen. William Brennan, a committee member, said he was not influenced by industry spokesmen, as did Dworak. Brennan said he did not hear anything in the committee hearings that made him want to change the present age.

"If somebody doesn't get their way in committee they might say someone controls the committee," Brennan said.

Dworak said his vote against the bill was based on his belief that the Legislature cannot deny 19- and 20-year-olds the privilege of drinking.

"They (supporters of the move) say 16- and 17-year-olds get liquor they drink from 19- and 20-year-olds, and they say this without real evidence," Dworak said.

But the Columbus senator said he could support the bill if an amendment were attached making it legal for 19- and 20-year-olds to drink on the premises of a licensed establishment, and illegal to buy liquor on off-sale.

Dworak said he would introduce the amendment this year as he did last year.

### Minor violations

Kelly offered evidence that 19- and 20-year-olds are buying liquor for minors.

He said there is a closer relationship between a 19-year-old and a high school student. He offered figures showing that since 1972, when the age was lowered to 19, annual consumption of liquor in Nebraska has gone up from 32 gallons per person to 139 gallons per person.

"They (19 and 20-year-olds) can't drink 1,438 bottles of beer. They had to have some help," Kelly said. That help had to come from minors, he said.

Kelly criticized the *Daily Nebraskan* for its past coverage of the measure.

"It is my opinion that the *Daily Nebraskan* has not covered the issue fairly," Kelly said. He asked that the matter be discussed with *Daily Nebraskan* editors.

### Young affected

Kelly said when young people from 17 to 20 look at his proposal they feel like somebody is stealing their cherry pop, because those people are most affected by the proposal.

Kelly cited a survey conducted last year by the Omaha World-Herald indicating 69 percent of those interviewed favor raising the age to 21. The survey also showed that 53 percent of those under 30 favored his proposal last year.

He showed figures from the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice that show a steady rise in the number of 17-year-olds arrested for liquor violations and for driving while intoxicated.

Figures from the Nebraska Department of Roads show an increase in alcohol related traffic deaths between 1973 and 1976 for 19- and 20-year-olds.

Kelly said the deaths are bad enough, but those figures do not reflect the number of young people injured in alcohol-related accidents.

### Valuable resource

"Our young people are too valuable a resource to waste so the liquor industry can make an extra \$25 million a year," Kelly said.

Kelly said the \$25 million figure is only an estimate. "Is it any wonder there is a bar on every street corner in downtown Lincoln?" Kelly asked.

He said the lower drinking age has made it more difficult to enforce the university drinking policy.

Before the age was lowered to 19, most university students were not of legal age, Kelly explained. Now minors are the exception rather than the rule on the UNL campuses.

He said the sheer number of students old enough to drink prevents law enforcement officials from doing their job.

Kelly added that his bill raises only the drinking age, and not the voting age or age of majority.

"Young people get this confused sometimes," he said.

### Support promised

Dworak said the proposal would have more support this year than it has had in the past. He said the Nebraska Secondary Education Association will support the bill, and some other states have raised their drinking ages, giving the bill some momentum.

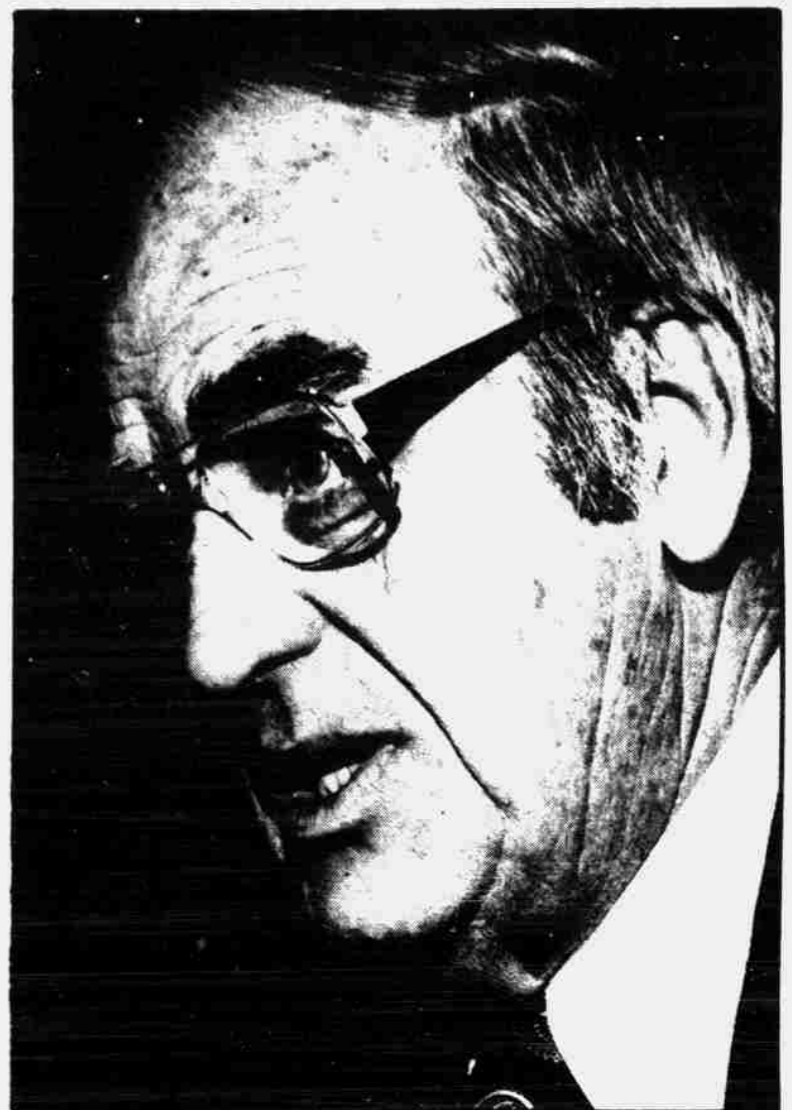


Photo by Bob Pearson

State senator Ralph Kelly of Grand Island.

Kelly said the trend to lower drinking ages across the country has ended, and states are beginning to go the other way.

Michigan, Maine, Minnesota, Montana and Iowa have raised their ages. Oklahoma was forced by the U.S. Supreme Court to make the drinking age there the same for men and women. Women in Oklahoma were allowed to drink at 18, but men could not drink legally until age 21.

Kelly pointed out that Oklahoma raised its age for women rather than lowering the age for men.

Indiana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon and Pennsylvania senators defeated moves to lower their states' drinking ages.

"The experiment (to lower ages) has been a dismal failure," Kelly said.

## Doctor studies deadly 'rattlers' to benefit living, despite protests

By Jeff Kruse

It's a pretty efficient way of dealing with rattlesnakes. Study their muscles and brains, sell their skins, eat their meat, put their venom in the freezer, and, oh, yes, try not to get bit.

"They're fascinating, exotic, and threatening creatures," said Dr. Robert Shuman, who for the past eight months supervised a study of 43 rattlesnakes at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Shuman, chief of neuropathology at the medical center, said there are several reasons for studying the snakes.

"We may find information regarding evolutionary processes, muscle behavior, and brain activity," he said. "These results would be directly applicable to human beings."

The idea of studying rattlesnakes was suggested to Shuman by Bill Strond, a UNO zoology graduate student. Strond, who obtained the snakes by participating in a "rattlesnake roundup" in Oklahoma, is interested in studying control centers of the snake's brain which regulate aggression.

### 'Rattler' strikes

Last May, he learned about their aggression the hard way when Gazelda, a four foot rattler, bit him on the chest.

"Bill's reaction was amazing," said Steve Baxter, who works in the lab with Strond. "He kept a hold of the snake, calmly put it back in the pen, then walked down to the emergency room."

Strond's stoicism also amazed Dr. Shuman.

"If that had happened to me I would have thrown the snake down and stomped on it until it was dead. Bill just gently put it back. I don't think he petted it, but I wouldn't put it past him," Shuman said.

Strond spent a day in intensive care and a week at home recovering from the bite.

"It was a touchy situation since no one had treated a snakebite here before and it

was something totally new for the doctors and residents," Strond said. "But I didn't have the nausea or vomiting associated with more serious bites, just a lot of pain and reaction to the horse serum."

### Studies dead tissue

Strond now is studying his own dead tissue that had to be removed because of the bite.

Shuman said that after the incident, a



Photo by Bob Pearson

Dr. Robert Shuman, director of a UNO research team studying the muscle and nervous system of diamond back rattlesnakes.

lot of pressure was put on him to get rid of the snakes.

"What you have to understand is that it was an accident based on basic anatomy," he said, explaining that they are taking no unnecessary risks.

"It's important to study the snakes because reptiles are a branch point for much of physiology," he said. "We are testing the possibility that anatomy determines behavior; that is, that anatomy would be at least a necessary, if not a sufficient condition for determining behavior."

Shuman said a snake's brain is composed of the same material that in human brains accounts for affections, sexual behavior, attention and memory.

### Muscular dystrophy clues

Shuman and Strond are also studying the muscle activities of the rattlesnakes, where they hope to find some clues to human muscular dystrophy.

Continued on Page 11

## inside thursday

Fear of Flying: Columnist has the airport terminal blues. . . . page 4.  
Bedtime is Badtime: Movie Moment by Moment more like hour by hour. . . . page 8.  
Huskers start new season: Wednesday's win over Kansas State is a turning point for Joe Cipriano and team. . . . page 10.