

# daily nebraskan

## Sunday-night fire forces 150 to evacuate Selleck

By Val Swinton  
and Kirsten Nielsen

Residents of Selleck Quadrangle's 8000 building gave good marks to the building's alarm system following a Sunday night fire that forced the evacuation of 150 students.

UNL police spokesman Robert Fey said the fire started about 10 p.m. Sunday in Room 8315. The room's occupants, Scott Laffoon and Cameron Lindsey, were not home when the fire started. There were no injuries, and Fey said damage was estimated at \$250.

An electrical short circuit in a lamp cord may have caused the fire, he said.

The fire was confined to one room, but smoke filled the third floor. Students from all three floors were temporarily evacuated.

Tom Mathews, a junior business major from Omaha, said he didn't hear the alarm ringing from his room on the third floor.

"I heard somebody yell 'fire!'," he said. "That was about it." However, he praised the locations of the building's fire exits.

"I think it's excellent," said Mathews, whose room is near a fire escape. "No matter where you are, it seems like you have a place to go."

There are fire escapes at the ends of hallways on each floor.

Residence Director Eric Buller said the alarm system was working perfectly.

### Loud alarm bells

"It about knocked me off my feet," he said of the bells that began ringing when smoke detectors were activated.

Buller also praised student assistants for their efforts in evacuating the building.

"They were really good about getting everybody out," he said.

Brian Featherstone, a junior from Omaha majoring in mathematics, was in his second-floor room when the alarm went off. His door was open at the time, and he said he had no problem hearing the alarm or seeing the flashing warning lights.

There was no smoke on the first or second floors, although Featherstone said he detected a slight odor from the fire.

Sunday marked the second weekend in a row that Featherstone was forced to evacuate his room. He said second-floor residents were ordered out last week after someone ignited some boxes. The alarms worked well that time too, he said.

Featherstone said he feels safe with the alarm system. "As far as the new system they put up this year, sure it makes a difference," he said.

### Fire safety improvements

The smoke alarms, warning bells and other improvements are part of a \$1 million program to bring residence halls into compliance with state and federal fire safety guidelines.

The students' comments were good news to Doug Zatechka, UNL housing director.

"We try to tell students how to evacuate a building," he said. "Yet you don't know if something is going to work until there is an actual fire."

Besides the smoke alarms, heat sensors were installed in "high-hazard" areas of Selleck such as laundry rooms and storage rooms in the basement. Regular doors to the students' rooms are currently being replaced with fire-retardant doors. The fire exits that Mathews spoke of are also new.

Flashing strobe lights are set off in Selleck whenever the alarms are activated and magnetic fire safety doors have been installed to seal off stairwells.

Zatechka said, however, he was concerned about Mathews' failure to hear the warning bells. He said the alarms have been tested and exceed the minimum decibel requirements in state and federal fire codes.

Mike Leupold, maintenance manager for the Cather-Pound-Neihardt complex, said improvements have been made there, too.

"Just this year we've installed magnetic fire locks on the hall doors, and most of the rooms themselves now have fire doors," he said.

Trash chutes have been equipped with smoke detectors and sprinklers, he said.

Charles Zimmerman, an architect in the Nebraska State Fire Marshall's office, said he too is pleased with UNL's willingness to improve fire safety standards.

"Sure, the university easily could spend a few million dollars in the dorms," he said. "But we realize they're on a budget and they are ordering new improvements."

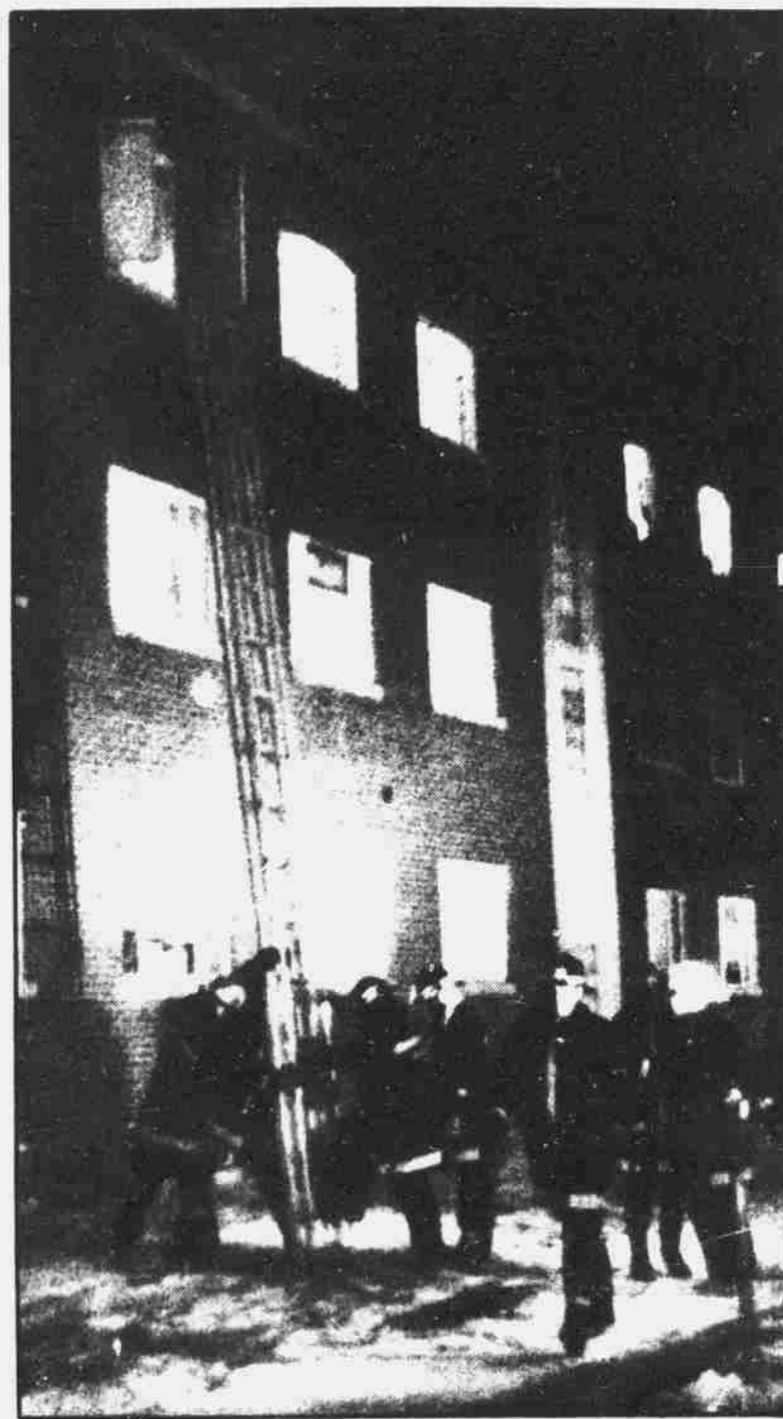


Photo by D. Eric Kircher

Lincoln firefighters work to confine Sunday night's Selleck Quadrangle fire to a third-floor room.

## 'United front' to advocate NU budget increase

By Patti Gallagher

In lobbying support for the NU 18 percent budget increase request, the Government Liaison Committee will seek to present a "united student front," to state senators, according to ASUN President Renee Wessels.

Wessels, along with the chair and vice chair of GLC, spoke to students Monday in a press conference at the Ne-

braska Union. The conference was held to outline GLC plans for lobbying in the Nebraska Legislature.

Wessels said GLC's main concern is the university budget. The committee will work for the total budget, she said, and will not attempt to designate portions of the budget as more important than others.

"The last thing we want to do is pit student against student," Wessels said. To attempt to present budget priorities to legislators would defeat the purpose of "presenting a united student front to lobby for an 18 percent increase," she said.

GLC's vice chairman for budget research, John Vitek, said that because of the diversity of student interest, GLC has tried to "take the approach of things that are important to every student."

If a senator were to inquire which portion of the budget was top priority, Vitek said, he or she would be referred to a university administrator.

Admitting that "we don't profess to know everything about the university budget," he said administrators are better informed on budget priorities.

However, relations with at least three administrators has been very good, Vitek said. Ned Hedges, vice chancellor for academic affairs; Robert Rutford, interim chancellor, and Larry Andrews, assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs, have provided information for their lobbying efforts, he said.

### Four areas emphasized

GLC members have targeted four areas for concentration. The UNL libraries are facing a "critical funding problem," Vitek said. They are one year behind in purchases and they canceled 788 periodical subscriptions last year, he said.

During the last 10 years, he said, the price of periodicals has increased 192 percent and price of books is up 92 percent. The library's budget has increased only 78 percent during the same time, he added.

At the current funding level, the library is barely able to maintain its present purchases. Any less means falling further behind in those purchases, Vitek said.

Faculty salaries is another targeted area. Vitek said salaries on this campus have decreased 15 percent in real value in recent years, and are far below the average for comparable universities and firms in the private sector.

GLC supports the university's request of a 10.5 percent salary increase for faculty, he said.

Vitek said GLC intends to request a special increase for affirmative action from the legislature. He added that the committee opposed the university's denial to allocate \$74,000 to affirmative action, as requested last fall.

First priority for GLC will be to obtain funding to renovate Bessey Hall, Vitek said. Because the governor vetoed the appropriation last year, he said, the group must convince him of the renovation's importance. Vitek also noted Architecture Hall and the Former Law building will be supported by GLC lobby efforts.

### Regent support questioned

Although the NU Board of Regents proposed the 18 percent budget increase, Wessels said they have not dealt with it publicly since the governor announced his 12.8 percent lid on state budget increases.

She said that although some of the regents support GLC's efforts, "it does make some of them nervous," Wessels said. "We will definitely be down there en masse" regardless of any regental opposition.

Other efforts pursued by the committee this semester include sponsoring lunches and breakfasts for state senators, giving campus tours for legislators, and having committee members establish contacts with senators from their district.

According to GLC Chair Nette Nelson, senators have been "very receptive," to the student lobbyists. They have not been turned down by any senators, although some have had scheduling problems, she said.

## Groundhog Day forecaster booed

By Tom Prentiss

Sporting a yellow ribbon in honor of the freed hostages, Punxsutawney Phil exited his hole and saw his shadow Monday, which folklore says means another six weeks of winter.

Roy Seneca, a reporter for the *Punxsutawney Spirit*, said Phil saw his shadow at 7:27 a.m., Eastern Standard Time.

Punxsutawney is located in western Pennsylvania, about 85 miles northeast of Pittsburgh.

Seneca said people really look forward to Groundhog Day in Punxsutawney because it makes the town a center of attention — at least for a day.

Seneca said Phil "spoke" to Charles M. Earhard, president of the Groundhog Club. The club is a civic organization in Punxsutawney.

"I'd like to tell President Reagan there will be a new beginning in early spring, but we're going with the true and tested six more weeks of winter," said Punxsutawney's most famous citizen.

The crowd of about 400 booed, said Seneca.

He added that Phil's shadow was not very dense and this may mean a mild winter.

Members of the Groundhog Club dressed up in tuxedos and top hats to celebrate the event, Seneca said.

He said Phil, who is reportedly 95-years-old, is helped by a special punch that members of the Groundhog Club prepares for him throughout the year.

## inside tuesday

Gift to the gifted: An Omaha senator introduces a bill to increase state aid for gifted children . . . . . Page 2  
A Unified Voice: Singer Holly Near brought her mixture of politics, music and feminism to the Nebraska Union Sunday night . . . . . Page 6  
On The Run: Nebraska's Steve Elliott says being in gymnastics and diving leaves him little free time . . . . Page 7