

Student faces charge of motor vehicle homicide

By Val Swinton
and Diane Andersen

A UNL student was charged with three counts of motor vehicle homicide Monday in Lancaster County Court following a weekend accident that claimed three lives.

John E. Moreland, 18, a member of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, was charged in connection with the deaths of

Christopher R. Harris, 21, Mission, Kan.; Peter J. Phelan, 20, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, both students at Creighton University; and UNL student Geri Lynn Foster, 19, of Omaha.

The victims were part of a group leaving a 1950s party near Sprague in southwest Lancaster County when a car driven by Moreland came over a hill and allegedly struck several people walking along the road.

The party was attended by about 300 members of UNL and Creighton fraternities and sororities.

According to the information filed in court Monday, Moreland was charged with unintentionally causing the deaths of the three students.

The report also said Moreland operated "a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcoholic liquor or of any drug."

According to the report, a chemical analysis showed Moreland had an alcohol content above the legal limit of .10 of one percent.

Deputy County Attorney John Colborn refused to elaborate further on the results of the chemical analysis.

Judge Jeffery Chevront released Moreland on a \$3,000 personal recognizance bond, which means he was not required to post a cash bond on his promise to appear in court.

The charge of motor vehicle homicide is a felony that carries a maximum prison sentence of five years or a fine of up to \$10,000 or both.

The conditions of most of the remaining hospitalized students were improved, according to Monday afternoon hospital reports on their conditions.

Creighton student Michael O'Keefe, 18, of Plymouth, Minn., still was in critical condition at Lincoln General Hospital with head injuries and a fractured leg, a hospital spokesperson said.

UNL student Robbin Campbell, 18, of Omaha, was in serious to fair condition at Bryan Memorial Hospital with slight head injuries and a fractured leg. Her condition had not changed much since Sunday, a Bryan Memorial Hospital official said.

Robert Arias, an 18-year-old Creighton student from Los Angeles, Calif., was transferred from Bryan Memorial Hospital to St. Joseph Hospital in Omaha Monday. Arias was listed in good condition at the time of the transfer.

Creighton student Doug Steenblock, 20, of Fremont, was in good condition Monday afternoon at Dodge County Memorial Hospital in Fremont, a night supervisor said.

Campus alcohol debate renewed

The fact that alcohol was alleged to be involved in the car-pedestrian accident near Sprague Saturday in which three students were killed has prompted some renewal calls by UNL students to allow alcohol on campus.

Several students interviewed by the *Omaha World Herald* in a Monday story expressed concern that students are not allowed to hold parties on campus where alcohol is served and must drive to and from parties off campus.

Richard Armstrong, UNL vice chancellor for Student Affairs, said Monday that: "The question that is being raised is one that has been raised before when the alcohol policy was in review."

"At this point in time, we don't know that alcohol played a big part in the accident."

Armstrong said recent efforts by the Residence Hall Association to legalize drinking on campus have started a review process "that would possibly lead to a review of the policy" by the NU Board of Regents.

Such a call for a review of the alcohol policy occurs about every four years, when a new batch of students is on campus, Armstrong said, recalling that the last such review was in 1976.

"I don't embrace the idea (of alcohol on campus) with open arms," he said, but added he takes a neutral position on the issue and is willing to see the review process take place.

"There are pros and cons on both sides of the issue," Armstrong said.

Emotionalism often rules at times when a tragedy has just occurred, Armstrong said.

"It's most unfortunate to bring this up when there's sadness in the community," Armstrong said, adding he thinks any discussion on changing the alcohol policy should wait for about six weeks to avoid upsetting families of those involved in the accident and to avoid emotional debate on the subject.



Daily Nebraskan Photo

Meridith James finds the cold unbearable for bare skin as she braves the elements to go to class Monday. Tuesday's forecast calls for approximately four inches of snow and declining temperatures.

Payment for players defended

By Patti Gallagher

In support of putting UNL football players on the university payroll, Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha quoted from the Bible Monday during testimony.

"First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain of ear," Chambers, an atheist, told the Nebraska Legislature's Education Committee in support of LB363.

He said the bill is not solely to address the fact that football players "bring hundreds of thousands of dollars to the university while being told they should play for the fun of the game."

It is actually motivated, Chambers said, to look at "an educational system which hinders maturation and development of football players."

Chambers sole supporter

Chambers was the sole supporter of LB363 during the 90-minute hearing. One UNL representative testified against it, saying it would violate NCAA regulations.

On face value, the bill would compensate "these UNL football players who are really a part of a big business" for their hours of work and its accompanying psychological stress, according to Chambers.

Compensation would "pay them and get rid of the hypocrisy," he said. It is hypocritical, he said, that football players are often compensated by non-salaried means which have to be hidden because of NCAA regulations.

But the bill also faces the recognition that football players are human beings, Chambers said. That would lead, he said, to consideration of the deficiency in their educational programs.

"Football players have strong bodies and weak academic accomplishments," he said. They are therefore left with "nowhere to go when the game is over."

"When the jersey comes off and the last whistle blows blows, they have no identity," he said.

"Players are subjected to a mental softening process from the time they are in little league football," Chambers said.

That process continues at the university in the form of lowered class requirements, inflated grades and other

special privileges, he said.

Examples of privileges cited by Chambers were allowing players to cut into lines during registrations, supplying free meals and shoes, and having other people take their tests.

Chambers said some of his information comes directly from football players at UNL. He declined to name them.

Chambers' bill does not specify salary amount. He suggested to the committee it could be set by the NCAA, the Big Eight Conference or UNL.

Speaking against LB363 was Keith Broman, UNL professor of finance. Broman, the UNL faculty representative to the Big Eight Conference, said NCAA and Big Eight regulations prohibit employment of athletes for pay.

If the bill were passed, "UNL would have to declare those employed ineligible to play," he said.

No indication from NCAA

Chambers said he has had no indication from the NCAA or UNL that the bill would violate any regulation. However, a recent *Sports Illustrated* article about the bill indicated that NCAA "may be nervous about it," he said.

Asked by committee member Sen. Tom Vickers of Farnam if football players get preferential academic treatment, Broman said, "The university educational programs are not remiss."

"Of course, there are exceptions," he said. "There are cases in which athletes do not finish their education, just as there are students in other areas who do not finish their education."

Committee member Sen. Maurice Kremer of Aurora expressed concern that if LB363 passed, other states would enact similar laws and players would go to the highest bidder.

Vickers said other sports consume as much time and require as much exertion as football, and said "if we're going to do this for one sector we ought to do it for all sectors."

Chambers said, however, that football is different both because it is more dangerous and because it is big business. "They are entitled to compensation for what they do for the college and the state," he said.

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