

daily nebraskan

Lincoln jail unsafe, unhealthy—alleges class action suit

By Elizabeth Burden

A class action suit was filed Aug. 12, against the city of Lincoln, Lancaster County and city and county officials, seeking to correct or restrain violations at the Lincoln jail.

The jail, in the basement of the County-City building at 555 S. 10th St., was built in 1969 to house up to 110 male inmates and 16 females.

An interlocal agreement between Lincoln and Lancaster County was reached, Aug. 17, transferring control of the jail to the county, with provisions for city use. This did not change the status of the suit or the defendants named, said William Blake, chief assistant to the city attorney.

The suit, filed by inmates Dennis Windes and Christy Stone, in behalf of themselves and all other prisoners, contends that the defendants have failed to effect jail standards that comply with the U.S. Constitution.

The unconstitutional practices that the plaintiffs say exist include:

— Subjection to unhealthy and unsafe living conditions, including overcrowding, and inadequate sanitary and health facilities.

— Hazardous fire and other emergency situations created by the design of the jail.

— Denial of adequate materials for maintaining personal hygiene.

— Violent assaults to inmates by other inmates as a result of inadequate security and failure to house dangerous inmates separately because of the large number in the facility.

— Inadequate lighting, ventilation and sanitation in the cells and lack of windows.

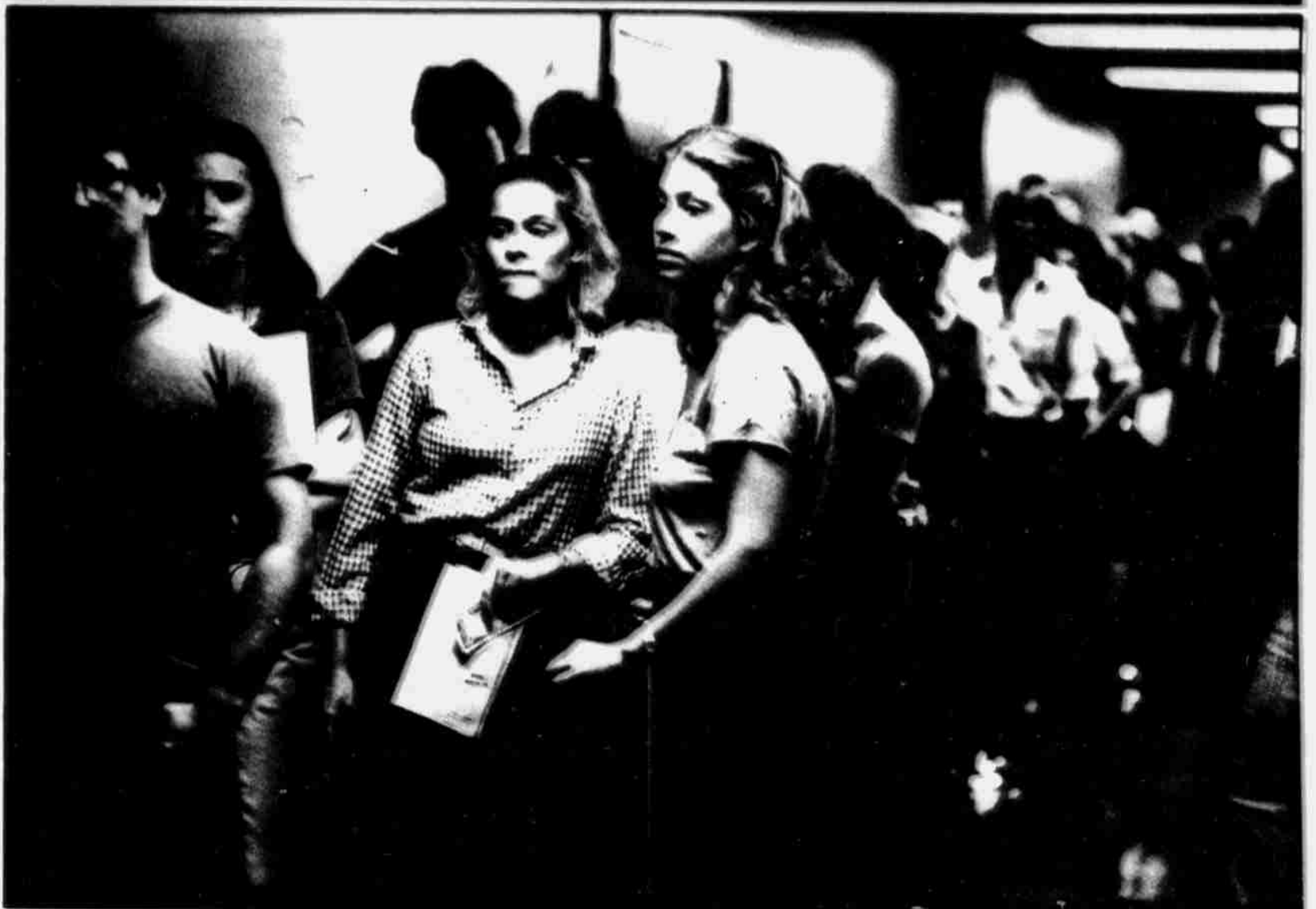


Photo by Kent Morgan Olsen

Walking the line

Jane Crist, (left) a freshman business major, and Susan Knott, a freshman civil engineering major, have found just one of the lines winding around the university this week, in this case, the drop-add line. Students waited in line for up to an hour Tuesday to change their schedules.

Community center welcomes volunteer work by students

By Ward W. Triplett III

Students with an interest in community involvement are welcome to take part in the programs of any Lincoln community center. But, despite the invitation, most centers do not see much volunteer work done by students.

"I think it is the fault of both the students and the Lincoln community," said Asuquo Umoren, director of the Malone Center which, at 2027 S St. is the closest community group to the city campus.

"Traditionally, there hasn't been much interaction between the two," Umoren said.

The Malone Center usually is recognized as being organized by and for blacks, but Umoren said there is more to the center than that.

"We try to service people, although a lot of our programs are geared toward blacks. Our purpose is to serve the entire Lincoln community," he said.

Umoren said that the center helps a number of the city's 300 Asian families, and along with the Mexican-American, black, and white involvement, the Malone Center brings together various cultures effectively.

Students, he said, always are needed to help with the tutoring and counseling programs the center has for junior and senior high school students.

"It can be a very practical thing, particularly if a student is planning on becoming a teacher, or going into some form of social work," Umoren said.

Umoren said the center used to have a program that brought students from the UNL elementary and adult education departments to Malone for intern work. But now people that come from UNL or Nebraska Wesleyan come on their own, he said.

Umoren said the internships allowed students to work directly with community children and see their problems.

"We're working to bring the university people back again. This year, for instance, we need more tutors in math and English than ever before, and it doesn't matter if

they are white, black, just anybody," he said.

Program director Fannie Thompson said, "We're trying to convince students to come and visit us. Once they start working through the center, that will tie them to the Lincoln community."

Thompson said the community agency, which is financed by the United Way, has an adult education program, adult social development advocacy programs, and recreation leagues. Plays and presentations also are given.

Umoren, who is an annual speaker for the UNL adult education program, said one issue students spoke out on for the Lincoln community proved that students had a voice to be heard.

"When they (the city of Lincoln) wanted to run the Northeast Radial through, the public heard the students' vote against it," Umoren said.

If the freeway had run as proposed, the land for the Malone Center's new building, scheduled for opening in March, would have been taken.

The new building will combine the existing Malone offices and a recreation center into one site between T and U streets.

"We have the university community to thank for being here still," Umoren said. "We owe it to those who spoke out to say that we are here and alive and well."

inside wednesday

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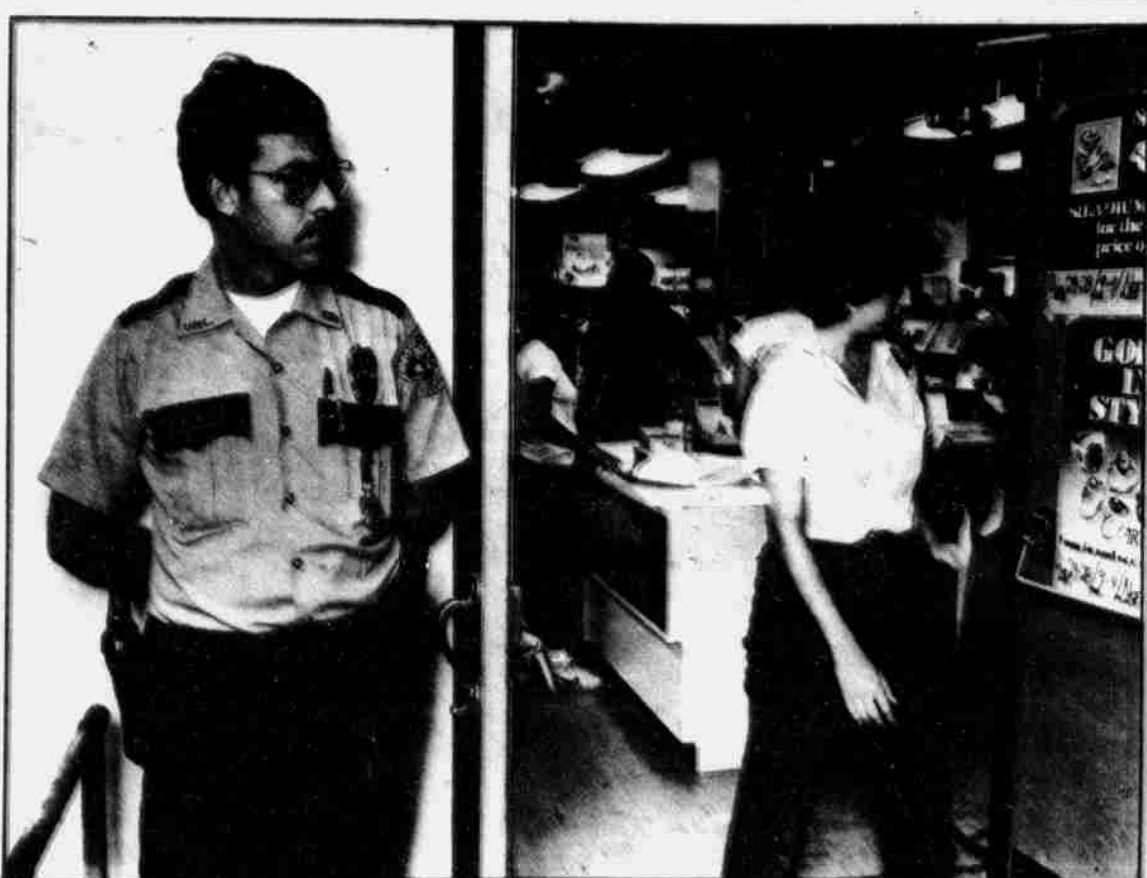


Photo by Mark Billingsley

UNL police officer Mike McConnell stands outside the University Bookstore. The bookstore hired the police officers as a deterrent to shoplifting.

University police officers provide bookstore security

The man in the blue uniform leaned against the wall and watched students stream by the bookstore. Occasionally, he told a student to leave a bookbag on the shelf outside the door before entering.

Down the hallway, another officer stood at the turnstile just inside another bookstore. He also kept his eyes on book buyers filling into the store.

An officer is stationed at each of the stores for half a day and then replaced.

The UNL police officers were hired for the first two days of school to provide security at two University Bookstores. Bookstore manager Larry Behrends said the police officers are a big help to the bookstore staff.

"Their presence definitely deters shoplifting," Behrends said. "And they help people go from one area to another to buy textbooks."

Behrends said the presence of

authority discourages persons from taking other people's packages that are left on the shelves.

The police officers also provide security when cash is transferred from one location to another.

Police officer Mike McConnell said the overtime work was nice, but it cut into his sleep. McConnell patrols on the swing shift from 4 p.m. to midnight, but worked from 8 a.m. through 12:30 p.m. the last two days.

Police officer Douglas Petersen stood watching students at the other bookstore. Both officers said they hadn't seen any shoplifting or encountered any problems with students.

"Hopefully, if I'm standing here, it will deter them if they have thoughts of shoplifting," Petersen said.

Behrends said the police security has been used for about five years, and has worked well.