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Douglas enters plea of innocent

By Brad Kuhn
Daily Nebraskan Senior Reporter

As expected, Nebraska Attorney General Paul Douglas pleaded innocent to charges of perjury and obstruction of justice in the investigation of the insolvency of Commonwealth Savings Co. of Lincoln. District Judge Jeffre Chevront set a Nov. 26 trial date.

Douglas was indicted in June by a Lancaster County grand jury on one count of perjury and one count of obstruction of justice.

The perjury charge stems from allegedly false testimony Douglas gave Feb. 25 before the Legislature's special Commonwealth committee. Douglas testified he paid income taxes on all payments he received, totaling \$32,500, from Commonwealth Vice President Marvin Copple for services Douglas performed as a consultant. Douglas also said at the time that his actions as attorney general had not been influenced by his business or personal relationship with Copple. It later came to light that Douglas had received as much as \$40,000 from Copple.

The misdemeanor obstruction charge alleges that Douglas knowingly obstructed justice in a sworn statement he made Feb. 30 to special assistant Attorney General David Domina. Douglas told Domina he did not discuss with Copple a letter from the FBI dated March 10, 1983. The indictment alleges the two men did discuss

the letter prior to the declared insolvency of Commonwealth.

Several obstacles lie between Thursday's arraignment and a Nov. 26 trial. For one, Douglas' lawyer, William Morrow, said he must get 45 signed depositions to complete the defense. Morrow also refused to rule out the possibility that he would ask that the trial be moved out of Lincoln to ensure his client a fair trial. There is also some question whether Morrow will continue to represent Douglas because of a possible conflict of interest with one of Morrow's partners who is a witness in the case.

Douglas entered the courthouse through the back door 45 minutes before the 4 p.m. hearing, waving at a handful of startled television camera men fumbling with their equipment, sans-reporters.

At 4:04 p.m., Douglas and Morrow strode confidently into the tiny courtroom laughing and joking. Douglas, scanning the gallery said, smiling, "Look at 'em all."

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha, caught Douglas' eye and responded: "Where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

After the arraignment, Morrow kept reporters busy while Douglas beat a hasty retreat down the back stairs.



Joel Sartore/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska Attorney General Paul Douglas, left, leaves the County-City Building Thursday with an unidentified man.

Former fraternity member files 'hazing' damage suit

By Dan Bender
Daily Nebraskan Senior Reporter

A former member of Kappa Sigma Fraternity filed suit last week for damages he claims he suffered during a fraternity-sponsored pie-eating contest that took place more than 3½ years ago.

Douglas W. Larson said Wednesday he refrained from suing his former fraternity because he was promised at the time of the incident that he would be compensated for his injuries.

According to the suit, Larson was injured during a pledge activity for the Alpha Psi Chapter of Kappa Sigma Fraternity on Jan. 29, 1981. Larson and other pledges were required to eat pies without using utensils while sitting in a circle on the floor. The first to finish his pie was to stand on a chair in the middle of the circle and whistle.

According to the suit, two

pledges wrestled to be the first to stand on the chair. The chair toppled during the struggle and struck Larson in the mouth. Larson allegedly suffered a cut lip that required four stitches and broke a tooth that required a root canal and a crown.

Larson would not comment Wednesday on whether he was a willing participant in the contest, which he said was hazing and therefore prohibited by the fraternity and the UNL Interfraternity Council.

"When you are a pledge, you are required to participate in those events," Larson said. "They don't come around and ask you if you want to do it."

Larson said he was promised by the chapter's pledge trainer after the contest that the medical and dental bills would be paid by the chapter.

"They never paid," Larson said.

Adam Karavas, president of the Kappa Sigma Building Association, said Larson and several other members were asked to leave the fraternity in January 1984, because they participated in "impermissible hazing, abuse and damage to fraternity property and general conduct unbecoming a member of the fraternity."

"We had hazing problems we wanted to eliminate," Karavas said. "We gave them an opportunity to abide by the rules."

Larson said he was willing to go along with the rules, but he voiced his opposition to them. He left the fraternity in February.

Named as defendants in the suit are the Kappa Sigma Fraternity, its Alpha Psi Chapter at UNL and the Kappa Sigma Building Association. The suit, filed in Lancaster County District Court, asks for \$503 in medical and dental expenses and general damages.

Alumni center construction to be finished next month

By Gene Gentrup
Daily Nebraskan Staff Writer

Construction of the Wick Alumni Center, 1520 R St., should be completed sometime next month, said Jack Miller, executive vice president of the NU Alumni Association.

The alumni center originally was scheduled to open a year ago this month, but construction was halted in December 1983 after the Alumni Association terminated its contract with the Harold G. Wright Co. of Blair. The contract dismissal resulted from dissatisfaction with the brick work on the facade of the building.

The Wright firm and Associated General Contractors of Nebraska claimed earlier that the firm's dismissal was a breach of contract and that the New York architectural firm of Gwathmey Siegel and Associates should have been removed instead of Wright. Gwathmey Siegel was selected in a national competition.

Miller said Wright earlier had threatened to file suit against the Alumni Association but has not done so. He said he has not talked with Wright for some time.

Wright could not be reached for comment.

After the contract was terminated, Builders Inc., a local contractor, was hired to complete the project, and construction resumed in March. Builders Inc. was hired by University Surety Co., which holds the performance bond on the project.

The bond essentially is an insurance policy for the Alumni Association that guarantees the Wick Center will be completed as designed if the contractor does not complete his contract for any reason.

The 30,000-square-foot, \$3.6 million structure is being financed by the alumni donations. The center is named after Milton I. Wick, an alumnus whose family provided \$1 million for the building. Another \$1 million came from an anonymous donor, and about 4,000 other alumni contributed. An endowment fund has been established to ensure operations for the center.

The center will feature a 3½-story Great Hall, a library board room on the first floor, offices on the second and third floors and filing and storage space in the basement.

Elliot found guilty of sexual assault

By John Meissner
Daily Nebraskan Senior Reporter

Jack Elliot's career ended before a packed house last Friday. Sadly, it was a packed courtroom.

Elliot, 59, the superintendent of North Platte Public Schools for the past 15 years, was found guilty of third-degree sexual assault in Lincoln County Court. The case stemmed from charges filed May 2 by a female student who claimed during visits to the superintendent's office Elliot had fondled her, hugged her and attempted to French kiss her.

During the two-day trial, both sides quickly became engaged in interminable attempts to defame each other. The defense capitalized on the 17-year-old victim's unwed pregnancy and contumacy, branding her a "bona fide sociopath" and "troublemaker." The state contended the alleged incidents of assault were "Jack Elliot's little secrets" and painted a

picture of Elliot as lecher.

Elliot testified that the student had been in his office several times during the 1983-84 school year, and admitted he placed his hands on her shoulders occasionally. But he vigorously denied making sexual advances toward the girl. According to the North Platte Telegraph, Elliot said he took a special interest because he liked to make an extra effort to work with students who were having difficulty.

The victim had difficulty getting through her testimony on Aug. 29. At one point, her sobs prompted County Judge J. Patrick McArdle to call a 10-minute recess. She contended Elliot "patted me on the butt" in a November 1983 encounter and accused him of trying to place one of her hands on his crotch in a February 1984 visit to his office.

Although early trips to Elliot's office were voluntary (she sought help on a research project in the

spring of 1983 and other visits were prompted by a need to discuss school problems), the girl said she was summoned into Elliot's office May 2.

Elliot said he requested the visit because "she was in grave danger of not graduating." At that point, according to the girl, the superintendent fondled her and tried to kiss her.

In an interview Tuesday, Lincoln County Attorney Charles Kantd said Elliot's third-degree sexual assault charge is a class-one misdemeanor involving "touching or contact for physical gratification." As such, Kantd said, it falls between second degree sexual assault, where a weapon is used but no penetration occurs, and sexual harassment, a civil offense, that is primarily non-physical abuse. When a sentence is handed down later this month, Elliot could face up to one year in prison and a \$1,000 fine.

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