

Alcohol

Continued from Page 1

"I was never physically hazed; it was more of a mental hazing," he said.

James said the mental abuse continued. But the final straw for him was when his best friend, who hadn't had much experience with alcohol, became severely intoxicated at a pledge function in the house.

"He was very sick; he couldn't even speak. I didn't know what would happen to him."

Haunted by thoughts of his father's college friend who had passed out, choked on his own vomit and suffocated, James worried. No one was in any condition to take his friend for help.

Instead of joining the rest of his pledge class, he stayed in his friend's room to look after him. During that time he realized such situations weren't worth the supposed "friendships" there.

"I left and never went back."

Infractions

Alcohol and hazing infractions in greek organizations have become more apparent to UNL administration since Jeffrey Knoll's fall from a third-story window at Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity, the result of a hazing incident.

"It became apparent to me from the anonymous letters and phone calls that more hazing incidents were occurring than I was aware of—or that any of us were aware of," said James Griesen, UNL vice chancellor for student affairs.

Griesen estimated he had heard nearly a dozen reports of hazing since then. But so far, the university has been unable to take any action on the reports.

"In each and every case, even some I would classify as severe, the people would not identify the victims or the name of the house," said Griesen, who in an earlier press conference called the secrecy surrounding hazing a "conspiracy of silence."

To the greek system's credit, Griesen said, most people did not fully report the incidents because they didn't want to get the fraternity, or

individual members, in trouble. This was because of the positive aspects of greek life.

"They wanted to do something about one isolated part of the fraternity experience, which they saw as otherwise very positive overall," Griesen said.

Hazing is something the greek system's leadership also has been battling.

"Not one national fraternity organization condones physical or mental hazing in any form," said Jayne Wade Anderson, director of greek affairs at UNL.

Anderson said attitudes were the biggest challenge to ending the practice of hazing.

"It's something that becomes a part of some people's minds. I have never figured it out ... they aren't aware (of the dangers) until something major happens," she said.

"We continuously educate and reinforce that hazing is not a part of group membership, but you don't know what's going on in their minds."

Anderson said another dangerous mentality was "group think"—when a group failed to distinguish danger-

ous situations because they thought everyone was collectively agreeing to participate.

Tim, a senior at UNL, said one support for hazing stemmed from wanting to earn membership in an organization.

"You don't want to wear the letters if it wasn't difficult," he said.

However, Tim, who said he had never been made to do anything unwillingly, said the challenge should be turned toward more positive objectives, such as excelling in classes.

Beliefs

James said he disagreed with the belief that a pledgeship should be difficult, especially because of pressures associated with the first semester in college.

"In theory, you think it sounds like a great achievement. But you don't need to fear the people you're living with."

Other fraternity members continue to condone hazing as a way of cementing friendships and creating brotherhood.

James said a heightened sense of

friendship and brotherhood did not result from his treatment as a pledge.

"All of a sudden, when you're activated, then they're your friend? I hated some of them!"

"There's no explanations for (hazing). I think it's really a sick way for some obviously insecure guys to express themselves."

He added: "You're in a position where you're forced to do things you wouldn't normally do out of your own consciousness."

Sidney agreed.

"I definitely felt really violated of my rights in some way ... They were putting us all at risk."

Crackdown

Griesen, who testified before the Legislature on Wednesday in support of a bill that would make hazing a crime, said the university would continue to take measures against hazing and alcohol infractions.

As recently as Wednesday night, Griesen said he visited a fraternity house after a professor reported a possible hazing incident. The student had been falling asleep in the professor's classes.

Griesen said he stopped by the fraternity at about 10 p.m. but found no evidence of hazing. He said he would continue to take such reports seriously.

He said he also expected the university's recent crackdown on campus alcohol violations to help lessen the problem of hazing.

Alternatives

James' solution was not to leave the greek system entirely. He depledged and found a fraternity that had a different attitude about hazing—not to practice it.

"I knew there had to be a fraternity that was on a different wavelength, a higher maturity level," he said.

"As pledges we aren't hazed, and they're some of the closest friends I'll ever have. We didn't have to have people screaming at us and making us perform impossible tasks. We didn't need that in order to become friends."

For Sidney, the solution to hazing was made for him.

"They rescinded my pledgeship is what they called it. They blackballed me is how everyone else said it."

Sidney, who doesn't drink, said he was told his personality did not fit that of his fraternity—a comment that he took as a compliment. His life and his grades, he said, have since improved.

"I feel alive finally. I thank God every day that I'm not in the fraternity."

But his frustration at what he sees as fraternity members' urges to cover up hazing practices, instead of eliminating them, remains.

Boycott

Continued from Page 1

Griesen said MASA's boycott inaccurately portrayed hiring practices. He said the university couldn't set up every hiring decision based on racial balance.

"We'd be happy to meet with anybody and explain (their hiring practices)," Griesen said. "(MASA) has met with me before and we are always looking for opportunities for hiring Latino Americans."

Griesen said he agreed there had not been many Latino hirings at UNL.

"I fully sympathize with their goals," he said.

Maestas said the boycott would go on until MASA saw an indication of change.

MASA will talk to the Vietnamese Student Association, the University of Nebraska Inter Tribal Exchange and the Afrikan Peoples Union about joining the boycott, she said.

"What we said needed to be said," Maestas said. "We're not trying to attack people—we're not trying to be vicious."

"These are facts. We can't cover up what someone else did."

Griesen said he was confused by MASA's actions.

"I don't quite see the point in a boycott of Multicultural Affairs—the very people that are there to help them."

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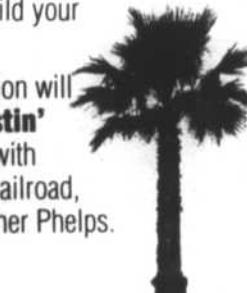


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