

Bjorklund

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ter, Rhonda, undress in her room, Vada Bjorklund said. Arthur Bjorklund also would sleep naked and walk naked from his room to get a glass of water, she said.

"I assumed he walked around so the kids could see him," she said.

More visible than the sexual abuse was the physical and emotional abuse her husband inflicted on Roger Bjorklund and his sister.

"He never showed love to either of them," Vada Bjorklund said.

Arthur Bjorklund instead favored his first and natural child, Donald.

Rhonda and Roger Bjorklund didn't share that favored status.

"That's all he ever did — yell and scream at the kids," she said.

Less frequently, she said, her husband would twist Rhonda and Roger Bjorklund's ears and arms, hit them on the head or squeeze the back of their necks.

Bjorklund's sister, now Rhonda Larsen of Hutchinson, Kan., testified she experienced a similar unhappy childhood. The experience caused Roger Bjorklund and Larsen to move away from home in their teens.

Both teens dropped out of school and shared an apartment in Kearney. Larsen said Roger Bjorklund always was kind to her, but he began to drink heavily when he was living

by himself.

"At one point, I think he was drinking every day," she said.

Roger Bjorklund and his sister fell away from their Seventh-day Adventist upbringing while they lived in Kearney. After attending weekend revival seminars, they both became active in the church. Roger Bjorklund became especially active in the church, his sister said.

Roger Bjorklund was going to be a minister, but he became disillusioned with the church after being hurt by a close friend who was his church supervisor.

Roger Bjorklund's relationship with Larsen soon began to change.

Larsen lost most contact with her brother until he called her in December 1992.

Roger Bjorklund told Larsen of the Harms murder.

"He told me about it," she said. "They didn't intend for (the death) to take place. One thing led to another; it ended up happening."

Larsen said her brother was kind of quiet about the crime and wished it never would have happened. Although Roger Bjorklund didn't tell her why he committed the murder, she said she thought it was because he got scared.

Chief Deputy Public Defender Scott Helvie objected to Larsen's testimony about the phone conversation with her brother.

"It's improper impeachment," Helvie said. "Rhonda's impression



Jeff Haller/DN

Vada Bjorklund, center, talks with people after testifying about her son Roger's childhood during his sentencing hearing Monday at the City-County Building.

was he got scared. He didn't say he got scared."

The objections were overruled by District Judge Donald Endacott.

Roger Bjorklund's grandmother, Carmen Davis of Springview, also testified Monday. Davis, 84, was asked by defense

attorneys what type of grandson Roger Bjorklund was.

"A good one, I thought," she answered.

NU engineering college recommendations

In October 1993, the NU Board of Regents authorized the establishment of a review team charged with completing a comprehensive review of engineering and related programs at the University of Nebraska.

Four consultants visited both the Lincoln and Omaha campuses of the NU system at least once. Following is a summary of the team's conclusions and recommendations:

The state of Nebraska and the University of Nebraska system should initiate a deliberate and carefully planned process leading to the establishment of an independent college of engineering at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

The recommended process should include the following elements:

1. The first action should be a clear and unequivocal commitment by the Nebraska state government and the University of Nebraska system to establish and support an independent college of engineering at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Without such a commitment, the enormous effort required to plan in detail and to implement the establishment of such a college is unlikely to be truly fruitful. This does not necessarily mean the immediate formal establishment of the college, developmental process.

2. A clear and compelling vision and at least the outlines of a real strategic plan for the new college must be developed immediately. This will be necessary in the development of support for the commitment to

create the new college. However, that commitment should not be held hostage to a requirement for a plan that would spell out every imaginable detail of the development of the college into the indefinite future.

3. It should be understood from the outset that additional financial resources will be required. Some of the proponents of the establishment of an independent UNO college purport to believe that the administrative division of the Omaha and Lincoln college which could become what is needed in Omaha with only very modest additional expenditures. The team disagrees. We believe that what would be left from such an administrative division would leave UNO more nearly in the position of having to create an engineering school from scratch.

The team believes that Nebraska and its university system can both continue the development of a strong traditional engineering school in Lincoln and build a new kind of engineering school in Omaha, one carefully adapted to the special needs of the Omaha area's citizens and its business community. It should be possible, we believe, to bring that new school to a state of full service to its community and to full accreditation before the end of this decade. If Nebraska succeeds in this, it will have made a major contribution toward ensuring its own economic competitiveness in the 21st century.

The alternative is continuation of the present situations. The team believes alternative is unacceptable. We hope our Nebraska friends agree.

Engineering

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The consultants, however, did not give the University of Nebraska at Omaha much praise.

"The physical facilities at the (UNL Engineering) College at UNO are grossly inadequate," the report states. Sen. LaVon Crosby of Lincoln said she disagreed that UNO was in need of restructuring.

"UNO sort of grows like an awkward child," she said. "And it hasn't matured yet."

"It takes time," Crosby said. "It's been there about 25 years and there are a lot of 25-year-olds who aren't mature yet."

Crosby said UNO had much to offer, and that action now could be too hasty. The focus should be more on enhancing what already is there, she said, as Omaha businessmen have

told her graduate programs were mostly needed.

The consultants found Nebraska's present investment in engineering education to be relatively small. The report said the state could improve the situation if it could muster the political will.

That will, Crosby said, comes from the voters, who have said they wanted a higher quality university, but weren't going to pay higher taxes to support it.

NU President Dennis Smith, speaking via telephone from a hotel in Rawlins, Wyo., told reporters he was not prepared to commit to the plan Monday.

But Smith said he would have a preliminary recommendation at the regents' next meeting March 26.

"A major problem will be the financial considerations," he said. "I have not decided as of this moment whether I am going to the Legislature

to ask for money."

Smith said he was not unhappy with the report, but suggested a second committee be formed to pick up where the first committee left off, though one originally had not been planned.

ASUN President-elect Andrew Loudon said university students had been lost in the debate.

"I think we really need to look at who is going to be hurt," he said.

Loudon said he had yet to talk to a UNL engineering student in favor of a separate college.

John Ballard, associate dean for the UNL college of engineering and technology, said great care needed to be taken when separating the colleges without damaging them.

Ballard also said he doubted the Legislature would increase NU's budget, which would mean cuts in other areas such as scholarship funds.

Official: women must take charge of their own life

By Bob Ray
Staff Reporter

Women could accelerate welfare reform by refusing to subscribe to traditional gender roles, the Nebraska director of social services said Monday.

Mary Dean Harvey, the director of the Nebraska Department of Social Services, gave a speech in the Nebraska Union entitled "Women and Poverty — Welfare Reform in the '90s." The speech was held in conjunction with Women's Week '94, which focuses on women's issues.

Often, women learn their roles at an early age, Harvey said. They are conveyed through toys and treatment by elders.

Women often are raised with the idea they must look pretty, find the perfect husband and have children, she said. With many women accepting such a conventional role, they often settle for minimal education and low-wage jobs, Harvey said.

"Not having those skills will land us in poverty — period," Harvey said. "We need to erase that board, get rid of it, abolish it."

Harvey said women needed to take control of their own lives and make their own decisions on what roles in society they should take.

"We need to start revamping what we currently do," she said.

Women need to understand that their roles are up to them, Harvey said, and both men and women need to realize that society's views of women have changed.

"You have an obligation to start to take charge of your own life and own destiny, and if both parties will do that, then we will find fewer women and children living in poverty," she said.

Harvey also said one out of every five children in Nebraska lived in poverty.

"If this is the case in Nebraska, what must it be like in Texas, New York, Louisiana and California, where the economy is not as good as Nebraska?" Harvey asked.

Most of the single-parent households in the United States are headed by women, Harvey said, and there are a number of independent women not receiving child support.

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