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SEPTEMBER 21, 1994

Bjorklund receives death sentence

By DeDra Jansson
Senior Reporter

Roger Bjorklund was sentenced to death Tuesday for the 1992 first-degree murder of UNL freshman Candice Harms.

Lancaster County District Court Judge Donald Endacott delivered the death sentence to a stoic Bjorklund before a crowded courtroom.

He also sentenced Bjorklund to 6 2/3 years to 20 years in prison, served consecutively to the death sentence, for the use of a weapon to commit a felony.

Bjorklund was convicted last November for the first-degree murder of Harms and the use of a weapon to commit a felony.

"It was a pitiless crime, an unnecessarily torturous crime," Endacott said during the sentencing. "Candice Harms was completely and

absolutely at the mercy of her abductors and tormentors.

"She was there only by a tragic twist of fate that had placed her, instead of some other vulnerable young woman, at the intersection of 27th and Vine when the hunters spotted their unfortunate prey."

Harms' parents, Stan and Pat, and her boyfriend, Todd Sears, wiped tears from their eyes throughout the hour-long sentencing. After the sentence was delivered, Bjorklund's wife, Shannon, held her head in her hands as tears rolled down her face.

Lancaster County Attorney Gary Lacey said Endacott made the right decision in sentencing Bjorklund to death.

"I asked for the death penalty, and I think I was justified," Lacey said. "If there is any case that is appropriate, this is the case."

Bjorklund's attorney, Chief Deputy Public

Defender Scott Helvie, declined comment to the Daily Nebraskan.

Reading from the lengthy sentencing order, Endacott said the court was justified imposing the death penalty instead of life in prison.

Endacott said the court must consider three factors before imposing the death sentence:

- Whether sufficient aggravating circumstances exist to justify imposition of a death sentence.
- Whether sufficient mitigating circumstances exist that approach or exceed the weight given to the aggravating circumstances.
- Whether the sentence of death is excessive or disproportionate to the penalty imposed in similar cases, considering both the crime and the defendant.

Endacott said the court determined beyond a

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INSIDE

■ Roger Bjorklund was moved to death row at the Nebraska State Penitentiary Tuesday. Bjorklund may go through an eight-step appeal process before he is executed.

■ Four members of the jury that convicted Bjorklund of first-degree murder in November 1993 traveled to Lincoln from Cheyenne County Tuesday to witness Bjorklund's sentencing.

See Daily Nebraskan team coverage on Page 3.



Stan Harms, right, looks at his wife, Pat, and Todd Sears after reading a statement at the County-City Building Tuesday. Roger Bjorklund was sentenced to death for the murder of Harms' daughter, Candice.

Gerik Parmele/DN

Bjorklund should die, Harms says

By Matthew Walte
Senior Reporter

On Sept. 22, 1992, Roger Bjorklund and Scott Barney sentenced Candice Harms to death for being a "sweet, innocent young girl," her father said Tuesday.

Two years later, Lancaster County District Court Judge Donald Endacott sentenced Bjorklund to death for Harms' murder.

But for Stan and Pat Harms — the parents of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln freshman who was abducted, raped and murdered — the road to justice is only half traveled.

After Bjorklund's sentencing hearing, Stan Harms spoke to more than 20 members of the media outside the same courtroom where Bjorklund had appeared during a four-week trial and had been convicted of the murder.

Stan Harms read from a prepared statement as his wife, Pat, tried to keep microphones and cameras at a comfortable distance.

Death is a just sentence for what Bjorklund did to his daughter, Stan Harms said.

For the three months that Candice was missing, he said, the family was in anguish — not knowing whether she was alive or dead.

"Her naked, tortured body was left for dead in a field," Stan Harms said.

He said that during her disappearance, the city of Lincoln and the state of Nebraska were held hostage with fear.

After a confession from Barney, who was sentenced to life in prison in June, the mystery of her disappearance ended.

See HARMS on 6

UPC vote on compromise ends ASUN feud

By Brian Sharp
Senior Reporter

Members of the University Program Council voted without discussion Tuesday night to end their five-month control feud with the student government.

In a 11-2 vote, they approved a compromise written Sept. 9 by Lia Jensen of UPC and Andrew Loudon of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska.

Both presidents had to put the agreement before their respective groups. ASUN will begin discussion tonight.

The compromise sets up a six-member committee that will select UPC executives. Members will be split between UPC and ASUN, with three students coming from each group.

The dispute began last spring when ASUN passed a bylaw change that set up a committee to select UPC executives and event directors.

The council protested the change and rejected it during the summer because the ratio of ASUN members to UPC members was two to one. ASUN then filed a petition in student court.

Jensen said Tuesday's vote, done by secret ballot, was good for UPC. The absence of debate among UPC members, however, was a surprise, she said.

"I was anticipating that there might be more verbal discussion," she said. "I was afraid that people wouldn't accept the compromise."

Jensen said most members just needed clarification about the con-

"I was anticipating that there might be more verbal discussion."

■ LIA JENSEN

UPC president

lict because everything happened so quickly last spring.

Once they realized what the compromise meant and that it wasn't as

harmful to UPC as the bylaw change, there was little opposition, Jensen said.

"(The vote) shows that most of the people trust what Andrew and I have done," she said.

A two-thirds vote was needed for UPC to pass the issue, she said. It will now become an amendment to the UPC constitution. Filing the constitution with ASUN is the only action left for UPC, she said.

If approved by ASUN, the change would take effect in November, she said. Under the compromise, UPC will retain the right to select event directors.