

Daily Nebraskan

COVERING THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA SINCE 1901

VOL. 94 NO. 71

INSIDE MONDAY

SPORTS

■ Nebraska volleyball advances to NCAA regionals, Page 7

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

■ Santa Claus really is a baker, Page 9

PAGE 2: Violence erupts at Swedish disco

DECEMBER 5, 1994

Indictments bring mixed reactions

By Brian Sharp
Senior Reporter

Lincoln's Hispanic community has been told to have faith in the system following the death of Francisco Renteria, Jose Soto said.

Now it must have faith that the system worked by returning four indictments, said Soto, a community spokesman.

But at the same time, he said, the community is being told by the indicted and their lawyers that the system has failed.

Soto is the director of affirmative action at Southeast Community College and has worked closely with the family of Francisco Renteria, who died Oct. 1 after a struggle with police.

Thursday, a grand jury indicted Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady, officers Luke Wilke and Stephen Schellpeper and Lincoln fire Capt. Danny Wright.

Casady and Wilke will plead innocent to the charges when they are arraigned in court today, their lawyers said. Wright could not be reached for comment. Schellpeper, who is out of town on vacation, will be arraigned Dec. 13.

Casady read from a prepared statement at a Friday press conference, but answered no questions on the advice of his lawyer. Casady was indicted for official misconduct related to the investigation, a misdemeanor charge punishable by a maximum six months in prison and \$1,000 fine.

"I want my colleagues, family and the citizens of Lincoln to know that I am absolutely innocent of this charge," Casady said.

"I have committed no crime, violated no law, abridged no ethical or moral obligation," he said. "I have made every diligent effort to support the quest for justice in this case."

But Soto saw things differently. "(Casady) has asked us to trust the system, to have confidence in the system," Soto said. "Now that he has been indicted, I find it somewhat ironic that he seems to be the one to not have trust or confidence in the grand-jury system."

Jane Burke, one of Wilke's lawyers, said Friday the grand-jury system was "not acceptable" and that the indictments for third-degree assault were a "politically correct solution as a result of the media coverage" surrounding the case.

"The politically correct solution was to find a sacrificial lamb," she said.

Burke and co-counsel John Stevens Berry said the indictments did not specify, and they didn't know, what acts constituted the charge.

"These were officers who acted by the book," Berry said. "They acted in the way that the citizens of Lincoln expect them to act."

The indictments have damaged the officer's reputations, Berry said, and the secrecy of the hearings only feeds the public doubt.

"I don't have a great deal of faith in the

See REACTION on 6

BITTERSWEET TEARS



Jeff Heller/DN

Maria Vega, center, wipes her eye while standing with Francisco Renteria's brothers and sisters at a press conference at Haymarket Square Friday evening.

Police chief, officer to be arraigned today

Prosecutor explains incident as many express anger over misdemeanor charges

By Matthew Walte
Senior Reporter

Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady and two other men indicted in the death of Francisco Renteria will be arraigned this morning in Lancaster County District Court.

Casady, Danny Wright and Luke Wilke are scheduled to appear before Judge Donald Endacott to enter pleas to misdemeanor charges ranging from assault to misconduct.

On Friday, Robert Bartle, special prosecutor in the case, announced the indictments of four officials involved in the Oct. 1 death of Renteria.

The fourth man, Lincoln Police Officer Stephen Schellpeper, is out of the state and will not be arraigned until Dec. 13.

Details on the indictments were as follows:

- Schellpeper — one count of third-degree assault stemming from his actions in arresting Renteria.

- Wilke — one count of third-degree assault stemming from his actions in arresting Renteria.

- Wright — one count of official miscon-

duct and one count of abuse of public record for failing to render immediate medical services to Renteria.

- Casady — one count of official misconduct for failing to investigate suspects in an impartial manner, failing to prepare and file reports of information in the investigations in a timely manner and failing to disclose information to the special prosecutor.

The indictments came from a 19-member grand jury that investigated the incident for 12 days.

The assault charges are Class I misdemeanors, which carry a maximum penalty of one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine. The misconduct charges are Class II misdemeanors, which carry a maximum of six months in jail and \$1,000 fine.

Some people attending the press conference expressed anger that the charges were only misdemeanors.

"How much did they pay you!" one member of the audience yelled at Bartle. "I lost a friend, and you give them misdemeanors?"

"It's another cover-up! You screwed up again, didn't you? Did you do this to please us? You did not please us!"

Bartle responded calmly to the accusations and said his job was not to charge. He said the grand jury's job was to investigate the incident and charge those involved if probable cause was found.

Mayor Mike Johanns said Friday he would wait for the trial to finish before making any decisions regarding removal of the four indicted men.

Johanns expressed sympathy for all who were involved in the case — the Renteria family and the involved city employees. He pleaded for calm in the community Friday.

People are innocent until proven guilty, Johanns said, and the community must remember that.

Casady was put on administrative leave at his own request until the trial finishes, Johanns said. Assistant Police Chief Jim Baird has assumed Casady's duties.

The other indicted men also were placed on administrative leave.

Johanns, who picked Casady as chief of police in 1993, said he would not speculate on Casady's future on the force. He said, however, that the chief, unlike the other officers, could be removed immediately at the mayor's request.

For the more than 70 people who attended his press conference, Bartle revealed more information about the night Renteria died.

Officer Charlotte Veskrna of the University Police, who was not indicted, first contacted Renteria. She mistook him as a man violating a protection order.

See INDICTMENTS on 6

Creighton professor defends report in engineering debate

By Matthew Walte
Senior Reporter

The author of a report evaluating the cost-effectiveness of a separate engineering college at UNO said this weekend he acted independently in writing the paper.

Robert F. Allen, a professor of economics at Creighton University, said he did the report because no one was questioning the need for expanding engineering education in the state. Rather, the debate has focused on the University of Nebraska at Omaha's needs, he said.

The report was titled "Expanding Engineer-

ing Education in Nebraska: A Cost Effectiveness Analysis." It said a separate college in Omaha would be cost effective only if the state spent less than \$4.5 million on expanded education.

To be cost effective, the report said, all buildings for a separate college, operational and equipment costs would have to be financed by private interests.

Also, the report said, the Omaha area would have to see engineering employment growth.

Allen said the debate should focus on the amount of need for expanded education and a low-cost solution to meet that need.

Regent Rosemary Skrupa of Omaha said Wednesday she questioned the balance of the report. She said Allen failed to talk with engineering faculty at UNO for his report.

But Allen said he did not go to any engi-

neering faculty at UNO or University of Nebraska-Lincoln because he did not need their input. He said he went to Stan Liberty, dean of the College of Engineering and Technology, for some information on cost estimates, not opinions.

Skrupa also asked Tuesday if Creighton was getting involved in the debate about the separate college. The report contained a cover letter printed on CU letterhead.

Allen said CU was not involved in the issue. He used the letterhead because he is a professor there.

The report was a research project, and he said he disseminated the report as a CU faculty member.

Allen agreed with Skrupa that the report was just one man's opinion. But, he said, it was more than an opinion, it was an analysis

of the facts.

"This is an important issue confronting the state, to the taxpayers of the state" he said.

The report does not take a position on the issue, Allen said. It just lays out data and projects the costs for expanded education, he said.

A former employee of UNL, Allen said that did not affect the outcome of his report. UNL human resources records shows Allen was a professor of economics at UNL and left the university in December 1979.

Liberty said Allen called for information but had no ties to the engineering college.

Liberty said he had seen a copy of the report but did not read it carefully — only looking at the conclusions and methodology.

h
ENGINEERING
DEBATE