

ID checkers keep underaged on their toes

By Gerry Boltz
Senior Reporter

Neither rain nor snow nor sleet nor fake ID's shall keep them from their appointed rounds.

This is the creed of the ID checkers, those who stand at the front door of bars to make sure only those aged 21 and over are admitted.

Sheldon, a UNL junior majoring in pre-physical therapy, said his job at the front door of Iguana's, 1426 O St., was pretty easy.

"It's not too tough, as far as picking out the ID's," Sheldon said.

A checker who goes by Pierre at Morgan's Upstairs, 1409 O St., agreed.

"Most of the time I just sit on my butt," Pierre said, "It gets dull at times."

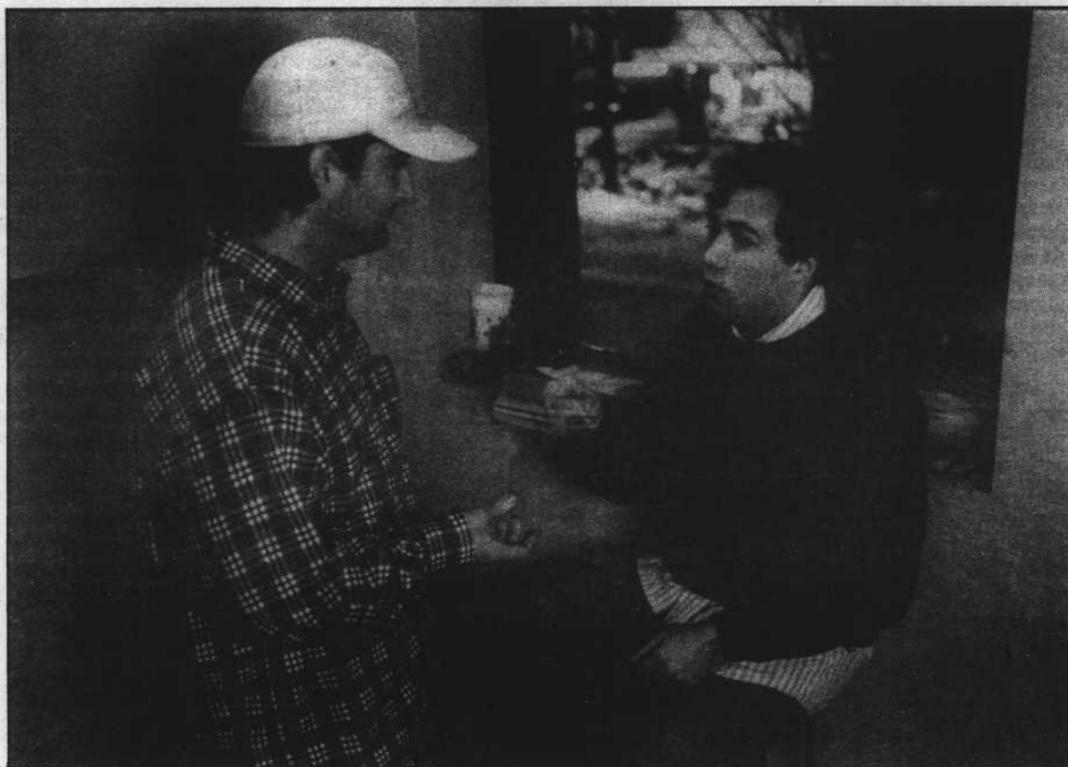
But the task of checking to make sure all patrons are at least 21 years of age is an important one, Sheldon said.

By state law, any establishment serving alcohol to anyone under 21 will be fined \$5,000 dollars; the ID checker who failed to catch the fake will be fined \$500.

"It's pretty much my call," said Pierre. "I can only get into trouble if a minor gets into the bar."

Sheldon said, "Whoever is going to get into this bar has to get through me first."

Jeff, a doorman at the Watering Hole, 1321 O St., said checkers looked at more than just the birthdate.



Pierre checks a patron's ID at Morgan's Upstairs, 1409 O St. "Most of the time I just sit on my butt," Pierre said of his job.

Travis Heying/DN

Each doorman has his own tricks to see through fake IDs.

"Body language is a lot of it," Sheldon said. "Sometimes I'll ask when they graduated, what their astrological sign is, stuff like that."

Other techniques involve the ID

itself. "The state seal on the driver's license becomes distorted if tampered with," Jeff said. "Usually you can tell right off."

But Jeff said even he could be fooled.

"The bad ones are really bad, and the good ones are so good, you can't tell," he said.

What happens to someone with a counterfeit ID varies from bar to bar. "We always confiscate the fake ID," said Sheldon. "I'll usually get

about one to three a night. "I'm very rarely threatened. Most of the time people will give me a little bit of crap, but that's it."

Jeff has been offered bribes. "I've had people come back and offer me money to get their ID cards back."

At Morgan's, Pierre said, he just sends them on their way.

"If they come back with it two or three times, then we take it," Pierre said. "There was one time that I had six people vouching for their friend's age, but the answer was still 'no.'"

Being a frequent patron — called a "regular" — at a bar can sometimes get you in without showing an ID.

"If they come here really often," Pierre said, "and I've seen them a lot, I won't check their ID's."

"I don't always check the regulars," Jeff said, "but I always check new ones coming in with the regulars."

Iguana's is a bit more persistent, Sheldon said.

"We always check," Sheldon said, "even people 55 or 60 years old. We check regulars, and even people who have been in the bar and left."

After the Nebraska-Colorado game, Jeff said he had a brief run-in with one of the Cornhusker football players.

All three have a simple, two-word reply for people who say they left their driver's licenses at home, in the car or even inside the bar. "No excuses."

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