

Daily Nebraskan

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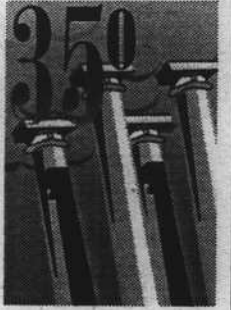
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February 3-5, 1995

Victim's crusade moves bill forward

By J. Christopher Hain
Senior Reporter

Roy Stephens, 43, has seen a trend running through his life — an unfortunate trend.

Thursday, he testified before the Judiciary Committee with the hope of preventing a similar trend in the lives of potential Nebraska victims of sex crimes.

Stephens was lured into captivity from the streets of Southern California at the age of 8, he said, by a man who promised him a hot meal, but instead sexually abused him.

At 24, Stephens was sent to prison for crimes he said he committed as revenge against the adults who exploited him as a child.

In 1988, he helped establish the Missing Youth Foundation in Nebraska as a result of the abduction of Jill Cutshall of Norfolk.

Stephens, now living in Omaha, has continued to speak out on the concerns of children.

He testified to the committee in support of requiring people convicted of certain sex crimes to register with law enforcement officials.

The committee heard testimony on four bills dealing with certain types of sex offenders. Three of the bills, LB730, LB776 and LB645, dealt with registering sex offenders.

After the hearing, the committee voted 6-0 to advance LB645, the Sex Offender Registration Act sponsored by Sen. Chris Abboud of Omaha, to the floor of the Legislature.

LB645 requires people convicted of first-, second- or third-degree sexual assault, assault of a child, debauchery of a minor or incest to register with the sheriff in the county where they live.

The sheriff must then forward to the State

Patrol the description, photograph, fingerprints, social security number, address and place of employment of the sex offender.

A sex offender registration bill is needed to bring Nebraska in line with a provision in the 1994 federal crime bill that requires all states to register sex offenders or face a 10 percent reduction in federal crime bill funds.

Currently, 40 states require sex offenders to register with law enforcement officials.

Registering sex offenders is important, Abboud said, because convicted sex offenders are likely to continue committing similar acts.

Gary Plank, a criminal behavior profiler with the Nebraska State Patrol, said sex offenders had a higher rate of repeat offenses than any other crime group.

Plank said a 1988 study in California showed that over a period of 15 years, 49 percent of the

people arrested for sex crimes committed another sex crime.

These types of repeat sex offenders could be attracted to Nebraska, Stephens said, if Nebraska doesn't register sex offenders and other states do.

Stephens said the bill also should pass to give employers a way to adequately check the background of employees who must work with children.

"We need to empower the community," Stephens said.

Thirty-six years ago, Stephens escaped his captor in California, but he still hasn't escaped the memory of the incident. However, he said he considered this bill a step toward preventing similar incidents for future victims.

"It's a crusade that I have taken."

Honored teacher attends to the details

Nominee is professor first, then scientist

By Beth Narans
Staff Reporter

John Gruhl is not a showman or an entertainer.

He believes the best lectures come from hard work and accurate details.

"I prepare very carefully, and I think this shows," he said.

This preparation does show for Gruhl, who has been a political science professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln since 1976.

Gruhl was one of two UNL professors nominated by other faculty members for the Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Award. Winners of the award, which is a university-wide honor, will be named this spring.

"He is very deserving of the nomination," said David Forsythe, chairman of the political science department.

"He is certainly an outstanding teacher. He is very committed and devoted to his students."

Gruhl also has been named as a charter member of the university's Academy of Distinguished Teachers. The academy was created to identify outstanding teachers at UNL and encourage them to share their expertise with others at the university and throughout the state.

Three other UNL professors also have been named as charter members of the academy. Six more will be named in March.

Forsythe recalled an incident last spring when Gruhl slipped on ice and broke his jaw. With his jaw wired shut for six weeks, he still managed to teach his smaller classes, Forsythe said.

A temporary replacement was hired to teach the larger classes, but Gruhl attended every session, Forsythe said.

"That is just typical of the kind of devotion he has," Forsythe said.

Gruhl, 47, doesn't see himself as being much different from other professors.

"I do the same kind of things most other people do," he said.

One thing Gruhl insists on is learning all his students' names. He said students had commented in evaluations that his learning their names was the best thing to



Jon Waller/DN

John Gruhl, professor of political science at UNL, was one of two UNL professors nominated for a university-wide distinguished teacher award. Gruhl also co-authored a book for the Political Science 100 course.

ever happen to them at UNL.

Gruhl also strives for complete accuracy in his lectures.

"He researches his lectures as if they were journal articles," Forsythe said. "I've never known anyone else to be that accurate."

Gruhl said he prepared carefully because he was not comfortable just "winging it."

He also has a good feel for what is interesting to students, he said. He said he tried to grab their attention with clippings and

political cartoons.

These attention-grabbers are included in his textbooks. He has co-authored two versions of an introductory American government

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Housing rate hike proposal advances

By Matthew Waite
Senior Reporter

A proposal to raise housing rates for incoming freshmen by 6.5 percent has been forwarded to the NU Board of Regents, the vice chancellor for student affairs said Thursday.

James Griesen said the rise in rates would cover the costs of rewiring the residence halls and providing all the rooms with direct access to the HUSKERnet system.

But new students wouldn't foot the bill alone. Returning residence hall students, whose housing costs are frozen as an incentive to return, also would see a \$60 increase per year, Griesen said.

Griesen said the cost of a double room, 20-meal contract would increase by \$205 from \$3,145 to \$3,350.

Only 1.9 percent of the 6.5 percent increase would go toward the computer network upgrades, he said. The other 4.6 percent of the increase would go toward inflationary costs.

With the increase, Griesen said, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln still would have the lowest resident housing rates in the Big Eight.

Doug Zatechka, former director of housing, said as many as four residence halls would be rewired and connected to the system by the time residence hall students started to sign up for housing for next semester.

Zatechka said he would meet with the Residence Hall Association this weekend to get feedback on which halls should be rewired.

By fall, Griesen said, \$200,000 will be spent on upgrades to all halls. The upgrades include:

— Forty-five new computers will be put in the residence hall computer labs. \$138,000.

— Sixty-seven existing computers will be upgraded with hard drives. \$15,200.

— Network connections will be installed into the labs. \$34,900.

— A student information server will be created. \$7,000.

— Software licences for all computers will be bought. \$5,000.

Andrea Casart, president of RHA, said she supported the move, calling it a great compromise.

Casart said the proposal being forwarded to the regents was better than the original proposal. She said RHA

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