

# Daily Nebraskan

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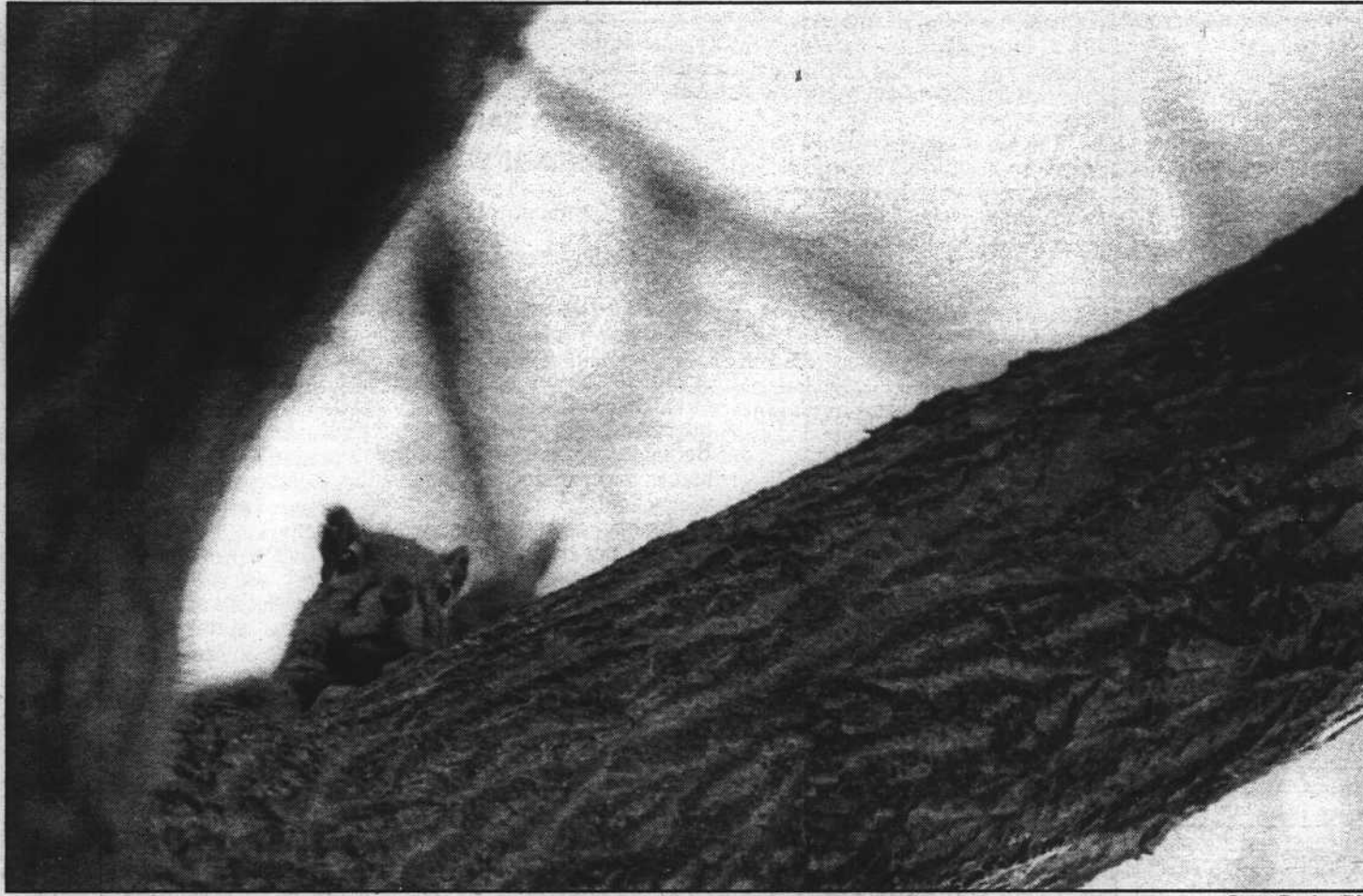
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February 21, 1995

## 'Nut'orious



Scott Bruhn/DN

The infamous *Sciurus niger*, or fox squirrel, perches high above the Canfield Administration Building parking lot. Squirrels did more than \$500 damage to administrators' vehicles last spring.

## Shocking story of squirrels gone bad

By Paula Lavigne  
Senior Reporter

Last spring, a spree of vehicular vandalism began in the Canfield Administration Building parking lot. As the weather warms up, two university administrators say they hope this year the vandals find a different home — in a tree.

Their suspects — Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel. It all started with a faulty headlight in Bruce Currin's van. Currin, director of human resources, said he replaced the headlight, but to no avail.

Everything appeared to be in order, he said, but when he opened the hood, he was in for a surprise.

"There was this great big squirrel's nest in the corner where the light wires were," he said.

It was spring, and the squirrels were ready to make a family. Mid-February is one of the peak birthing seasons for the fox squirrel, which accounts for 99 percent of

eastern Nebraska's squirrel population.

Currin's co-workers teased him, he said, but he refused to set traps. As an animal preservationist, Currin said he would never think of harming a squirrel.

Instead, he spent \$40 to get the wiring fixed, and he parked in a different spot for a few weeks. But it wasn't long until the squirrels moved back.

Another \$40 later, Currin said he finally confronted the squirrel, who was standing 7 feet from his vehicle.

"I just expressed to him in pretty rational terms that I didn't think it was appropriate that he or she — I couldn't tell from that distance — built a nest in a car where he could get hurt," Currin said. "I asked the squirrels to move their construction elsewhere."

And they did.

A few months later, as Michael Mulnix was driving home, his headlights went out, his speedometer quit and his oil gauge dropped to zero.

Mulnix, executive director of university

relations, said he didn't know what was wrong because his truck was only two years old. He pulled into a gas station and had the attendant check the oil.

"He opened the hood up and said, 'My God! What do you have in there?'" Mulnix said.

Mulnix said he walked around and saw a nest made of plastic bags, sticks and "everything." Then, he said, the bag moved.

"The guy leaped back and goes, 'It's a rat,'" he said. "So we got sticks and starting poking at the sack. We got enough courage and pulled the bag up. There were three little tiny baby squirrels in there."

The squirrels had eaten every wire in his truck except two.

"I was surprised they didn't get shocked," he said.

But Mulnix did — with \$425 in repairs.

Scott Hygnstrom, assistant wildlife professor, said squirrels may be attracted to a soybean product used to make insulation

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## New plant would help whole state

By J. Christopher Hain  
Senior Reporter

Gov. Ben Nelson said Monday that efforts to lure a 3,500-employee computer-chip plant to Omaha would benefit all Nebraska.

Nelson said rural state senators who might plan to derail a group of incentives in the Legislature to attract the Micron Technology plant would benefit nobody.

"We need to put aside regional and partisan differences," Nelson said.

Three bills, LB828, LB829 and LB830, introduced by Sen. Ron Withem of Omaha, create economic incentives for businesses investing at least \$50 million in Nebraska and creating at least 500 jobs.

Micron will decide by March 1 whether to locate its \$1.3 billion plant in Omaha, Oklahoma City or Utah County, Utah.

Some senators have speculated about using the Micron issue as leverage to push the ethanol industry, which helps rural Nebraska.

None of the bills have been passed, and

See MICRON on 6

## Housing, unions increase wages for student jobs

By Matthew Waite  
Senior Reporter

Saying that fast-food restaurants' high wages are making hiring students difficult, two campus employers are raising wages for student employees.

University Housing and the Nebraska Unions have budgeted raises for hourly wages in an attempt to keep up with the rising fast-food wages, James Griesen, vice chancellor for student affairs, said.

With area restaurants paying \$5 an hour and more with tuition incentives, he said the labor pool was being drained.

"With that kind of environment, we simply can't ignore it," Griesen said.

Housing has budgeted a 10 percent raise for part-time employees, Griesen said, and the unions have a tentative goal of 5 percent.

Daryl Swanson, director of the Nebraska Unions, said the unions requested a 10 percent increase from the Committee for Fees Allocation to support the raises. On appeal, the unions received a 5 percent increase for the students'

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## Police chief returns to work; Renteria protests continue

By Brian Sharp  
Senior Reporter

Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady says he is defined by his career. But it has been the questions posed to that definition that have changed him.

"It has caused me to be a much more serious person," he said. "It has caused me to be much more guarded. I hope that goes away."

A grand jury indictment handed down Dec. 1 charged Casady with official misconduct. The charge stemmed from

his actions during an investigation into the death of Francisco Renteria.

Friday, the charge was dismissed on the grounds that the grand jury exceeded its authority. Amid protests and more questions from the Hispanic community and the Renteria family, Casady returned to work.

In an interview Monday, Casady spoke quietly, cautiously in his office at the Lincoln police station. Questions were followed by long periods of silence as he stroked his mustache, eyes to the floor; often the response was that he didn't have the answer.

"You get the feeling sometimes that you're not making anyone happy," he said.

Casady said that as police chief, it was his job to deal with turmoil and

crisis, balancing different objectives and viewpoints.

But the past months have brought a number of viewpoints and statements attacking Casady and the job he has done. There have been calls for his resignation and opinions that his badge is permanently tarnished.

Casady said the hardest thing, aside from the indictment, has been the fact that he cannot respond with detail in his defense. With charges against two officers and a fire captain still pending, Casady said, he must remain silent on those points for now.

Jose Renteria has said he was disappointed that the police department never contacted his family following the death of his brother Francisco. Casady said that was not a regret of

his, and then requested no further questions about the family.

"Anything I say won't make any difference," he said.

Casady hopes he can make a difference by taking part in the community conciliation process. When the group meets today, it will mark the first time Casady attends.

There will be no speeches, he said. In fact, Casady said he had no plan to address the group. Instead, he plans to keep a low profile, listen, provide information and make suggestions where necessary.

Mayor Mike Johanns formed the group in response to the community division following Renteria's death. The group is scheduled to be dissolved April 1, but that date is pre-

ature, Casady said.

Nothing productive can be accomplished in that short amount of time, Casady said. Meeting for an eternity would only start to address all the issues that have been and are yet to be raised, he said.

Casady said it was important for him to maintain his low profile in Lincoln as well — for the good of the conciliation process. Being the focus of attention will not help the community heal, he said.

When asked if the media's attention to the police department and the focus placed on procedure and himself had hindered conciliation, Casady started, "to the extent that individu-

See CASADY on 6



Casady