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WEATHER:

Today - Partly cloudy. Hot.
North wind 5 to 15 mph.
Tonight - Partly cloudy. Low
around 60.



August 25, 1995

'We're one man short'

Mourners remember slain officer

By Jeff Zeleny
Senior Reporter

OMAHA — Slain Omaha police officer James Wilson Jr. smiled at those who gathered to mourn him Thursday.

The wide grin, frozen on his color portrait in the front of St. John's Catholic Church, is the vision his sister will forever have painted in her mind.

"All my images are of Jimmy laughing," Jeannie Wilson said, eulogizing her brother. "It's not even a laugh, it's a little grin with big teeth. Jimmy had it on all the time, and I'm sure he has it on now."

But for the more than 2,500 survivors who came to Wilson's funeral to pay respects, it was too soon to laugh.

There were tears to shed. Memories to relive. And a 24-year-old rookie police officer to lay to rest.

Wilson, a third-generation Omaha police officer, was shot to death Sunday in his patrol car while attempting to stop a van with a suspicious license plate. His career as an Omaha police officer lasted 380 days.

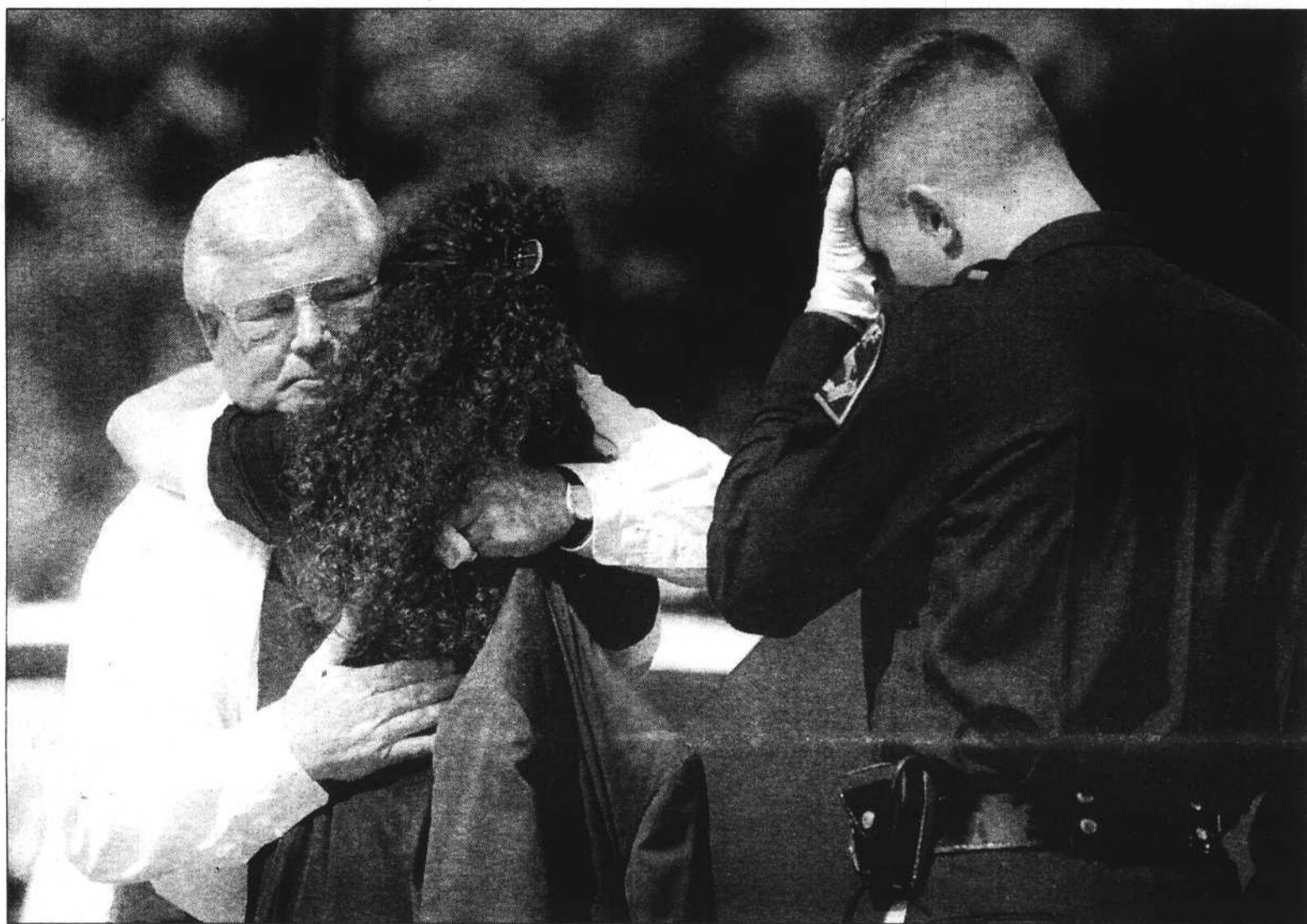
About 1,200 police officers from across the state and Midwest lined the aisles and pews of the church and the sidewalks of Omaha's Creighton University campus. They came to bury the first Omaha police officer killed in the line of duty since 1974.

Many officers, standing shoulder-to-shoulder beneath purple stained glass, wiped tears away with their white-gloved hands. They were silent, but the black bands stripped across their badges showed their grief.

"We watched Jimmy every day keeping peace in the community. It was easy to see every day how proud he was," fellow officer Chuck Noonan said from the pulpit. Now, "we'll be one man short."

Noonan spoke on behalf of Wilson's crew. He fought back tears as he told the congregation about his fallen comrade, whom many had never met.

As Noonan stepped away from



Travis Heying/DN

James Wilson Sr., father of slain Omaha police officer Jimmy Wilson, hugs a supporter while an Omaha police officer grieves nearby. Wilson, who was the first Omaha policeman killed in the line of duty in 21 years, was laid to rest in a ceremony Thursday morning.

the altar and walked toward the head of the coffin, James Wilson Sr. stood from his pew and embraced the officer. Noonan buried his face in Wilson's shoulder and wept.

The Rev. John J. Lynch offered comfort through scripture and words. He urged the officers not to be angry with the seven men and boys being held in Wilson's slaying.

"We join our hearts and prayers for the families of those who are charged in this senseless act," Lynch said. "Father forgive them, they know not what they do. Those people did not know Jimmy Wilson."

Police Chief Jim Skinner knew Wilson and knew that the young

man represented a 60-year family legacy with the department. That tradition ended when the youngest Wilson was struck down.

"He gave us one year of outstanding service," Skinner said, withholding tears.

But Skinner said Wilson's service hasn't necessarily ended.

"Young Jimmy Wilson gave his mother, Barbara, and his father, Jim, joy and happiness for 24 years," Noonan said. "And to the Omaha Police Department and the citizens of this community, he has given an eternity."

Gov. Ben Nelson, Sen. Bob Kerrey (D-Neb.), Rep. Jon Christensen (R-Neb.) and Mayor Hal Daub attended the funeral. In pews throughout the church, floral dresses and pin stripe suits were

dotted among blue and brown uniforms.

As officer Kevin Rowe sang a tribute, "I'll Be With You 'til the End of Time," a packet of pink tissue was passed down an outside aisle to husbands, wives and children of officers.

Even more officers — including 80 from the Lincoln Police Department — were lined symmetrically on a brick plaza outside the church. About 1,000 people listened to the service through speakers that played throughout the campus, where Wilson graduated in May 1993.

Students listened to the funeral as they went to class. Like many of the officers from across the state and Midwest, they came to pay

respect to a man they never met.

"Law enforcement is a brotherhood," University of Nebraska-Lincoln Police Sgt. John Lustrea said as he waited to join the procession to the cemetery. "There is a camaraderie between law enforcement everywhere."

Lustrea, who was joined at the funeral by University Police Sgt. Mylo Bushing and Cpl. Brian Scusa, said there had been a somberness on the force since Wilson was slain.

"Anyone here knows it can happen," Lustrea said. "We all face the same type of situations. You just want to show your respect to a fellow officer."

See FUNERAL on 3

Regents to explore 'separate checks' tuition option

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

Two months after the NU Board of Regents approved a 6.2 percent tuition increase, the regents will examine other ways to make tuition affordable.

At a special meeting Saturday, the regents will break from their normal business to study the financing of higher education, including a new concept called differential tuition.

The concept was conceived by guest speaker Charles Kuralis, director of the national Fund for the Im-

provement of Postsecondary Education.

The system would charge students based on their major, year in school, and services used.

For example, students majoring in low-cost areas, such as English, would pay less than those in high-cost areas, such as engineering. Seniors would pay more than freshmen because they need more one-on-one attention and use more services.

Joe Rowson, NU director of public affairs, presented this analogy:

"If a bunch of us were going to a restaurant to eat, and we each ordered

what we wanted, and when the end of the meal comes they bring us one check.

"We decide we will just split it evenly rather than trying to figure out what person had the salad and who ordered the prime rib."

The current systems ask students in low-cost areas to subsidize those in high-cost areas. Classes are high-cost if they call for small student-teacher ratios or expensive equipment or services.

James Hendrix, dean of engineering, said engineering classes were expensive because they relied on ex-

tensive laboratory and computer use, but it was premature to say if engineering students should pay more.

If Kuralis' system was used, Rowson said, the university would have to study each student's needs. It also would have to make sure students would not pass up a challenging class because it was more expensive.

The NU system already makes graduate and some professional students pay a higher tuition than undergraduate students, Rowson said, but it doesn't parallel Kuralis' idea.

And Kuralis' idea will be only one

of several discussed.

Regents Chairwoman Nancy O'Brien of Waterloo said she expected to hear more than 50 ideas.

"This is a discussion and an exploration," she said. "Too often, the board gets together and sets policy, makes decisions only based on what's happening in Nebraska."

When the rising cost of tuition butts heads with the shrinking amount of federal and state funding, O'Brien said, a university has to look at ways to keep tuition affordable without cutting programs.

"It's balance."