

Nissen gets life for murders

OMAHA (AP) — A life sentence was handed down Wednesday to a man who testified against his friend in the killings of three people at a rural Humboldt farmhouse.

Marvin Thomas Nissen wiped his face as he was sentenced in Douglas County District Court for the first-degree murder of Teena Brandon, a woman who posed as a man and dated women.

Two weeks ago, the 22-year-old Falls City man was sentenced to life in prison for the second-degree murders of Lisa Lambert and Philip DeVine, who were with Brandon at the farmhouse. The sentences are to be served consecutively.

Nissen could have received the death penalty for Brandon's murder.

Brandon's mother, JoAnn, said she was glad the sentencing was over but that it was not what she wanted. "I

wanted him to get death," she said.

Richardson County District Judge Robert Finn said Nissen's testimony against John Lotter, 24, was a significant factor. Nissen's cooperation was "a dominating fact and clearly has probative value as to the character of the defendant," the sentencing order states.

Lotter, also of Falls City, was convicted of first-degree murder in all three killings. His sentencing is scheduled for Nov. 20.

Nissen admitted he stabbed Brandon, 21, but said Lotter shot all three victims.

Brandon, Lambert, 24, and DeVine, 22, were killed Dec. 31, 1993, in the farmhouse Lambert rented. DeVine had come from his home in Fairfield, Iowa, to visit Lambert.

Brandon, formerly of Lincoln, had

accused Nissen and Lotter of raping her one week before the killings. Prosecutors said Nissen and Lotter killed Brandon at the farmhouse to silence her about the rape charges. Police believe Lambert and DeVine were killed to eliminate witnesses to Brandon's murder.

Nissen agreed to testify against Lotter under a deal with prosecutors, who said they would not seek the death penalty for him in exchange for the testimony.

Under Nebraska law, sentencing judges are not bound by such agreements.

Finn presided over Nissen's trial, but he was joined by two other judges — Douglas County District Judges Michael Amdor and Gerald Moran — in deciding the sentence. State law allows judges in death penalty cases to have a three-judge panel pass sentence.

Oklahoma governor says leg belongs to bomber

OMAHA (AP) — Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating said Wednesday that he believed an unidentified leg found in the wreckage of the Oklahoma City bombing belonged to a bomber who didn't get away.

"If there were two guys in a truck, one lit the fuse, and one didn't get away from the truck fast enough, that's wonderful," Keating told the Omaha World-Herald.

The leg belongs to an unidentified black woman about 5 feet 5 inches tall between the ages of 16 and 30, said Dr. Fred Jordan, Oklahoma's state medical examiner.

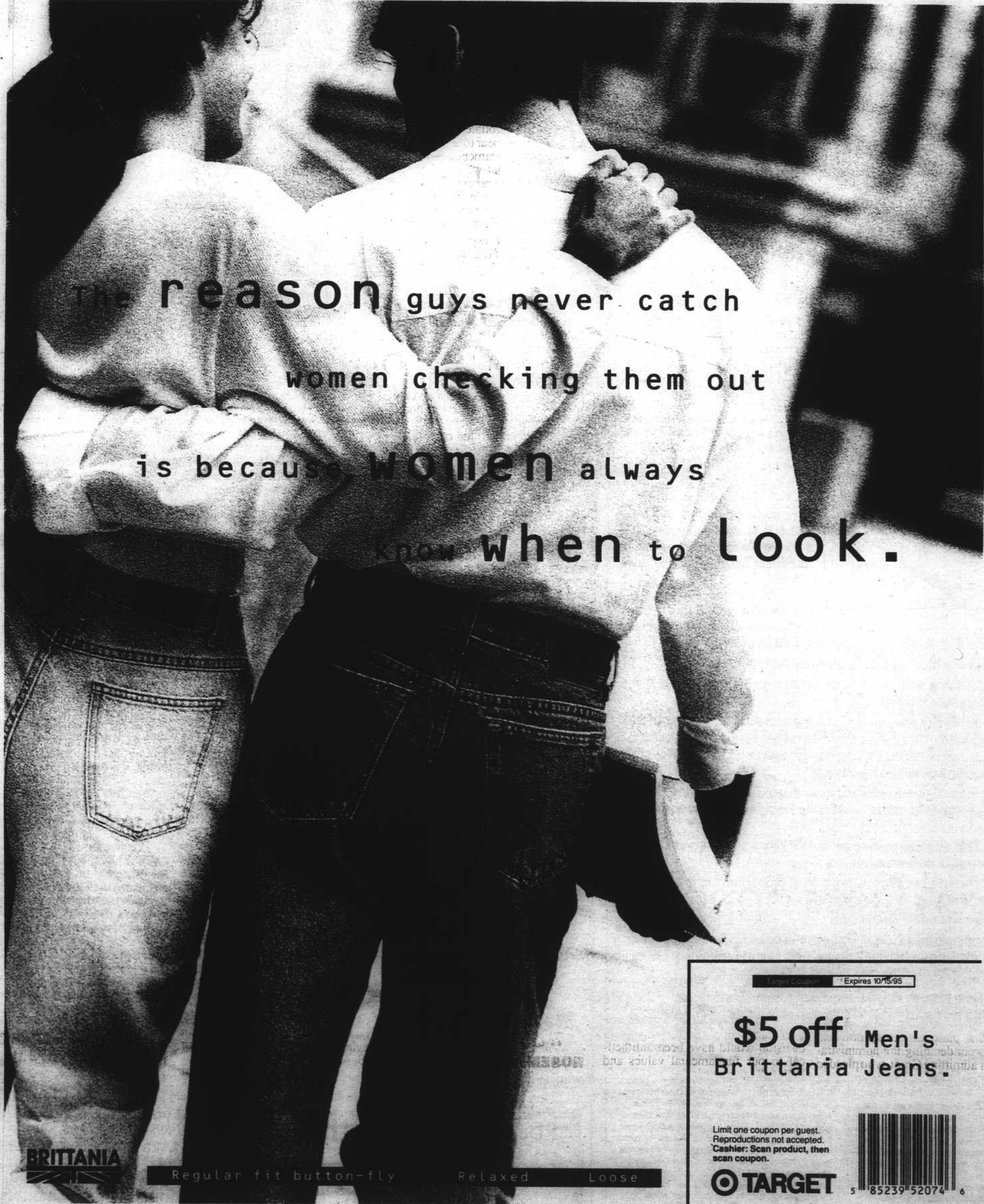
A self-described conservative

Republican, Keating said he also thought political pundits went too far in suggesting that Republican politics encouraged right-wing militia groups.

Keating said membership in such paramilitary groups was small.

"You are always going to have people on the left and the right who are angry," he said. "To have a few men crawling around the woods taking pot shots at tin cans is not a threat to public peace."

Keating played a round of golf Tuesday with Nebraska Gov. Ben Nelson during an annual charity golf tournament.



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