

Fakes

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his head and takes his ID.

After cursing the doorman, he stomps off. Before long, a Lincoln Police officer on bicycle stops him. After 15 minutes of interrogation, he is arrested.

The young man is one of the three to five minors on a typical weekend Yia Yia's catches using a fake ID.

Kimbe Ross, co-owner of Yia Yia's, said minors who attempt to use fake IDs at her bar and restaurant would not only lose their fakes, but also would have the police called on them.

Ross said she wanted to send a clear message to minors that the bar would not tolerate fakes.

"I know they're human, but you have to be hard on them," Ross said.

If police find a minor drinking alcohol at Yia Yia's, Ross could receive a \$5,000 fine and risk losing her liquor license.

Other bars go beyond sending a message.

Frank Gillaspie, owner of Morgan's Upstairs, has a sign posted by the door warning minors that the bar may file a civil suit against them if they are caught misrepresenting age.

Gillaspie said minors should get a higher penalty than judges usually give.

The maximum penalty for misrepresenting age is a \$500 fine, three months in jail or both. Most minors, however, get away with a \$50 to \$100 fine, Gillaspie said.

"That \$50 to \$100 fine is nothing," he said. "And their parents won't find out."

Tommy Mausbach, owner of The Brass Rail, said word already had spread about his bar. The only fakes he wants there are those taped on the cooler behind the bar.

"It's a deterrence," Mausbach said, "If we display them, others tell their friends and little (fraternity) brothers and sisters in sororities that The Brass Rail takes fake IDs."

Before Mausbach took ownership of The Brass Rail last September, he said, it was known as a popular bar for minors.

"It's been a college bar for 60 years. That's what makes it more difficult," Mausbach said.

The bar now confiscates about five fakes a week, compared to up to a dozen last fall. Door attendants get a portion of the bar's tips for each fake they catch, Mausbach said.

But even with messages, warnings and changes, minors still get in.

"If anybody on O Street says they don't serve minors, they're idiots," said Ben Sand, owner of the Watering Hole. "There's just too many good IDs out there."

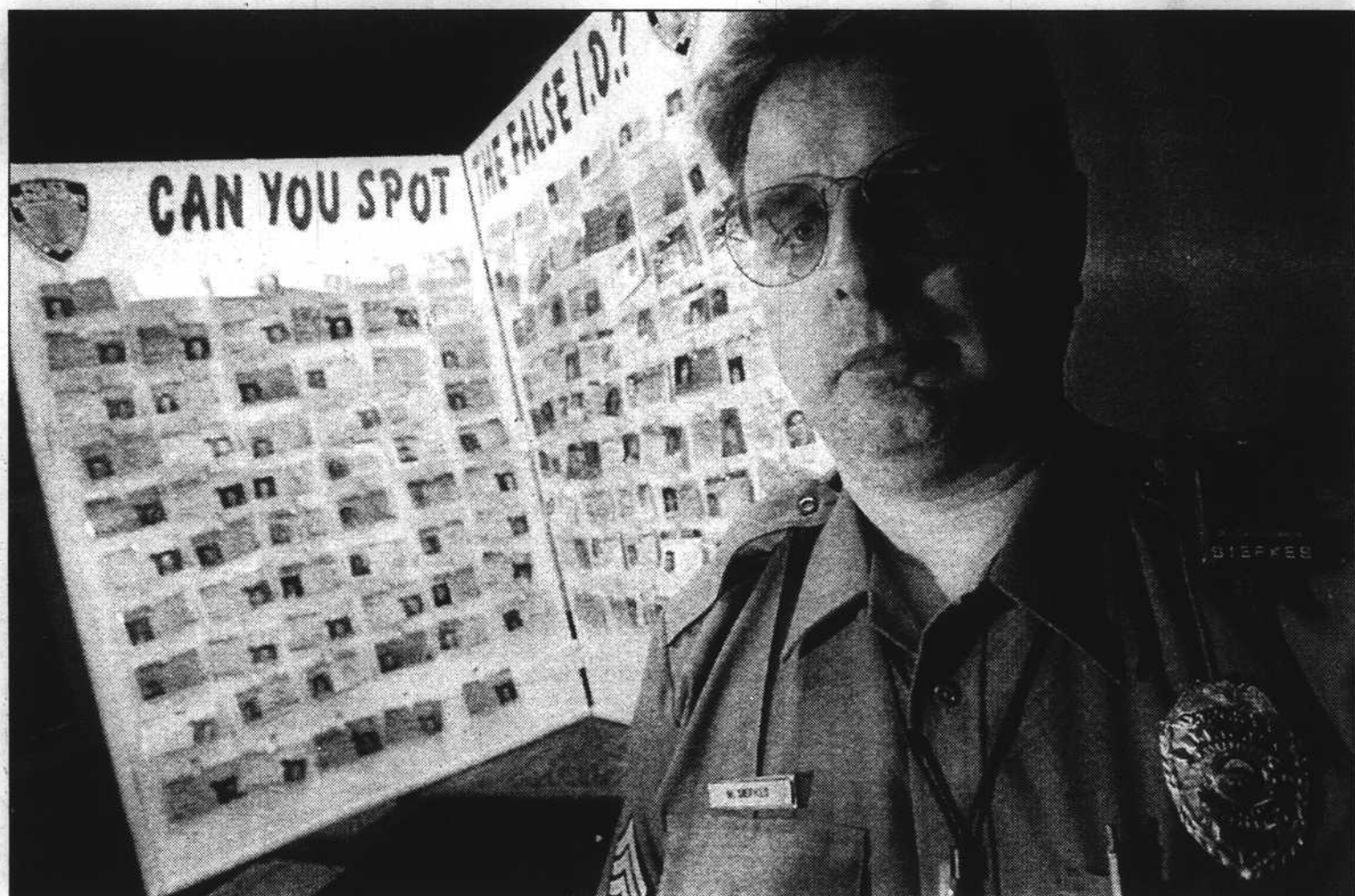
"We do all we can to keep them out, but we're not going to catch every one. It's a real problem for us."

Checking IDs at the Watering Hole is a little more complicated than other bars because minors often come to eat, Sand said.

When the bar is busy, bartenders aren't always able to watch to make sure minors aren't drinking from other's drinks, he said.

"When it's busy, we want to keep them out," he said. "We want them, but we don't want to risk losing our state liquor license."

Out of business



Travis Heying/DN

Bicycle patrolman Mike Siefkes stands in front of a wall of confiscated driver's licenses at the Lincoln Police Department.

Lincoln police Cpt. Jim Peschong said bar owners should be aggressive against minors because the liquor commission highly scrutinized them.

If bars violate any of the state's liquor laws, including serving minors, they could be closed for 10 days, fined \$5,000, or, after multiple violations, lose their liquor licenses, Peschong said.

The Hurricane and Montigo Bay, two dance clubs downtown, closed their doors after losing their licenses last fall.

Lincoln police tried to help downtown bars last year by putting plain-clothed officers inside, in part to crack down on minors and fake IDs.

The "Badges in Bars" program, which lasted from October 1994 to October 1995, infiltrated 22 bars, he said. Police trained 87 door attendants and checked more than 5,000 IDs during the program, Peschong said.

The program netted 79 arrests for crimes ranging from fake IDs, fighting, theft, drugs, failure to comply with a lawful order, disturbing the peace and urinating in public.

"Badges in Bars" gave bars extra protection from minors with fakes and helped keep them away, Peschong said. Some nights, officers would confiscate 10 to 15 fake IDs.

"I think it has made students a little more cautious."

As police confiscated more fakes during the

program, they got closer to finding where they came from, Peschong said.

Police came so close to catching a student on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus who was creating fakes, Peschong said, that the forger closed his operation.

Using computers and copy machines, people can make fake IDs easily and inexpensively, he said.

"Modern technology can make things look better than they ever used to."

"People are really good at it, which leads them to believe they can get away with it."

Bathroom bust

Police have many techniques to find if minors are using fakes, but the best way is talking to them, Peschong said. Officers will get information about them and double check to see if it's right.

Officers often will call a minor's parents if they doubt his or her age, Peschong said.

For an example, Peschong said if police see someone in a bar who they think is a minor drinking, they will ask that person for an ID.

If the ID proves to be a fake, the officer has a misrepresentation of age charge.

Police then will remind people that they can be arrested for providing false information if

they don't tell officers their real age, he said.

Instead of risking an additional charge, most minors tell the truth.

The maximum sentence for both providing false information and minor in possession is \$500, three months in jail or both.

But not all arrests for fake IDs are that easy. Sarah Thiele, a sophomore business administration major at UNL, said she got caught using her fake ID — despite an attempt to get away.

Thiele said she was with friends at Woody's Pub one night. She had taken two sips of a drink when she saw a Lincoln police officer coming into the bar.

Thiele went to the ladies' restroom, but the officer stood outside, waiting for her.

Her friends came in and warned her, so she gave her fake ID to one of them.

A female officer entered shortly after and searched her, Thiele said. The other officer convinced Thiele's friend to surrender the ID, she said.

Thiele was arrested for minor in possession of alcohol, misrepresenting age and providing false information.

She bought her fake ID from a friend who looked like her, she said.

Although Thiele went through a pre-trial diversions program, she said she was angry and embarrassed about the encounter.

"I think there's far more important things in Lincoln than minors in a bar."

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