

Execution date set for John Joubert

From Staff Reports

It took Nebraska only one week to set a new execution date for convicted child-killer John Joubert — only 18 days from his previous brush with the electric chair.

On Monday, the Nebraska State Supreme Court set July 17 as a new execution date for Joubert.

Joubert was scheduled to die June 28 in the electric chair for the 1983 killings of two Sarpy County boys, but was given a stay of execution by the U.S. Supreme Court.

On July 1, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected Joubert's two appeals. By that afternoon Nebraska State Attorney General Don Stenberg had submitted to the Nebraska Supreme Court a request for a new execution.

Stenberg on Monday commended the court for its swiftness in acting on the Joubert case and didn't expect any further delays or stays of executions.

"The court recognizes that 12 years of review in the case of someone who has pleaded guilty and confessed to several murders is adequate and that further delays do not contribute to the administration of justice," Stenberg said.

But Christine Abraham, the state coordinator for Nebraskan's Against the Death Penalty, said justice was not being served.

"I'm disappointed in the Supreme Court's response," Abraham said. "I'm amazed they issued an order so quickly. It's unprecedented."

Matt Lemeux, executive director of the Nebraska chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, said he was also disappointed and surprised at the court's quick decision.

Lemeux said he was hoping the court would wait to make its ruling until October, when the U.S. Supreme Court would be back in session.

X-rays of mummies show glimpse of past

By Mike Kluck
Staff Writer

Many people have heard stories about the mummification of ancient Egyptian royalty and pharaohs. The process of ritual preservation of the dead has fascinated scientists, historians and movie-goers for years.

But royalty only made up about 3 percent of the ancient Egyptian population.

Most ancient Egyptians consisted of ordinary middle-class citizens, many of whom were mummified in the same manner royalty was.

It's a fact that pleases Alan Kirkland, because it will allow him to study the lives of people who lived more than 3000 years ago.

On Monday, Kirkland, the director of the Egyptian Collection Research Project at the University of Nebraska, X-rayed the second of three mummies the University currently has in its collection.

Kirkland said it would take him a while to learn more about the mummy, which he believed to be a woman who lived during the 18th Dynasty sometime between 1200-1300 B.C.

But the X-rays should help him determine the age, height, weight, diet, and physical characteristics of the person. Dental conditions can also be detected, and possibly what caused the person's death.

"We will do a forensic examination much like they do in any criminal investigation they do today," Kirkland said. One mummy was X-rayed July 1 while the remaining one will go through the same process next Monday.

Nebraska is one of about 12 institutions which has X-rayed mummies, according to Kirkland.

It is also unusual for a university to have three mummies intact and in good shape, such as Nebraska's, he said.

However, early results of the X-rays showed that the mummy had probably been the victim of grave-robbers soon after its death.

Although Kirkland said his investigation wasn't interested in gathering jewelry or treasures from the period, he was disappointed because the bones of the mummy were disturbed by the rummaging.

Nevertheless, Kirkland said the mummy was in good shape despite moving it from its storage area in Nebraska Hall to the University Health Center for the X-ray.

The mummy was moved in its original wooden coffin, but was covered to protect it from light and dust. The coffin was also supported by foam to protect it from breaking apart during the move.

Kirkland said other factors such as humidity, also hamper efforts to preserve the condition of the mummies.

"Nebraska is one of the worst places next to Florida to have one of these," Kirkland said. "They're much better off in a place with no humidity."

The mummies were originally donated along with other Egyptian artifacts to the University Museum in 1927 by George Linninger, a farm-implement dealer from Omaha.

Since then the mummies have been on the fifth floor of Nebraska Hall until 1994 when Kirkland, then a graduate student, began the project to identify and catalog the collection.

Kirkland said the mummies the University has are priceless, but are deteriorating due to the conditions they are exposed to every day. He said the mummies should be stored in a climate-controlled facility.

For now, Kirkland said he will continue to examine and protect the mummies, while learning more about their culture. The horror stories will be saved for the movies.



Photos by Tanna Kinnaman/DN
Top: After languishing for decades on filing cabinets in a darkened room of Nebraska Hall, an Egyptian mummy is examined by x-rays at the University of Nebraska Student Health Center. Above: Graduate student Alan Kirkland and scientific illustrator Sarah Guthmann examine x-rays of the Egyptian mummy.

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