

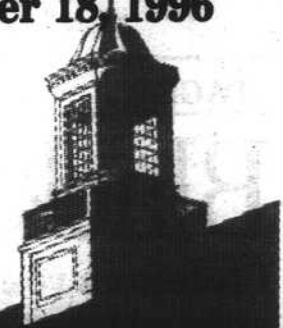
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How sweet (16) it is



ISABELLE MORNEAU (left), Jenny Benson (center) and Kim Ratliff salute the record crowd of 1,544 Sunday at the Abbott Sports Complex. The Nebraska soccer team beat Minnesota 3-2 in sudden-death overtime in a first-round NCAA tournament game. Please see coverage on page 10.

MATT MILLER/DN

State's judges losing support, records show

OMAHA (AP) — If election records are any indication, Nebraska's judges are losing favor with voters.

The approval ratings of judges has dropped steadily since the 1960s, when judges typically received 70 to 80 percent of the vote.

"In recent years, it has been pretty well accepted that a judge is going to get 25 to 30 percent no votes," said Darwin Severson, administrator of Douglas County District Court for 20 years.

Legal experts say they are not sure why the no votes are increasing. They surmise, though, that rulings on particular issues, extensive publicity about high-profile cases and the public's lack of knowledge about the justice system may be factors, the Omaha World-Herald reported Sunday.

Election records confirm the trend — Nebraska Supreme Court judges generally received approval ratings of 81 to 87 percent in the 1960s, 78 to 85 percent in the 1970s, 71 to 83 percent in the 1980s and 68 to 76 percent in the 1990s.

Six Nebraska judges have been removed from the bench since the retention system was implemented in 1962.

The American Bar Association Journal, in its November issue, notes that judges around the country have come under attack for decisions in particular cases.

Douglas County District Judge Mary Likes, who was opposed by the Omaha Police Union before the Nov. 5 election, said the labeling of judges by special-interest groups is disturbing. She retained her seat with 59 percent approval of voters.

Judge Likes said the union's criticism will not cause her to veer from judicial standards.

"It would never even occur to me to do anything different than what I'm charged to do, and that is to be fair and impartial," she said.

Professor focuses on 'Indian laws'

By MATTHEW WAITE
Senior Reporter

John Snowden lets out a wry smile when asked about his style — he claims he's traditional and orthodox.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln law professor's office is a hodgepodge of '60s and '70s fallout: a Jimi Hendrix poster from his first teaching job, a Bob Marley picture, reggae music playing on his radio.

But the most dominant decorations in his office — pictures, paintings and a woven rug — come from his passion for American Indian issues.

Snowden, who has been teaching Native American Law for the past six years, said keeping up with American Indian laws is challenging and, at the same time, disheartening.

Laws dealing with American Indians have turned negative in the last decade, he said. From sovereignty issues to gaming law, Congress has closed every door the tribes have opened, Snowden said.

The center of American Indian law is sovereignty, Snowden said. The tribes, on their reservation lands, are sovereign nations inside the United States. The U.S. Supreme Court, in separate decisions, recognized Indian sovereignty in 1823, 1831 and 1832.

Since then, Snowden said, Congress has reduced sovereignty further and further, through homestead laws that took land from the tribes and laws that restrict actions the tribes can take.

But the tribes survive.

Snowden said his class is about the federal government's laws governing the tribes. Each tribe has laws and customs separate from the federal laws.

Each semester, he takes students to some of Nebraska's reservations.

"It always feels good to get back to Indian Country," he said. "There's just a different vibration in the air."

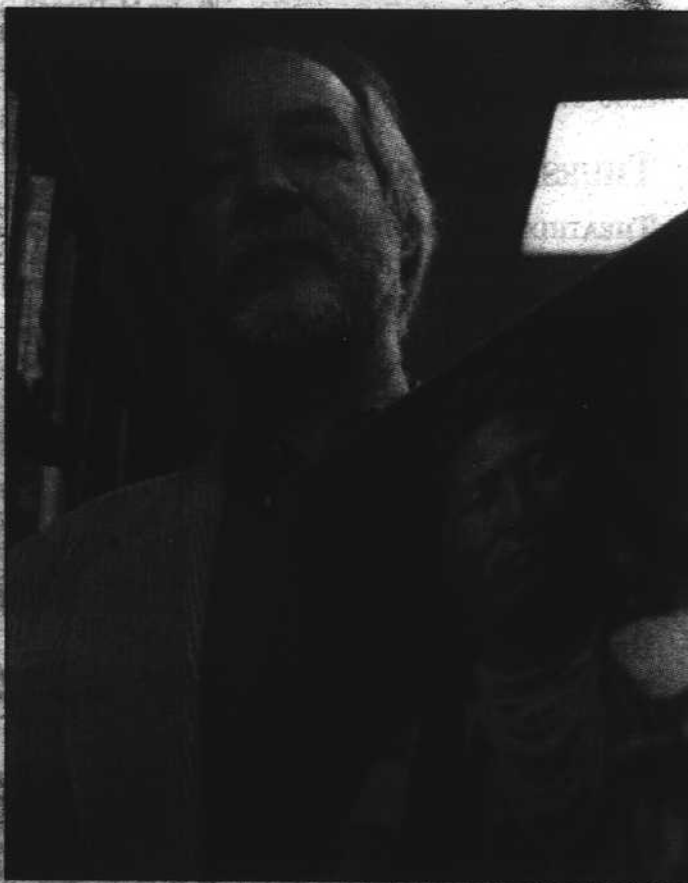
Snowden's allegiance to the tribes comes out of their history.

"The history of my people as it relates to the people of this continent has been shameful," he said. "In particular, the law regarding Indian sovereignty and Indian lands was started in racism and continues in that."

Each time a tribe finds a way to get ahead — such as the current battle between Nebraska's Santee Sioux Tribe and the state over casino gambling rights — Snowden said the government slams the door shut.

But Snowden believes that whatever the government does, tribes will survive well into the future. They have already endured centuries of genocide.

"The race is neither to the swift or the strong but those who will survive."



SCOTT BRUHN/DN

JOHN SNOWDEN, UNL law professor, holds a picture of Plenty Coups, a chief of the Crow Indian tribe.

Woman dies in fire; smoke inhalation is cited as cause

By CHAD LORENZ
Senior Reporter

A 61-year-old woman who was apparently smoking in bed died Friday morning in a fire that destroyed her apartment.

Firefighters carried Leona Greenfield out of her garden-level apartment at 5505 S. 31st St. and tried to resuscitate her, Lincoln police Capt. Stephen Imes said.

She was later pronounced dead on arrival at Lincoln General Hospital.

Firefighters found Greenfield lying in her bathroom, Lincoln fire Capt. Dustin Morton said. She apparently died of smoke inhalation, he said.

Greenfield was the only victim in the fire. Other occupants evacuated the building.

She might have had trouble getting out of the apartment because of a recent hip injury, Morton said.

"It was difficult for her to get around in the first place," he said.

Greenfield had smoke detectors in the apartment, but investigators had not yet determined if they sounded or were working, Morton said.

Although Morton's engine company was dispatched at 7:22 a.m., Greenfield's neighbors smelled smoke about an hour before, he said. The neighbors apparently didn't call the fire department because they thought the smell was burning food.