

Ex-mobsters tell tales of campus betting

By **MIKE KLUCK**
Senior Reporter

Lex Varria just had three things to do for his job: answer the phone, do a little baby-sitting and collect money.

Varria, who spent 10 years running a sports betting operation for an East Coast mob, spoke Tuesday night with Sonny Goodman and Tom Grey at the Nebraska Union's Colonial Room.

Goodman (not his true identity) is a former mob gambling boss and Grey is a spokesman for the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling.

All three were in Lincoln to talk about gambling on college campuses. The talk was sponsored by Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity and Gambling with the Good Life.

Varria spoke about how he would trick college students into placing bets and then use intimidation and threats to make them pay their debt.

His extortion techniques included threatening mob violence, taking vanloads of students to the blood bank to give blood and making collections on fraudulent insurance claims.

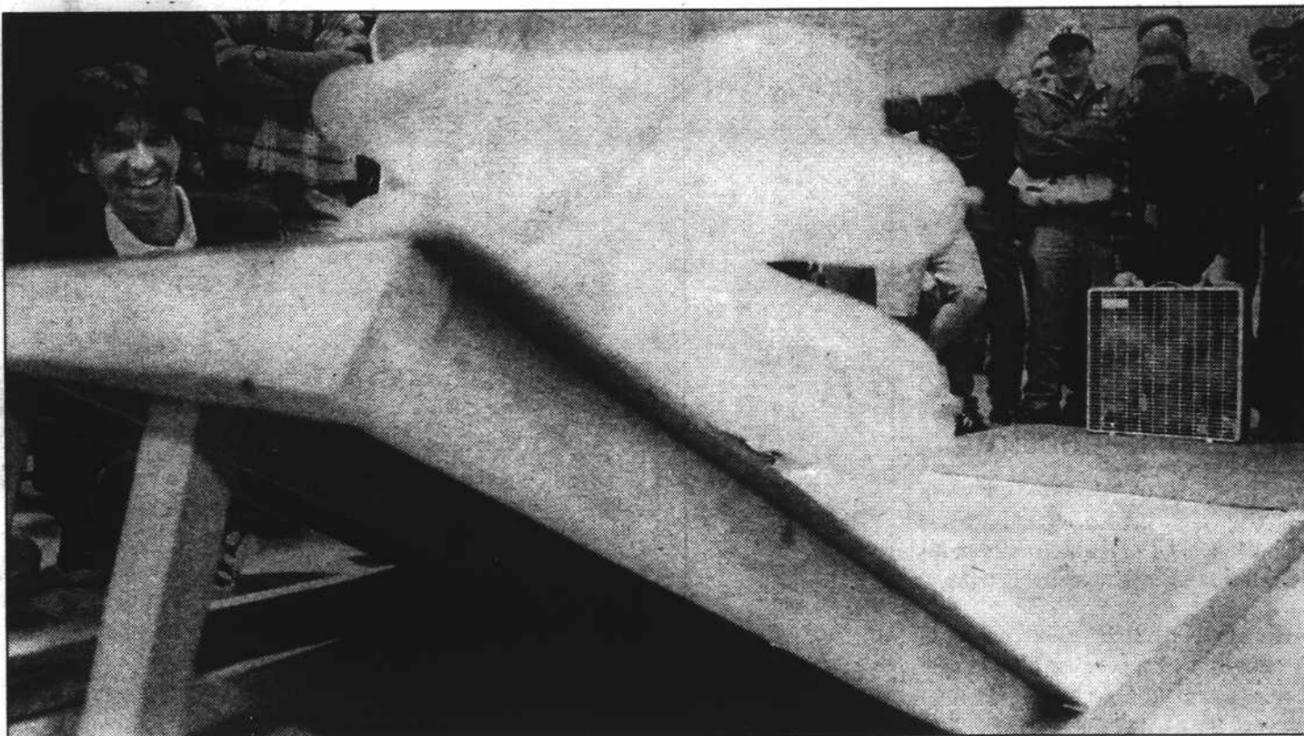
Varria, who was speaking at a college campus for the first time, said once he collected the money, students often would bet again.

But Varria, who worked in the Boston area with clients who attended Harvard and Brown University, always knew one thing the gamblers didn't know.

"I'm on this side of the fence and you (the gambler) can't win," Varria said. "There is no way. I've never been a gambler, it's all about money. I've got a plan for you and all you are going to do is be a loser. The only choice you have is how big of loser you are going to be by the end of it."

Goodman, who spoke at UNL in April, said the belief of winning is the big myth of gambling.

Racing fans



MATT MILLER/DN

GAVRIL HEGREA (left), an engineering graduate student, helps judge the all-terrain vehicle competition held by the Mechanical Engineering 101 class in Mabel Lee Hall Tuesday afternoon. This entrant, called "Functionality," was designed to float over the ramp at the end of the Turf, Surf and Climb Challenge — a competition in which engineering students had to design vehicles powered only by wind.

Human rights activists blame ignorance for racism

By **BRIAN CARLSON**
Staff Reporter

Area human rights activists gathered in Lincoln Tuesday to unify their efforts and renew their call for progress in human and civil rights around the world.

Sponsored by a diverse group of area organizations, the celebration of Human Rights Day featured panel discussions, speeches and workshops covering a wide range of human rights issues.

Panelist Martin Ramirez, a counseling psychologist for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's counseling and psychological services, said human rights advocates must continue their struggle despite the price they pay for their views.

"Once you cross the line, I don't think you can ever go back," he said. "But when you speak the truth, when you speak about the unjust and how rights are being violated, there's nothing to apologize for."

Ramirez said prejudice he experienced as a child made him feel ashamed of his family's

Mexican-American heritage. It took him years to realize the toll that the prejudice had taken on his self-esteem, he said.

Prejudice and human rights violations can be traced to ignorance, panelist Kelly Morgan said. Morgan, a Native American who represented a group for parents of gays and lesbians, said rampant human rights abuses have decimated her people's way of life.

Any movement toward improved human rights conditions must begin with an increased appreciation for diversity, said Rick Wallace, president of the NAACP's Lincoln chapter.

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