

Signing day

Eric Crouch, a quarterback from Millard North, headlines Nebraska's 22-member football recruiting class. PAGE 9



The blues, brother

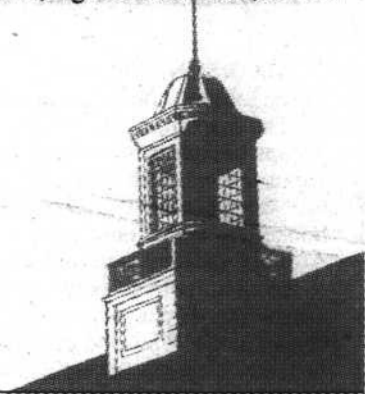
Matt "Guitar" Murphy is known for much more than his work in the backup band for the Blues Brothers. PAGE 11

February 6, 1997

JUST PLAIN GRAY

Cloudy, light wind, high 30. Snow later, low 20.

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Speaking Out



LANE HICKENBOTTOM/DN

LOBBYIST PAUL O'HARA, left, talks with lobbyist Jim Cunningham in the Capitol Rotunda last Thursday morning. O'Hara lobbies for O'Hara & Associates, while Cunningham lobbies for the Nebraska Catholic Conference.

Voices that carry: Lobbyists say it all

BY ERIN SCHULTE
Senior Reporter

Legislature

The voices that rise above the din of constant chatter at the State Capitol are the ones with money behind them.

"Money is a megaphone," said Walter Radcliffe, who has been a lobbyist since 1977.

People know that lobbyists often have a say in which bills rise and which bills fall — and it's not because they have well-developed vocal chords.

It's because of their clients' pocketbooks.

Lobbyists are hired by clients — often hospitals, special-interest groups like the American Association of Retired Persons, or corporations — to work full time representing their interests at the Cap-

tol.

Besides the money transactions between clients (known as "principals") and lobbyists, money flows from principals to legislators in the form of campaign contributions, according, sometimes, to who votes their way.

"You try to elect your friends and unelect your enemies," Radcliffe said.

More than money

The other side of the lobbyist's coin is that they provide an invaluable service to legislators.

Sen. Dwite Pederson of Elkhorn said if he's studying a bill's effects

Please see LOBBY on 7

Aliant increases rates to support upgrades

BY JOSH FUNK
Staff Reporter

Nobody ever said technology was cheap.

Effective March 23, all residential Aliant Communications customers will experience a change in their rates to pay for improvements the company has made.

Aliant will raise its basic rate from \$12.50 to \$13.75 per month, but at the same time it also will lower its long-distance rates.

All 175,404 of Aliant's residential customers were notified of the rate change on Nov. 8, 1996.

Lela Kelliher, Aliant Communications specialist, said callers who use their long-distance often may end up with a small net change in their bills.

This is the first basic service rate increase in five years. The increase is to pay for the \$128-million investment Aliant has made in improving its services.

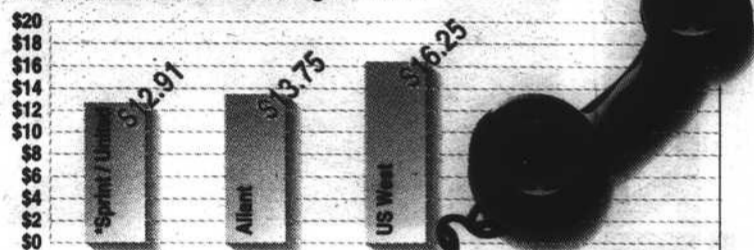
Aliant has installed fiber-optic lines and digital switching centers to improve its service.

The fiber optics are installed in a ring to prevent a loss of service if the lines break. In the event of a break, the signal will just reverse direction in the ring and continue.

"Customers should notice that their calls are going through faster with the

Nebraska Phone Rates

The majority of Nebraska is serviced by three telephone companies. After the increase, Aliant Communications ranks second in price for basic residential service among the three.



*Basic Service does not include several additional charges that may be allotted by Sprint/United

AARON STECKELBERG/DN

fiber optics," Kelliher said.

The digital switching system has allowed Aliant to offer several new services to its customers such as caller identification and last-call return.

Officials said the long-distance rates are being revised in response to the Telecommunications Act recently passed by Congress.

"We are eliminating the subsidies in long-distance service to encourage competition and those savings are being passed on to the customer," Kelliher said.

Even with the impending increase in rates, Aliant Communications will compare favorably with other cities. In other areas of Nebraska such as Omaha, Grand Island, Alliance and

Lexington, the basic rate for phone service is \$16.25 a month.

Customers who think the rate change is unjustified can petition the Nebraska Public Service Commission to have the rate change reviewed before March 10.

Two percent of Aliant Communications customers, or 3,509 people, must petition the commission to justify a hearing.

"Legally, Aliant can raise its rates 10 percent a year," said John Burvains, deputy director of the public service commission.

"If we receive enough petitions the commission will hold a hearing to review the rate change. Then the commission will set the rate."

Sigma Chi could face sanctions

From Staff Reports

Sigma Chi could face sanctions from its international organization for the cross burning that took place during a Jan. 23 pre-initiation ritual.

Burning a cross is a direct violation of national fraternity policy, according to Mark Anderson, president of the Sigma Chi Corporation in Evanston, Ill.

"We are not racists, and we did not want to do things that would lead to the perception that we are racist," Anderson said.

The international organization's ban on cross burning was issued twice and is now a part of the Sigma Chi policy manual, Anderson said. The local chapter could face sanctions ranging from demanding a simple apology to withdrawing the Sigma Chi charter, he said.

When questioned Jan. 27 about the incident, Anderson said he thought the reported cross burning was a misunderstanding.

The ritual likely involved only the fraternity's symbol, the Norman Cross, he said. A Norman Cross has flared ends and is featured on the Sigma Chi fraternity crest.

Lancaster County Sheriff's Department officers said they discovered

"We are responding, and we will carry out whatever punishment they deem as appropriate."

RICHARD RICE
Sigma Chi chapter adviser

about 30 Sigma Chi fraternity members engaged in a historical ceremony outside Lincoln on Jan. 23.

No arrests were made regarding the ritual, which included Confederate uniforms, rifles, sabers and the burning of a 6-foot cross, they said.

Craig Vacek, Sigma Chi president at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said the burning cross was used to reenact the early heritage of Sigma Chi heraldry — when Emperor Constantine had a vision of a burning white cross before his successful invasion of Rome.

Vacek said the ceremony was not racially motivated but a ritual to reenact the founding of Sigma Chi by soldiers during the civil war. The fraternity has since apologized for allowing

the opportunity for misunderstanding.

International Sigma Chi officials reported they have conducted an unofficial investigation and asked for the local chapter to respond to some questions about the incident.

"We are responding, and we will carry out whatever punishment they deem as appropriate," said Richard Rice, a Lincoln attorney who advises the local chapter.

UNL did not punish the fraternity because the incident did not violate any specific university policy. The university's Interfraternity Council also did not sanction Sigma Chi.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.