

Lincoln crime scene seeing some action

Murder and mayhem made the news in 1996-97, but the city is still safe.

By MATTHEW WAITE
Senior Reporter

Neil Young once sang "There's still crime in the city, but it's good to be free." And in the 1996-97 academic year, Daily Nebraskan readers got it all.

A nine-month investigation into crime in the city found that while there is still crime, it isn't where people think it is. The Malone neighborhood, contrary to popular belief, is a low crime area.

And Riley Washington found that it is good to be free — free from the weight of felony charges. The former Husker was acquitted of attempted second-degree murder.

Crime in the city of Lincoln continued at its low and slow pace — the way its citizens like it. Nebraska's capital city remained one of the lowest crime cities in the country, according to FBI statistics.

But there were times when police were busy, and the courts were active. The year in crime was marked by the arrest of a suspect in the murder of a UNL freshman, the execution of a

child murderer and the flare-up and dying out of a dispute in a north Lincoln neighborhood. Lincoln police arrested Gregory Gabel on June 25, 1996, for suspicion of the July 25, 1995, murder of Martina McMenamin.

Gabel was charged with first-degree murder, and he is awaiting trial. The arrest ended an investigation that lasted exactly 11 months.

Another murder case that flared up was the murder of Tamara Ligenza. Ligenza was killed in her apartment on Sept. 7, 1993.

Prosecutors say Ligenza's ex-boyfriend, Clifford Davlin, got into her apartment, strangled her, then set her apartment afire. Davlin has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

In yet another murder case, John Joubert was executed in July for the 1983 killing of two boys in Sarpy County. Joubert's execution was the second in Nebraska in two years. Before these two, Nebraska hadn't executed anyone since 1959.

Other crimes, however, did not deal with life-and-death matters.

On 29th and Dudley streets, a fight between neighbors turned into a 30-person street brawl on March 19. Police in riot gear were called out, but not used during the fight.

Three people were taken to the hospital, 11 were arrested in the whole series of events.

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Because of quick reactions by community groups and a willingness to stop the violence by the combatants, the tensions died down in a matter of days.

A year-review of crime would be remiss without mentioning the list of football players — current and former — who wound up in the back seat of a police cruiser at one time or another.

This year, Terrell Farley was arrested twice for drunken driving, and got booted twice from the football team and once from the NFL draft. He is currently awaiting sentencing for failure to comply with a lawful order and for his second DWI offense.

Lawrence Phillips was arrested for a disturbance at an Omaha hotel in March. That arrest occurred days before his jailing on assault charges. He served 23 days and was taken to St. Louis by his coach, Dick Vermeil.

Also serving time was Tyrone Williams, a former Husker defensive back who went from Super Bowl Champion with the Green Bay Packers in January to Lancaster County Jail inmate in February.

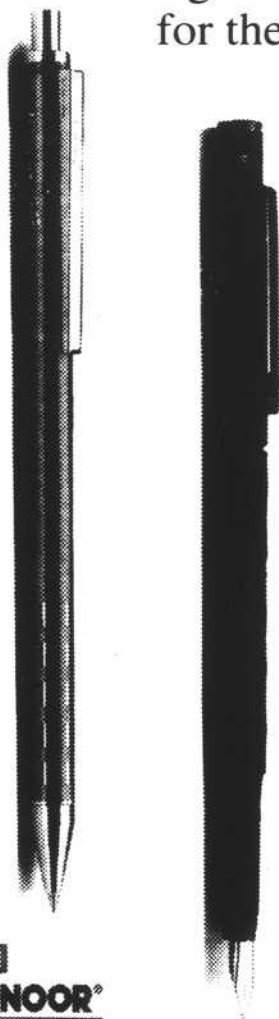
Also awaiting sentencing is Jon Vedral, a former wingback, on drunken driving and assault charges, and Eric Alford, a former tight end, on felony drug charges.

On a more positive note, a Daily Nebraskan investigation into neighborhood crime rates found that a Lincoln neighborhood long thought to be high on crime was in fact a low crime area.

Lincoln's Malone neighborhood ranked no higher than fifth when compared to eight other core neighborhoods. All neighborhoods did not have much crime, but Malone had even less than areas previously perceived as being low crime.

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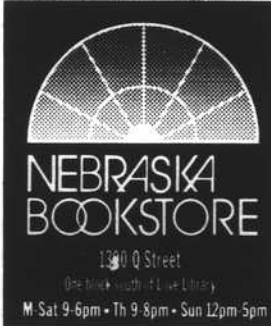
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