

News Digest

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1998

PAGE 2

Mardi Gras crowds flood New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Despite threats of a police crackdown, bared bosoms and barely-there costumes flourished Tuesday in the French Quarter on Mardi Gras, New Orleans' last fling before Lent.

The currency of the day was strings of cheap plastic beads, which men dispensed by the handful in exchange for flashes of breasts.

With the weather a sunny 70 degrees, police said the crowds could top 1 million, which would be a Fat Tuesday record. Police said spectators were 15 rows deep in spots, and 60,000 to 70,000 people gathered along eight blocks of Bourbon Street alone.

Parades ran several hours late because a float on Zulu — the traditional black spoof that rolls first — broke down. That delayed the parade of Rex, king of Carnival, and the many parades that followed.

Civic leaders had complained that New Orleans' Mardi Gras was getting a reputation elsewhere around the country as an orgy in the streets. And police spokesman Lt. Marlon Defillo said the department would take a harder line against

lewd behavior this year.

But there was little sign of any crackdown in the French Quarter.

"I stop it if I see it, but so far I haven't really seen any," said a policeman standing beneath a balcony where women drew cheers for raising their shirts. "This group isn't complaining."

Crowds of men with cameras surrounded Dorothy McGee, a 26-year-old secretary from Boston, as she repeatedly raised her cutoff T-shirt while her husband, Doug, looked on.

"This is really fun," she said, heavily laden with beads. "I wouldn't do it at home, but what the heck."

Her husband added: "It's OK with me, as long as she shares the beads."

Religious groups walked amid the revelers with signs warning of damnation. They handed out fliers calling for repentance and harangued the crowd over loudspeakers.

"We believe these people will go from Mardi Gras to hell," said Fred Sutton of Mobile, Ala. "Is a string of beads worth eternal damnation?"

Rescuers halt survivor search

KISSIMMEE, Fla. (AP) — Rescuers with dogs searched the piney woods near a tornado-devastated campground Tuesday for the bodies of people blown away when a swarm of tornadoes strafed central Florida.

At least 38 people were killed and hundreds of homes and businesses were destroyed Monday. Seven people were still missing Tuesday, four from the Ponderosa Park Campground.

As hope of finding more survivors faded, searchers began yelling to the two dogs, "Go find Fred!" — the signal for the black Labrador and Weimaraner to find bodies hidden in the underbrush surrounding the campground.

"Search!" — the command to find survivors — could no longer be heard.

"There's nothing in there," said Lt. Mark Bogush of the Tampa Fire-Rescue Canine Unit. "They don't want to shut that door of hope, but this is basically a cleanup."

Rescuers picked through the mass of twisted metal, shattered glass and splintered lumber the day after six to 10 El Niño-driven twisters tore

through central Florida from the Gulf of Mexico. Monday's tornadoes, packing 260 mph winds, were the state's deadliest on record, killing more than Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

The weather service issued warnings 20 to 30 minutes before the tornadoes hit, but it did little good.

"When people are sleeping there's no way of getting the message out," said Terry Faber, University of Miami meteorology researcher.

In Sanford, 40 miles north of Orlando, the putrid stench of a rotting pig carcass alongside a driveway hung heavily in the air over a 10-acre farm. Chickens, pigs, a horse, and a cow with a broken leg wandered about in a daze.

Freddie Padgett of the town of Geneva near Daytona Beach, recounted wearing a life jacket to bed — his habit whenever storms approach. His recreational vehicle was demolished, and he was hurled into Lake Harney by the winds, staying afloat by clinging for hours to a small boat.

The number of people left homeless and damage estimates were being

tallied Tuesday. State Insurance Commissioner Bill Nelson said, however, that property damage was not on a scale with Hurricane Andrew, which destroyed or damaged 35,000 homes and caused \$25 billion in losses.

Shelters were set up to house thousands, but many found solace with relatives, neighbors or in hotels.

Donations began pouring in as relief organizations estimated that more than \$300,000 will be needed to shelter, feed and clothe displaced families. President Clinton declared the region a disaster area, clearing the way for federal aid, and the Red Cross provided meals. Clinton also promised to survey the destruction Wednesday.

Cinde Von Herbulis was among the volunteers helping to distribute supplies.

"We are giving them what they will need today and tomorrow," she said. "They were afraid if they took too much there wouldn't be anything for somebody else."

Weapons specialists take control

WASHINGTON (AP) — Weapons experts — not diplomats — will take charge of deciding where and when to hunt for hidden Iraqi biological and chemical arms, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told uneasy senators Tuesday.

She promised to work with the U.N. inspections commission to clear up "ambiguities" in the deal that U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan struck with President Saddam Hussein and "to close any possible loopholes."

Projecting caution about the accord, the administration said it would insist on a "quick test" of Saddam's promise to expose all sites, some of which have never been opened, to U.N. inspectors.

"We have to be watching very closely," President Clinton said.

Bill Richardson, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, returned

from New York Tuesday and joined Clinton's other national security advisers at the White House to go over the Iraq agreement.

At the Pentagon, officials announced that Clinton had signed an order authorizing the call up of 500 members of the National Guard and Reserve in support of the Gulf deployments.

Defense Secretary William Cohen announced Sunday that he requested the move, which makes specialists such as Navy harbor surveillance troops, Coast Guard port security forces, Army chemical detection forces and Air Force Special Operations C-130 air crews available for up to 270 days.

Diplomats were added to the U.N. inspection teams for prospective searches of eight of Saddam's six dozen or more palaces, a gesture to the Iraqi

president, who had accused Americans on the commission of espionage.

Also, the U.N. special commission is obliged under the agreement "to respect the legitimate concerns of Iraq relating to national security, sovereignty and dignity." Still, Clinton and his top advisers gave a generally favorable view of the agreement, which defused a crisis with Iraq that could have boiled over into U.S. bombings.

Albright conceded that the function of the diplomats was fuzzy, but she gave assurances "the inspectors will decide where to go," and she even implied the United States could pull out of the deal if the diplomats' role was unsatisfactory.

"Diplomats may be acceptable if UNSCOM (the U.N. special commission) is in control," she told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "We will clarify, but we will also test."

UNL speed limits to drop for safety of pedestrians

TRAFFIC from page 1

- \$75 for 11-15 mph over.
- \$125 for 16-20 mph over the limit.

Offenders must then add a \$23 court cost.

In a letter sent to several city leaders Feb. 13, public works recommended that LPD and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln enforce the changes.

Another change — this one done by the university — may keep pedestrians getting on and off shuttle buses on Vine Street safer. Tad McDowell, UNL Parking and Transit Services manager, said the university was urged to move a shuttle stop in front of Henzlik Hall east or west 75 feet so it was closer to lit crosswalks and away from such a congested area.

McDowell said the stop was moved

about 75 feet to the east Tuesday, but he wanted city officials to make sure the move was adequate.

Wiechmann said ASUN's Government Liaison Committee talked to public works last semester about the dangers to pedestrians near 14th and Vine streets.

Wiechmann met last semester with ASUN President Curt Ruwe, Haden and Mayor Mike Johanns to talk about GLC proposals and testimonies from accident victims.

Addressing safety concerns in the 14th and Vine streets area was one of ASUN's main goals last semester.

Public works investigated GLC's suggested traffic changes and acted according to results from traffic investigations earlier this year.

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The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448, Monday through Friday during the academic year, weekly during the summer sessions. The public has access to the Publications Board.

Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by calling (402) 472-2588.

Subscriptions are \$55 for one year.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE.

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THE DAILY NEBRASKAN

Faculty: UNL must raise standards

RIGOR from page 1

rigor: setting high standards and then working hard to ensure as many students as possible meet that standard.

UNL Academic Senate President James Ford said many universities nationally were examining the standards they set.

"They're asking, 'Are our students being challenged at an appropriate level?'" Ford said, "And the answer is often no, across the nation."

If professors ask more from their students, Ford said, their students will "come up to the mark" and do what is asked of them.

New admissions standards now require incoming freshman to have more of certain high school classes than in the past, and therefore UNL is attracting more academically prepared students, Edwards said.

These students, he said, will expect to be challenged at the university — and the university must deliver.

"It places an obligation on the faculty, on the administrators, on the university, to ensure that we have programs that fulfill the expectations and aspirations of those students who are coming on campus."

Edwards emphasized that some programs were challenging already. But as the admissions requirements create an academically stronger generation of

UNL students, courses should change accordingly.

The goal of a faculty committee is to identify students who are not in the UNL Honors Program, but who are "academically committed," Edwards said.

The committee, headed by Brian Foster, dean of the arts and sciences college, was organized last semester to brainstorm ideas to make classes more challenging for students who want such a challenge.

Foster said the committee, formed of faculty members across campus, has completed its mission to "sketch out" programming that might be necessary to make curriculum rigorous.

He said follow-up committees would meet to further discuss creating rigorous programs to identify and serve highly committed students.

Ultimately, both Foster and Edwards said they wanted every UNL student to be committed to academics.

"The mark of a great university is the amount of intellectual excitement you have on campus," Foster said. "How people are engaged in intellectually exciting ideas — really worrying about them and talking about them."

"To the extent that we're able to achieve that kind of environment, we've achieved the goals of the committee."

If goals of increased academic rigor are achieved, though, some question

whether UNL will become a campus of the "academically elite."

But Edwards said UNL will always admit a large freshman class, comprised greatly of people who aren't at the "tippy-top" of their high school classes.

"The question," Edwards said, "is rather what will we expect of average students when they come here?"

Ford said changes in UNL's academic climate won't happen overnight, and a continued discussion among administrators, faculty members, students and people outside UNL would be the only way to truly achieve a rigorous environment.

The Academic Senate plans to sponsor all-campus debates next semester on the subject of increased academic rigor, he said.

"We want to increase the level of academic excitement at UNL," Ford said. "Many universities have healthy debates all the time, but that's not very common at UNL."

Moerer noted the environment he would like to see at UNL was illustrated by Willa Cather, an NU alumna.

"Willa Cather described this institution in the first decade of the 20th century as having an atmosphere of 'endeavor, expectation and bright hopefulness,'" Moerer said.

"That is what we are seeking to achieve."