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Lyrical Year
Artists and poets come together in
the 2000 Nebraska Poets Calendar.
A&E, PAGE 11

Punishing attack

Nebraska pounds Tennessee in the
2000 Fiesta Bowl.
SPORTS, PAGE 24



Reeves' sentence dropped

By Michelle Starr
Staff writer

The Nebraska Supreme Court nullified convicted murderer Randy Reeves' death sentence Friday as it corrected itself.

The court said Friday morning Reeves' 1991 death sentence was invalid, and he would be resentenced, opening a fresh round of appeals 19 years after the crime.

"We're basically back at square one," Assistant Attorney General Kirk Brown said at a press conference Friday afternoon.

Reeves was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to death for the 1980 stabbing deaths of Janet Mesner,

30, and Victoria Lamm, 28, at the Quaker meeting house in Lincoln.

The Nebraska Supreme Court ruled that it made an error during the appeals process in which it upheld his death sentence.

On Friday the court said: "It would do more harm than good to adhere to this court's clearly erroneous decision..."

In the 1991 review of Reeves' case, the Nebraska Supreme Court resentenced Reeves to death instead of sending the case back to district court, thereby eliminating a step in the appeals process.

In Friday's opinion the court said it had "acted as an unreviewable sentencing panel (in 1991)."

Under Nebraska law, a trial court death sentence is automatically sent to the State Supreme Court for review.

Paula Hutchinson, Reeves' attorney, said Reeves was stoic as always after hearing the decision.

She said in a press conference on Friday that Reeves knew nothing could bring back the two women, but the death penalty would have created more pain.

Gus Lamm, Victoria's widower, said he agreed.

"There's been enough sadness, enough misery, enough killing," Lamm said.

Reeves was convicted by a Lancaster County District Court jury in April 1981 and sentenced to death by a three-judge panel

that same year.

Since his initial sentence, Reeves' case traveled up and down the court system, including two trips to the U.S. Supreme Court and two to the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Throughout the appeals conflicts between state and federal rulings were a problem, Hutchinson said.

The conflicting rulings include a 1991 decision by the Nebraska Supreme Court to resentence Reeves to death after the U.S. Supreme Court had vacated his death sentence a year earlier.

"No one has said he got a fair shake in his original sentencing," Hutchinson said.

Please see REEVES on 9

—ELECTION 2000—

Democrats face off in Iowa debate

By Brian Carlson

Staff writer

JOHNSTON, Iowa — In the Hawkeye State's first 2000 Democratic presidential debate Saturday, Al Gore came out swinging at rival Bill Bradley, placing him on the defensive for much of the debate but failing to disrupt Bradley's calm demeanor.

An aggressive Gore continued to criticize aspects of Bradley's voting record and campaign proposals on issues such as agriculture and health care.

Bradley questioned Gore's leadership ability, but by and large appeared reluctant to tussle with the vice president.

Gore and Bradley, a former three-term senator from

New Jersey, squared off in an hour-long debate at the Iowa Public Television Studios in this Des Moines suburb. The Iowa caucuses, the nation's first presidential contest, are scheduled for Jan. 24.

Saturday's debate included one of the candidates' first detailed discussions of agricultural policy, an important issue in Iowa, where the farm economy has struggled in recent years.

The candidates agreed that the 1996 Freedom to Farm Act, which introduced market-based reforms into the farm economy, should be replaced.

But Gore attacked Bradley for past Senate votes against ethanol subsidies and relief for farmers whose crops were destroyed by Mississippi River flooding in 1993.

At one point Gore asked a farmer in the audience to stand. Saying the flooding had destroyed crops on the man's 400-acre farm, he asked Bradley why he voted against disaster relief.

"I think the premise of your question is wrong," Bradley answered. "This is not about the past; this is about the future. The reality is, we need to have a change in ag policy."

Gore responded: "I understand why you don't want to talk about the past." He then posed the same question to

"This is not about the past; this is about the future. The reality is, we need to have a change in ag policy."

Bill Bradley
Democratic candidate

Please see DEBATE on 6

A swingin' day



HABAKKUK SCOLLAND, 12, and his brother, Joshih, 7, swing Saturday at Upco Park in north Lincoln. Saturday's temperatures reached 51 degrees.

Josh Wolfe/DN

Fetal research focus of debate

By Kimberly Sweet

Staff writer

A University of Nebraska regent is prepared to take on anti-abortion leaders in a debate over the use of aborted fetal tissue for research at the university's medical center.

Anti-abortion leaders received an early Christmas present in the form of a letter from regent Drew Miller last month, challenging them to prove that ending research at the University of Nebraska Medical Center is not in the best interest of Nebraskans.

In his Dec. 23 letter, Miller challenged Nebraska Right to Life leader Julie Schmit-Albin, Metro Right to Life leader Bob Blank and Rescue the Heartland leader Larry Donlan to

a debate in front of "a panel of leading Nebraska citizens."

Miller said if the citizens who watch the debate vote to stop it, Miller would withdraw from running for re-election to the board.

His term expires in January 2001. All three wrote to Miller just before the new year to accept his challenge.

KKAR Radio and KCRO Radio have both offered time to air a debate, Schmit-Albin said. KFAB has also expressed interest in hosting the discussion, she said.

All are AM stations with a talk and news format. KCRO radio has a Christian ministry format.

While she accepted the offer to debate the issues, Schmit-Albin said

she and the others were against having a panel of "leading citizens" vote whether the research should continue. The Right to Life executive director said the panel would promote an attitude that "regular" Nebraskans are too ignorant to have a say in the matter.

"Having a panel of leading Nebraska citizens is bogus," Schmit-Albin said.

In a letter responding to Miller's challenge, Blank said he wants to debate the issue of whether abortionist Leroy Carhart should continue to be on the faculty of UNMC, as well as whether fetal tissue should be

Please see FETAL on 10

Student dies in accident

By Kimberly Sweet

Staff writer

A 19-year-old UNL student died Thursday night when he lost control and rolled his car on a county road near Brule.

Tyler Dam, a freshman general studies major, rolled his car four to five times before he was ejected from his 1994 Pontiac Grand Am, said Sgt. Rob Robinson of the Keith County Sheriff's Office.

He was pronounced dead when authorities arrived at the scene. Robinson said Dam was not wearing his seat belt.

The accident happened around 11:15 p.m. Dam was driving home after dropping off his girlfriend, said Ann Kramer, Dam's grandmother.

The accident happened in Brule, 10 miles from Ogallala — Dam's hometown.

Kramer said Dam loved attending the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and was getting anxious to come back after the three-week winter vacation.

A high school cross country runner and basketball player, Dam loved all kinds of sports, Kramer said.

"He was a big Huskers fan," she said. "He was really sports-minded."

Dam also loved listening to music, Kramer said.

Funeral services are at 1 p.m. today at the Methodist Church in Ogallala.

Kramer said Dam loved life and lived it to the fullest.

"He's going to leave a huge hole in our lives," she said.