

Fire ruins home of vacationing family

By Michelle Starr
Staff writer

Lincoln firefighters continued Wednesday to check the rubble of a two-story house for signs of hot spots. The house caught on fire Tuesday morning. "It's only a pile of ashes," said firefighter Ron Trouba when he helped inspect the area Wednesday afternoon. The fire rekindled about 11 p.m. Tuesday night, Trouba said. The fire at 522 W. Lakeshore Drive, in Capitol Beach, caused an estimated \$315,000 damage to the structure and its contents. The blaze, caused by a pinched electrical cord under a washing machine in the laundry room, had burned for an estimated five to 10 minutes before fire fighters arrived on the scene, Trouba said.

The fire was so large, passing motorists could see it from the interstate, and they reported it to the fire department, Trouba said. Luckily, Chad and Joleen Holthus and two of their children were on vacation in Colorado. Their youngest child was sleeping at Chad Holthus' mother's house down the street from the blaze. The family was back by 4 p.m. Tuesday to inspect the damage. They are now staying in a local Residence Inn. The material loss was not the family's first concern, said Chad Holthus' mother, Joan Weeks. "The thing that I admire about my son and his wife was that their immediate response was that the family was OK, everything else was just stuff," Weeks said. When Weeks got to the fire, the firefighters had the blaze contained, she

said. "What I saw was them pumping water into what would have been my grandson's room," she said. Trouba said the fire was so large that firefighters took a defensive attack, which he referred to as "surround and drowned." Trouba said that common errors

could have grave consequences when dealing with electrical cords. People should remember never to leave after starting an electrical appliance, including dishwashers, washers and dryers, Trouba said. He also said over-use of extension cords is dangerous; they should not be used as permanent fixtures.

ELECTION 2000

13 senators endorse Stenberg Senate run

■ State senator says the Nebraska attorney general does a 'great job.'

By Jill Zeman
Staff writer

Thirteen state senators announced their support Wednesday for Nebraska Attorney General Don Stenberg in his 2000 campaign for the U.S. Senate. Stenberg is running for Democrat Bob Kerrey's seat. The senators gathered around Stenberg during a press conference to voice their support for the candidate. Stenberg, a Republican, said the senators' support was "another important step to victory in November." Stenberg said he was committed to serving the state in the Senate and will

work hard to represent Nebraska values. Sen. Mark Quandahl of Omaha supported Stenberg. "I think that Don Stenberg is doing a great job as attorney general, and I think he can continue that as a senator," Quandahl said. Sen. Kerrey has not yet announced whether he will run for re-election, which has had a positive impact on Stenberg's campaign, Stenberg said. "It has helped energize our campaign, and that momentum will not slow down if Sen. Kerrey does run," he said. Other leaders who have announced their support for Stenberg's campaign include Gov. Mike Johanns, Lt. Gov. Dave Maurstad, Secretary of State Scott Moore, State Treasurer David Heineman and State Auditor Kate Witek.


Barrett looks forward to coming retirement

By Veronica Daehn
Staff writer

After five terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, Republican Bill Barrett has decided to call it quits. Nebraska's third district representative since 1991 announced in October that he will not run for re-election in November 2000. Barrett said he was ready for a new challenge. "I've decided that I'm at a point in my life where I'd rather start my day with 'Good morning, Grandpa' instead of 'Good morning, Congressman,'" he said in a press release. Barrett was elected to the House in 1990, but his political career began in 1964. Early on, he was part of the Republican State Executive Committee and was chairman of the Nebraska GOP. In 1973, he served on the Republican National Committee, and he joined the Nebraska State Legislature in 1979. He remained in the Unicameral until 1990, when he decided to run for Congress. After serving nine years in the House, Barrett said it was hard to leave. "Deciding it was time to retire from public service has been one of the toughest decisions I've made in a long, long time," Barrett said. "The vast majority of my colleagues are the salt of the earth, and they're committed to making our democracy work." Without the pressure of campaigning for re-election, Barrett said he would have more time to focus on his

work in the House. In his final term, he said he wanted to look at education, rural health care, Social Security, tax relief and farming. Some of Barrett's constituents were unhappy with his decision not to return, Charles Isom, Barrett's press secretary, said. "Some were disappointed, but there was a lot of understanding," Isom said. "After years of service, he just felt it was time to step down." Barrett said he is grateful to Nebraskans for giving him the chance to serve in what he calls the "greatest political system on earth," despite the sometimes bumpy path representatives must travel. "I learned that this is a gratifying job, but hard, humbling, frustrating work," Barrett said. "Still, being part of it is a high privilege and honor." Isom said several candidates have filed to run for the third district seat. Republican candidates are: John Gale, David Hergert, Dan Urwiller, Kathy Wilmot and Carroll Scheldon. Rollie Reynolds is the lone Democratic candidate. The filing deadline for incumbents is Feb. 15, while others have until March 1. University of Nebraska-Lincoln Political Science Professor John Comer said Barrett's work would be missed. "He was a respected legislator and did a lot for the state of Nebraska in terms of his support for agriculture," Comer said. "Whenever you have a member resign, you lose his expertise, his contacts and his seniority. Nebraska will be less represented in the short-run."

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