

Media Packet

- Fowl play at Ferris State: Domesticated or not, ducks don't belong in university-run housing
- Duck owner has 10 days to fly the coop
- Judge orders student to find new home for self, pet ducks
- Police Corps recruits visit elementary
- New Ferris president sues Kendall student fine
- Ferris greets Eisler
- Freshman Ferris pitcher learning the ropes in fall
- Duck decision far overdue

The Grand Rapids Press

Tuesday, September 30, 2003

Fowl play at Ferris State: Domesticated or not, ducks don't belong in university-run housing

Ferris State University has the right to decide what animals are allowed as pets in on-campus housing. Students unwilling to abide by the rules should make other living arrangements. A Ferris student crying foul in a pet duck dispute with the school could have taken an offer of free room and board on campus for her mallards. The university made the offer to resolve a situation that has roiled on since May and now has cost biology major Beckie Ingham her on-campus apartment.

Ms. Ingham, a 27-year-old single mother, wanted to keep two ducks she has had since March. They are not only pets but the subject of her senior thesis. The university, which discovered she had the fowl in May, wanted them out of her on-campus apartment for health reasons and started eviction procedures when she refused to remove the fowl. A circuit court ruled Monday that Ms. Ingham must move out of the university housing in 10 days. Ducks are not usually a nuisance problem, but droppings can cause health and eyesore problems. Also, food left by people intent on feeding domesticated ducks can attract rodents.

After initially agreeing to give up the pets in June, Ms. Ingham, who shares the apartment with her 4-year-old daughter, changed her mind. Although she signed a new lease in July that allows only fish as pets in university-run housing, Ms. Ingham insisted she should be allowed to keep her ducks because previous leases allowed "caged birds." Indeed, residents who had caged birds prior to the new leases are being allowed to keep them.

But Ms. Ingham was being obtuse if she believed ducks qualified as "caged birds." Keeping a duck in a cage does not make it a "caged bird." That flies in the face of reason. Parakeets, canaries and cockatiels are "caged birds." Geese, ducks, chickens and other game and barnyard fowl are not. Ms. Ingham should know that better than most. Her daughter has a pet cockatiel, which the university was not asking the family to give up.

The university was not heavy-handed nor did it run roughshod over Ms. Ingham. Officials at the Big Rapids School made an effort to compromise, offering to house, feed and provide veterinary care for the two ducks as well as set up visitation times for Ms. Ingham and her daughter. Ms. Ingham however, was less accommodating, insisting on keeping the ducks in her on-campus apartment -- period.

Ducks need room to move freely, flap their wings and swim, none of which is possible in a cramped apartment cage. Ms. Ingham should consider that in deciding what is best for them. Had she checked with the university before bringing the ducks to the apartment, this controversy likely could have been avoided. At this point, the university has no choice but to stick to its rule. Her choice is to comply or leave.

The Grand Rapids Press

Tuesday, September 30, 2003

Duck owner has 10 days to fly the coop

By Ian C. Storey

BIG RAPIDS -- A judge has given Ferris State University student Beckie Ingham 10 days to find a new home for herself and her pet ducks.

Ingham looked on in shock Monday afternoon as Big Rapids District Judge Susan Grant found that the 27-year-old biology major had violated her lease with the university and should be evicted.

The judge has given her until Oct. 9 to leave the on-campus townhouse she shares with her 4-year-old daughter, Molly, and pet Mallard ducks, Britain and Merrill.

"I am just so confused with everything right now," Ingham said. "Maybe I had too much faith in the justice system, because I don't think that was a fair trial." She said she is unsure whether she will appeal.

"I still think that I have a case, but I don't know if I can afford it while also having to look for a new place to live," Ingham said. Grant said although she found no evidence supporting the university's claim that the ducks presented a health hazard in the housing complex, Ingham was aware of the new rules restricting pets only to fish and therefore violated the lease she signed in late July.

"By signing the new lease, the defendant knew of the new restrictions limiting pets to fish only," Grant ruled. "She signed the (new) lease under false pretenses because she said she would remove the ducks."

Big Rapids attorneys Ron Nichols and Ken Plas signed on to represent Ingham during the three-hour hearing.

Plas asked the court for a delay to allow him and Nichols to put together a defense for Ingham, but Grant denied the request.

The lawyers stepped in at the last minute to represent Ingham, who had been in court without representation.

Ingham has been battling Ferris since May, when the school discovered she was keeping the domesticated ducks in the West Campus Family Housing Complex. She has lived there for three years.

After initially agreeing to give up the pets in June, Ingham changed her mind, saying previous leases allowed "caged birds."

Ingham said she should be allowed to keep the ducks despite a change in policy this year making fish the only pets allowed in university housing. Ingham testified she was informed by the university that those who had birds under the previous leases would be allowed by the university to keep them.

Ferris attorney John Sperla told the court the university would have never allowed Ingham to sign a new lease if it had known she would not move the ducks. "She has had five months, but she has defiantly refused to remove the ducks," Sperla said. "It is a clear violation of the lease agreement. She admits the ducks are there, and clearly the lease prohibits it."

Ferris Deputy General Counsel Miles Postema testified several university officials "uniformly" told Ingham that she would have to get rid of the ducks or face eviction.

In September, the university made an offer to house the ducks in an on-campus facility free of charge and give Ingham access to them, a proposal Ingham rejected because she said it would be detrimental to the animals.

"We did quite a bit of work to determine if a location could be made available," Postema said. "She rejected the proposal."

Pioneer

Wednesday, October 1, 2003

Judge orders student to find new home for self, pet ducks

BIG RAPIDS (AP) - A Ferris State University student whose decision to keep two pet ducks at her on-campus apartment ruffled the feathers of school administrators has been ordered to find a new home.

Mecosta County District Judge Susan Grant ruled Monday that Beckie Ingham must move out of her town house within 10 days - and take her two pet mallards with her. Grant told the 27-year-old biology major that she had violated her lease with the university and should be evicted.

The judge gave Ingham until Oct. 9 to leave the apartment that she shares with her 4-year-old daughter, Molly, and ducks Britain and Merrill.

"I am just so confused with everything right now" Ingham told The Grand Rapids Press after the hearing. "Maybe I had too much faith in the justice system because I don't think that was a fair trial."

She said she was unsure whether she will appeal.

Grant said she found no evidence supporting the university's claim that the ducks presented a health hazard to residents of the housing complex. But she also said Ingham was aware of new rules regarding pets and therefore violated the lease she signed in late July.

"By signing the new lease, the defendant knew of the new restrictions limiting pets to fish only," Grant ruled. "She signed the lease under false pretenses because she said she would remove the ducks."

Pioneer

Wednesday, October 1, 2003

A crazy night, but also a special night at the same time

I doubt there are many people who detest more than I do the reality of having to dress in a shirt and tie (never mind the prospect of wearing a suit).

However, from time to time, throwing on a tie (I do have maybe three or four of them) is called for under the right circumstances.

One of those rare circumstances came up on Sept. 19.

I was charged with a two-pronged task: (1) Cover the high school football game at Top Taggart Field here in Big Rapids. (2) Cover/serve as a presenter at the Ferris State University Bulldog Athletics Hall of Fame ceremony.

There was just one little catch - the events ran, predictably, simultaneously. As the evening played out, my little mini-sacrifice proved itself well worth any inconvenience - even if I did have to wear a shirt and tie to a high school football game.

My role in the evening had been set months prior when I was asked by Joan Nelson, who was to be inducted into the Bulldog Athletics Hall of Fame as a Special Service Awards recipient.

For those of you in the Big Rapids community who know Joan understand you simply do not say "no" to a person who does so much to help other people. Joan served as a health and physical education teacher at Ferris from 1962 until she retired from her duties in 1990.

Before and since, Joan, who also is a member of the University's Founder's Club and Ferris Emeriti Association, has served as an outspoken and aggressive supporter of women's athletics teams at Ferris.

More than even an emotional supporter of women's athletics teams at FSU, she also has been a significant financial benefactor of so many of those same programs.

She's beloved too. Few people, particularly those not directly affiliated with the FSU Athletics Department, are as well known and well liked by so many of the women athletes and coaches of the women's athletes. These days, Joan spends most of her time moving back and forth from homes in Charlevoix and in Big Rapids.

Whenever in Big Rapids, however, she makes it her business to come out and support the women athletes who have come so far from when she first started at Ferris in 1962 after she graduated from Michigan State University.

Since the women's athletics programs began in the early 1970s, and now are celebrating their 30th anniversaries, Joan has been on board to watch them grow and prosper - helping out as much as she can.

On Sept. 19, my evening started in shirt and tie at the football game between Big Rapids and Chippewa Hills - asking anyone and everyone what time it is about every three or four minutes. I snapped a few photos and scribbled a few notes about the game before I hopped in my car and took off down State Street and up Perry to the Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center for the Hall of Fame banquet - I didn't even have a chance to eat (since I was pressed for time).

Too bad.

The meal looked great.

The event looked great as well.

I'm not sure how many people were in attendance at the banquet, but there was quite a large number.

There I was looking over my speech to make sure I knew what I was supposed to say.

I greeted Joan, who always has time and kind words for everyone and the rest of her party at her table and prepared for my introduction of her.

After speeches by FSU President David Eisler and Athletics Director Tom Kirinovic, it was my turn to step forward for my introduction of Joan.

I had a scripted speech, but caught up in the moment, I improvised a little at the beginning to thank the crowd and perhaps further savor the moment.

The speech went great.

I suppose I could have split after it, but I wanted to stay to hear Joan's speech. Joan had one line in her speech that warmed a lot of people's hearts, "Me coming here was just about magic ... I thank God every day for Ferris State University." As do I and a whole lot of other people. We can thank Joan Nelson for reminding those of us in attendance how special what we have really is here in Big Rapids and at Ferris State University.

Pioneer

Wednesday, October 1, 2003

Police Corps recruits visit elementary

By Candy Allan Pioneer Community Editor

BIG RAPIDS - Three students at Brookside Elementary in Big Rapids were bigger, older and more educated than the rest on Tuesday morning.

Those three students - Gwen DeGraaf, Eric Hamp and Tim Millard - are not enrolled at Brookside but in the Michigan Police Corps, a police training academy located at Ferris State University. The three are from around the state - Grand Rapids, Alpena and Kalamazoo, respectively - and all have completed a four-year degree prior to applying to the Corps.

"The Police Corps is federally funded program created during the Clinton administration, and Ferris (State University) picked it up," began Millard, explaining applicants must have previously completed a four-year degree at a Michigan college or university.

Continued DeGraaf, "It's a 20-week program - that's a longer academy than most. "And it's residential," finished Hamp. "The only other residential program in the state is the Michigan State Police Academy."

Those accepted into the Corps have one year to find a job upon completion of the program in order to keep their certification. After signing a contract with a law enforcement agency, the recruit has a four-year commitment to that agency, during which time he or she can earn up to \$30,000 in tuition reimbursement for college expenses.

The three recruits, as well as the rest of their classmates, visited Big Rapids Public School buildings on Tuesday as a means to better understand how police officers and children interact.

"Sometimes it just helps to have people give children the impression that police officers are friendly - someone they can go to for help," said Millard.

Added DeGraaf, "It's learning on both parts - we're learning how to interact with children ... obviously, they're on a different level than what you'd speak with adults on.

"I hope to learn to work better with kids, to talk to them on their level and listen to what they have to say," she continued. "I think children have a lot to but they can be hard to understand. I want to communicate more effectively with kids and have fun with them."

The visit is an annual event for students, said Hamp.

"They knew we were coming in and they were excited. I want to start them off at a young age knowing that we're the good guys," he said. "Basically, what I'm looking for is when we leave

here, we've had a positive interaction with the kids and they've had fun. My goal is to develop positive, lasting relationships with kids at a young age."

Recruits were assisted in knowing what to expect during their visit by Big Rapids Department of Public Safety - Police Division Officer Brian Miller, who serves as the school liaison officer to BRPS.

"Brian Miller has helped us out a lot - he's our mentor," said Millard. "We got his impression of what it was like to interact with the kids and it gave us an understanding of how to approach the kids."

While the interaction provided a learning opportunity for the recruits, it also benefited the school, said Brookside Principal Tim Buckingham.

"We enjoy helping out Ferris in any way we can - we always like to have cooperative programs with them," he said. "The kids like seeing the officers. ... The kids get to see young police recruits and ask questions - there's good interaction between the kids and the recruits. It's just a win-win situation for both of us. These three are excellent - you can see they're going to enjoy the kids. We're glad to have them here."

The Grand Rapids Press

Thursday, October 02, 2003

New Ferris president suits Kendall student's fine

By Melissa Slager

The windowed foyer in the Kendall College of Art and Design commons area was bustling, as usual, with artists-in-training, some with their hair in dreads, others carrying skateboards. But Wednesday was different.

"There are multiple suits here today," said student Kevin Eckert, 18, with classmates nodding in agreement as they looked across the room.

Board members, vice chancellors, public relations representatives and other administrators from Big Rapids -- base of Kendall's parent Ferris State University -- were on hand for a pre-inaugural reception in honor of new Ferris President David Eisler.

"We actually didn't know there was a new president until they posted signs this morning," Eckert said.

But students and faculty at the downtown arts hub were happy to welcome the soft-spoken man - - pinstriped suit and all.

Today was to be the official inauguration ceremony at the Big Rapids campus for "Dave," the 18th president to head Ferris -- and perhaps the only one to be a trained clarinet player.

"For me, it's highly symbolic that this begins at Kendall and begins with art," said Eisler, 51, in remarks at Wednesday's event.

At first reluctant at the idea of inauguration, the pomp has "provided the opportunity for us to get together as students and faculty to think about who we are and what we're becoming," he said.

The new president has made a point, as the first to be inaugurated since the Ferris and Kendall union, to include the arts school.

A vision for the future includes Kendall's further expansion, he said.

And in commissioning Kendall assistant professor Phillip Carrizzi to make a presidential medallion, he made one request: that it include both the flame of Ferris and flourished "K" of Kendall.

The tiny logos are side by side below his name on the gold piece.

On Wednesday, Carrizzi presented the medallion to Ferris board Chair Bruce Parsons, who was to place it around the new president's neck today.

"I always thought it was wonderful to be able to create these beautiful objects for people of great power, wisdom, etceteras," said Carrizzi, chair of the Metals/Jewelry Design Program.

"Power" is a hidden force in Eisler, whom search committee members say commands a room with a good dose of humor. He greets people by their first names.

People always are suspicious of presidential searches, said Oliver Evans, Kendall president and a member of the search committee. "There is a good deal of fear and trembling."

But Eisler is the right man for the job, he said.

This is Eisler's first time heading a college. He holds music degrees from the University of Michigan and was a professor of music before beginning his administrative career in 1990. Most recently, he was provost and vice president for academic affairs at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah.

On hand for Wednesday's reception were his wife of 30 years, Patsy, and his parents, Jake and Sally Eisler of New Jersey. Two adult daughters were to travel in last night for today's celebration.

Pioneer

Friday October 3, 2003

Ferris greets Eisler

By Mike Taylor Pioneer Senior Reporter

BIG RAPIDS - There was no shortage of pomp and ceremony at Ferris State University's Williams Auditorium Thursday, when David L. Eisler was inaugurated as the school's 18th president.

The multimedia event featured live speakers, a video presentation on the history of the university and a musical performance by the Ferris Festival Singers under the direction of Catherine Arroe.

Eisler took over as FSU president on July 7. He previously served a provost and vice president of academic affairs at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah.

At the ceremony, Eisler heard comments from representatives of the Academic Senate, the student government, Alumni Association, Ferris Foundation and the President's Council of State Universities, before taking the podium himself.

Quoting Emily Dickinson, Eisler opened his remarks by saying, "If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain."

The thrust of Eisler's comments was that the individual -- any individual - has the potential to affect positive change in the world around him.

Eisler went on to speak of the university's rich heritage, touching on the many contributions made to the community by FSU founder Woodbridge Ferris, as well as all the presidents who followed

"We are a part of a heritage that stretches back to our founder, Woodbridge Ferris," said Eisler. "For me Woodbridge Ferris represents an enduring symbol of vision, character, integrity and leadership"

Moving into the present, Eisler said, "This is an extraordinary time for Ferris State University. We have a faculty and staff second to none, who are truly committed to student success."

Eisler also noted fall enrollment at the school was the second largest enrollment increase in the school's history, "... proof positive of the need and demand for the Ferris degree."

Looking to the future of the university, Eisler listed five areas he feels must be addressed.

Following are those five points, along with some of Eisler's comments:

- Develop a learning the university. "My dream is that Ferris State University will come to be known as a learning university that continually learns from and improves on its efforts."

- Build on the traditional strengths of Ferris. "We will find ways to embrace the vision of our founder. As I tell our students, we are preparing them for a career that may not yet have been invented."

- Provide access to Ferris. "We must proactively and aggressively find ways for students throughout the state to access the unique education we provide. Fortunately we live at a time when this is more possible than ever before."

- Recognize the quality of the Ferris experience. "We must redouble our efforts to foster broad public recognition for the excellence of an education at Ferris State University"

- Build the resource base for Ferris "We must all work together to create private and public support for Ferris State University."

Eisler was joined (On stage by his wife, Patsy, where the two announced two new annual full] tuition scholarships dedicated to their respective parents. Patsy Eisler said, "For us this is a once-in-a-life time opportunity to say thank you. We believe strongly in the concept of giving back and hope that others will join us in making a difference for our students; providing the opportunity for them to receive the lifelong benefit a Ferris education can provide.

Eisler added he felt coming to Ferris marks a turning point in his life, an opportunity gratefully accepted.

"Ferris State University is an extraordinary opportunity," he said. "An institution with a wonderful heritage and exciting future. I am honored and humbled to be a part of this great university and look forward to what we can accomplish together for Ferris.

"For together I believe we can and will create a truly extraordinary university of the future."

Pioneer
Friday October 3, 2003

Freshman Ferris pitcher learning the ropes in fall

By Sandy Gholston Pioneer Sports Writer

BIG RAPIDS -Jenna Thiede knew pretty much from the beginning Ferris State was destined to become home for her and her softball pitching skills.

"I chose Ferris because they really showed a lot of interest in me during recruiting and when I came here for my visit I fell in love with the campus and I had some great conversations with Coach (Ken) Becker and Coach (Lesa) Bickley," said Thiede, who was named to the Michigan High School Softball Coaches Association Division II All State team this past spring. "It felt like home to me."

The Bulldog softball program clearly is pleased. Becker, the Ferris head coach who has spent the better part of the last six months serving overseas in the military in Doha, Qatar in the Middle East, was involved in Thiede's recruitment. Becker, along with Bickley, one of her assistants, expressed ample interest in Thiede to fortify the team's staff trimmed by the graduation of steady senior Amanda Opbroek

Returning a relatively young pitching staff that lacks the experience of a seasoned veteran like Opbroek, Thiede will be one of the players Ferris needs to step in and make contribution quickly. As a senior at Airport High School in Garleton, Thiede compiled a record of 21-6.

In many ways, young Thiede is following in the footsteps of her older sister Amy, who had a distinguished pitching career for longtime Ferris softball rival Wayne State. Amy had a solid four-year career for the Warriors and earned All-Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Second-Team accolades as a freshman when she established a team single-season record for strikeouts.

There's a lot of sisterly love.

"She was always very supportive of me and really taught me a lot about softball, about how to handle different situations and just being a big sister" said Jenna, who does have some of the competitive sibling rivalry thing inside of her.

"She was such a good pitcher and I want to keep working hard so I can become that good or better"

That will require lots of hard work. Moving from high school to college is a challenge.

Thiede saw it coming - especially since she watched her older sister go through the same transition.

"It's a different challenge for me, but it's also a good feeling knowing that I have such a good group of teammates with me who all get along so well," said Thiede who already has faced college competition during the Bulldogs' fall season. "I love being with the team because we all get along so well and have so much fun."

On the field, however, the Bulldogs are very competitive.

Pioneer
Weekend October 3, 2003

Duck decision far overdue

Much too much time, effort and money has been spent deciding whether or not a resident of a Ferris State University housing unit should be allowed to keep ducks in her apartment.

She maintained that because "birds" were allowed under an old lease, she could keep her ducks even though she signed a new lease in July that prohibits keeping any pets other than fish.

For weeks, the Ferris administration tried negotiating with the resident. In fact, FSU officials even offered to house feed and care for the ducks if she would remove them from the on-campus apartment.

That failed.

The resident refused the Ferris offer and asked for her day in court.

Finally, 77th District Court Judge Susan Grant handed down a decision Monday: The resident must move out of her apartment within 10 days and take her ducks with her.

The resident was quoted as saying "I am just so confused with everything right now. Maybe I had too much faith in the justice system because I don't think that was a fair trial."

Ferris officials first addressed this problem in August when they first attempted to evict the resident.

Since that time, negotiations failed to correct the policy violation.

FSU administration spent time trying to correct the violation. The courts became involved in the dispute.

We probably don't have to remind our taxpayers that it is our taxes that help pay for the FSU administration, FSU apartments and now the courts to address this frivolous problem.

Rules are rules. When they are violated, those involved in the violation must pay. Once again, it's the taxpayers who lose - they must pay too.

Let's hope the next policy violation is handled more swiftly.