

3-25-02

Ruling: KU can't demolish Oread houses

pected, and toxicology reports were being developed.

Chancellor Robert Hemenway expressed sympathy to the family.

"The tragic death of this talented student is a great loss to the University.

"I would like to express my profound sorrow and extend my condolences," Hemenway said.

KU Counseling and Psychological Services is available for grief counseling to students.

■ Contact Carr at mcarr@kansan.com.
This story was edited by Kristi Henderson.

By Lauren Beatty
Kansan staff writer

As University of Kansas students and faculty began their spring break, Ramon Powers quietly made the final decision of his career: not to allow the University to raze three houses it owns on Ohio Street to make room for scholarship halls.

The decision was due from Powers, the state historic preservation officer (SHPO),

March 13, but was pushed back to March 15, the same day Powers retired from his post. Powers issued a letter late in the afternoon which explained his decision.

"The SHPO has determined that the houses at 1323, 1329 and 1333 Ohio Street are character-defining features of the environs of the John Palmer Usher House and therefore, that the proposed demolition of those houses will encroach upon, damage or destroy the environs of

the historic property known as the John Palmer Usher House," Powers wrote.

Powers did not think the houses contributed to the historic environment of Spooner Hall, although it was also on the National Register of Historic Places.

The decision left the University in a quandary because of Powers' retirement that day. Lynn Bretz, director of University Relations, issued a statement which said the University was disappointed

with Powers' decision and that further review was needed. She said because of Power's retirement, she didn't know who to go to with questions.

"There are a couple of points made by the SHPO that need clarification," Bretz said. "How it's going to be handled now is one of our questions."

No one at the Kansas State Historical

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COMING IN THE KANSAN THIS WEEK:

MEN'S BASKETBALL: In-depth coverage of Roy Williams and his final four team.

HIGH HOPES: A University of Kansas student plans to climb Mount Everest.

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win the
championship?

"I'll be
crushed;
I'll cry
for a
week."



Brett Parr
Wichita senior

**Q: What will school
be like if we make
the Final Four?**



"It's
gonna go
crazy. It
will be a
crazy
campus
for the rest

of the week."

Carrie Wilson
Beloit sophomore

OREAD

CONTINUED FROM 1A

society returned phone calls last week.

The University could appeal Powers' decision, but Bretz said no action would take place now except for protection of the houses. She said the gas lines would be shut off at the houses and a fence put up around the properties to keep out vandals. Bretz said the University still wanted to build the two scholarship halls.

"The neighborhood would benefit from new scholarship halls," Bretz said. "We think we could construct halls that are esthetically pleasing and an asset to the Lawrence community."

Hayley Rumback, Wichita senior and Sellards Scholarship Hall resident, said she agreed with Powers' decision.

"The scholarship halls are a wonderful program and they should try to develop it, but maybe at another location."

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was edited by Sarah Warren.

Preservation officer tied to KU

By Lauren Beatty
Kansan staff writer

Ramon Powers had a relationship with the University of Kansas long before he decided March 15 to not let the University tear down three houses on Ohio Street to make room for scholarship halls.

That decision was the 62-year-old Powers' last act as the state historic preservation officer — before retiring that day. It concluded a spirited debate that began last year among the University, the Oread Neighborhood Association and the Lawrence Preservation Alliance over the fate of the houses.

Before Powers started working as state historic preservation officer in 1988, he worked at the University from 1963 to 1967. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in history from Fort Hays State University and was a KU Western Civilization instructor from 1963 to 1966. During the 1966-67 school year, Powers served as assistant director of the

Western Civilization program.

James Seaver, professor emeritus of history, was director of the program when Powers was an instructor. Seaver said he remembered Powers well and had followed his career after he left KU.

"Ramon was very well organized, the best of all the professors," Seaver said.

Seaver described Powers as an elegant person who was always diplomatic and got along with his fellow professors.

"He has made decisions that people haven't agreed with, but you can't please everyone," Seaver said.

Powers received his doctoral degree from KU in 1971. He also taught at the University of Missouri at Kansas City and Haskell Indian Junior College.

Powers became the state historic preservation officer in 1988, appointed by then-governor Mike Hayden.

Powers made some controversial decisions during his 14-year run as preservation officer, including one involving the Allis

Hotel in Wichita, which was eventually demolished. Some said he didn't try hard enough to preserve it.

As the state historic preservation officer, Powers continued to work with members of KU's faculty. Michael Shaw, associate professor of classics, worked with Powers as a member of the Kansas Preservation Alliance to preserve historic buildings in the state.

"He's done well," Shaw said. "He is known for his calmness, even in our being impatient with him."

Shaw said he had personal respect for Powers, but didn't always agree with him.

"We need to have preservation ordinances and someone must make a decision," Shaw said. "Should it be him? I don't want to comment on that."

Powers declined to be interviewed for this story.

■ **Contact Beatty at**
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was edited by Eve Lamborn.

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