

Neill House evictees speak out

By Gordon Loane
Brunswickan News

Four former residents of Neill House, evicted from residence following a traditional "Moose Milk" Party January 19th and 20th, have decided to tell their story, in an exclusive interview with *The Brunswickan*.

The four, Shane Betts, Craig Raynor, Lyle De Merchant and Jamie Robinson had appealed their evictions by Dean of Residence, John Craighead, to UNB President, Robin Armstrong.

Six and a half weeks after launching their appeals, Armstrong turned them down.

In a two and a half page letter obtained by *The Brunswickan*, former Neill resident Shane Betts outlines his version of events.

"Until now I have remained publicly silent concerning the Neill House fiasco," Betts begins his letter.

"Despite the efforts of Dean Craighead to portray all those involved as anarchist and deserving of their fate, I had assumed that the powers that be would hear my appeal and right the wrong."

"I have just been informed, however, that President Armstrong is refusing to even listen to my appeal," Betts wrote. "Since he will not hear my appeal, I feel I have no choice but to go public with what really happened."

On Saturday, January 20th Betts admits he participated in what Neill House residents traditionally call "A Moose Milk" party.

Betts claims that the President and Vice-President of the Neill House Committee at that time met with

House Don Jeff Wedge prior to the event.

"Wedge approved the relaxation of loud hours and the Moose Milk Party, which he now conveniently denies," Betts said.

"At roughly 8 AM Dean Craighead made his first appearance. He ordered the party shut down and the room cleared," Betts continued.

"The party was in a room, not in the hallway as Craighead alleges in the February 2 issue of *The Brunswickan*," said Betts.

"Within five minutes of [Craighead's] departure, the Moose Milk party was over and roughly half of the 20-25 people who had been there left. The music was also turned down to the point where it could not be heard outside," Betts continued.

"At some point between Craighead's first visit and his second, someone opened a window. They were not hanging out the window as Craighead alleges, but they did yell out of it which Craighead says was his reason for returning," Betts said.

"At this point he ordered everyone to go to their rooms."

"Mr. Craighead was angry and was giving the occupant of a room directly across from mine a tongue-lashing. The occupant of the room (Jamie Robinson) was civil and politely asked that the situation be dealt with on Monday (two days later)."

According to Betts, the reason for Craighead's third visit that morning is known only to the Dean.

"The party was long over and the music coming out of the room across the corridor from mine was barely noticeable from my room across the hall, let alone outside. Nevertheless,

Mr. Craighead, accompanied by a security officer, began arguing with various students."

He ordered a student standing in his doorway drinking a beer out of a bottle to put it into a plastic cup, according to Betts. "The student argued that he was in a room and therefore could drink out of a bottle."

Betts then described his encounter with Craighead.

"At this point, I believed as did others, that Mr. Craighead was leaving. Instead he walked down the middle of the hall until he got to my room where I was standing in the doorway," Betts said.

"He then proceeded to get in my face and say 'Do you have something to say to me?', to which I replied 'I didn't have anything to say to you but if you want me to I will.'"

"I then told him how I thought it was ridiculous for him to be there a third time when we were being quiet and we weren't bothering anyone," Betts said. "That was the extent to which the confrontation went."

Betts said he has several witnesses to this encounter.

Next, Betts said, "I got a call from Mr. Craighead's Secretary setting up a meeting for Tuesday (January 23). At no time prior to this meeting was I told that I was facing disciplinary action and that I should bring a representative."

"However, another resident who had met with him earlier told me how unfairly he had been treated, so I decided to take a tape recorder with me."

Betts claims that at his meeting with Craighead on Tuesday, January 23 he was told that no decision had been

made on what disciplinary action, if any, would be taken.

He was told to come back the next day for another meeting. When he arrived for the meeting, he was presented with a letter advising him that he had been expelled from residence effective 3 PM that day (Wednesday, January 24).

"Also effective that day, I was banned from all residences and residence activities," Betts said.

Craig Raynor, another of the four evicted, describes his encounters with Craighead that Saturday morning.

"The only reason why I got into a discussion with Craighead at all was because he was complaining that he was telling one of the other guys who didn't live in the House and he was just drinking out of a bottle in a room which is legal."

"I got arguing with [Craighead] about that, and I said it was perfectly fine that that happened," Raynor continued.

"Because I pleaded the case and I feel that I was completely right, those were the reasons for my being over aggressive."

"We all feel that Craighead was the aggressor that morning," he said.

Lyle De Merchant claims there were plenty of witnesses to the events in Neill that Saturday morning.

De Merchant takes exception to a sentence in a letter from Armstrong denying his appeal.

In Armstrong's letter he states that the Dean of Residence personally witnessed the events giving rise to this finding of fact.

"I don't see how he can say that," said De Merchant. "Craighead said we supplied minors, drank out of pails, we hung out the window. We have

witnesses to the fact that he never saw us do any such thing."

"The only events that Craighead witnessed were with drinking, yes, but they were in a room. We had an argument with Craighead, other than that I didn't do anything."

Both De Merchant and Raynor describe their meeting with Craighead on the following Monday, two days before they were evicted from residence.

"Craighead read from prepared notes telling us what we did. He wanted to know if we had anything to add," said De Merchant. "As soon as I started to express what I had to say or whatever, my version of the story, Craighead said 'No. I don't want to hear it, I don't want to play games with you.'"

"I said OK-I have nothing further to add. [Craighead] cut us right off completely."

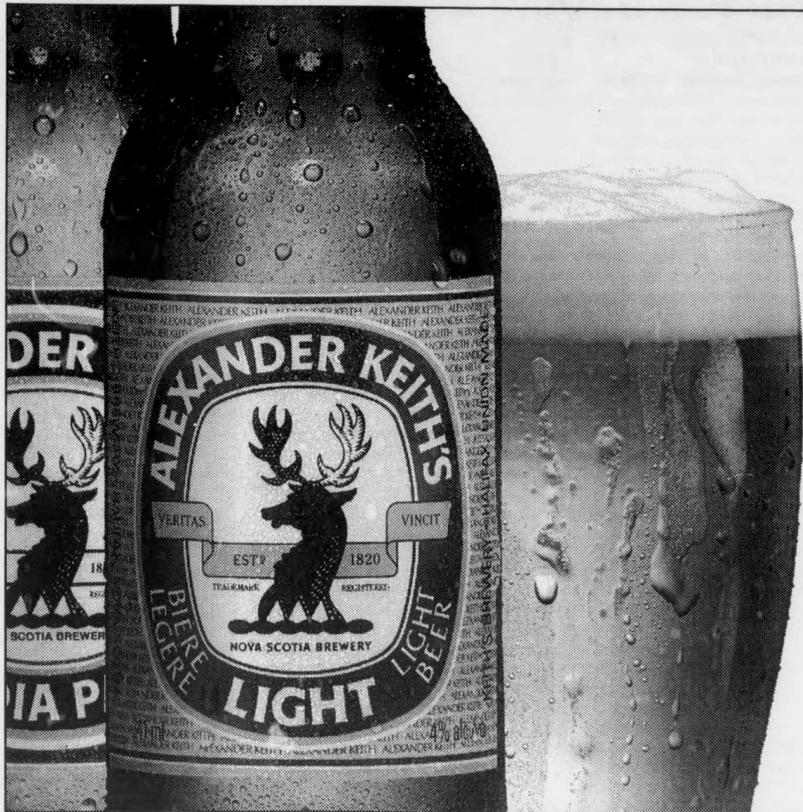
The fourth evicted, Jamie Robinson, said he met with Craighead on Tuesday as he had promised to do on the previous Saturday.

He said he was not called to a meeting by Craighead.

"I never knew that I had to defend myself, or that I needed to bring someone with me, a lawyer or anything," he said.

Shane Betts claims the problem all four evicted students have is directly related to the Dean of Residence.

"If we could have our say we'd be able to tell the President what the Dean of Residence did wrong. He violated our rights at certain points," Betts said. "I have no problem admitting to whatever mistakes I've made. But we don't even have the chance to have [Craighead] face the music for what he has done."



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