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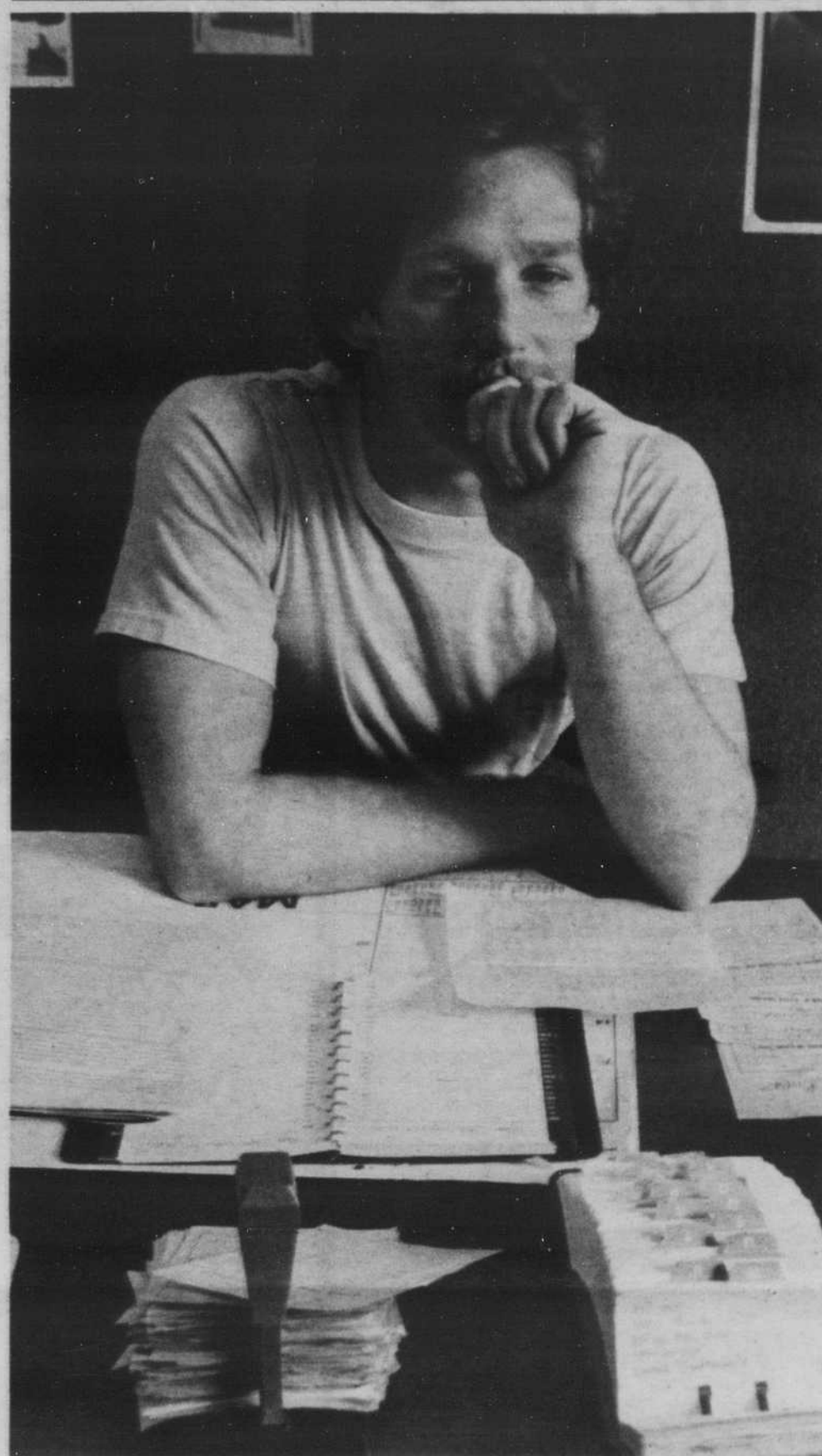
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AT 5:30, 7:30 & 9:30



Emerald Photo

**Rich Wilkins** He has a right to say anything he wants under the First Amendment

**Election court cans charges**

The ASUO elections court convened Wednesday, dismissing six of the 32 complaints concerning the recent ASUO elections.

The court dismissed five complaints levied against ASUO Pres. Rich Wilkins, including one charge of "persuasion of voter's choice by false information."

Written complaints stated that Wilkins said he had heard rumors that former ASUO presidential candidate Debbie Mellow was dropping out of the race and that Mellow would endorse current ASUO president-elect C.J. Balfe.

There are no rules barring Wilkins' alleged action, court member Jeff Boiler said. The only reason the charges were filed was because Wilkins is ASUO president, member Cathi Bulone said.

"He has a right to say anything he wants under the First Amendment," she said.

In other court proceedings, Jim Edmundson, Emerald Board of Directors chair, questioned the right of the elections director, Gus Palmitessa, to place

opinion questions on an ASUO ballot. Edmundson said Palmitessa did not have the authority to place a question on the ballot regarding incidental fee subscription to the Emerald.

Nothing in the ASUO constitution bars the elections director from putting questions on the general election ballot, said Michael Oths, Palmitessa's representative.

In the 1980 elections, a question concerning incidental fee funding of the athletic department appeared on the ballot to help the ASUO determine policy, Oths said. The question was opined by nature, setting a precedent for other elections directors, he added.

The Emerald ballot question was not an initiative for action, Edmundson said. Under the rules the election must be held in an "educational atmosphere," meaning some degree of discussion should have preceded the question's ballot placement, he said.

The "educational atmosphere" in the rules refers to election noninterference

with classes, not to the conduct of the elections, Oths said.

In other complaints, Jeff Houston, former ASUO presidential candidate, charged that Students for a Progressive Agenda members used SEARCH office materials, posted more than one poster on bulletin boards, and verbally threatened him.

Kevin Kouns, former SPA presidential candidate, threatened to make his stay at the University "unhealthy," Houston said.

The alleged threat about Houston's health is "absolutely false," Kouns said.

"We will admit we were doing some work incidental to the elections in the (SEARCH) office," added Ken Packman, former SPA vice-presidential candidate.

The SPA interpreted the rules according to past election interpretations, he said. The SEARCH materials the SPA used were nonexpendable items and were not detrimental to the use of the office, Packman said.

By Rich Burr

**Issues flavor president race**

The 1982 ASUO presidential election was different in many respects.

Nearly 2,900 students voted, making it the largest turnout in 12 years. It was also one of the closest elections in recent years.

Two influential coalitions formed, with some students calling them "political parties."

Election violation complaints totaled 32. Last year there were four.

Candidate Kevin Kouns talked of "national and international" issues that many believed didn't belong in an ASUO campaign.

Many students — 1,363 of them — liked what they heard.

His support group, Students for a Progressive Agenda, gained notoriety. And as it grew, so did the groups that opposed it.

And Kouns came 145 votes short.

"We were not running against C.J. Balfe, or against the Greek system," Kouns says of himself and SPA. "I think it was a symbolic victory." He feels the presence of SPA accounted for "at least 800 votes" that would not have otherwise been cast.

Alan Contreras, ASUO programs vice president, agrees that SPA increased the

turnout.

"I think people came out to vote because of SPA — for and against," Contreras says. He also cites a "well-organized" Greek system for involving more people.

Kouns is consoled by the increase of student involvement he saw.

"There were a lot of people who never participated in the process before and saw student government as a joke," Kouns says. "They looked at us and saw a real alternative."

Some have said that Kouns and SPA's stance on national issues hurt his campaign. Kouns disagrees.

"I had people tell me we should have backed off on the issues," Kouns says. "But I've had just as many tell me that if we'd made a tougher stance we could have won."

Kouns claims "harassment" by election officials and a stoic status quo contributed to his defeat.

"We do in fact represent a difference from the status quo," Kouns says. He and SPA were perceived as a threat to "the structure of government," and he saw a "closing of ranks" among those involved in the governmental process, he says.

Press coverage of the campaigns hurt

everyone, Kouns says.

The Emerald, he says, "sanitized" coverage of the campaigns and ignored controversy in order to remain objective.

"There was controversy over the issues," Kouns claims. "(The Emerald) made it appear that there were no differences between the two candidates, and I think that's unfortunate."

Emerald Editor Sally Hodgkison doesn't see it that way.

"We covered issues as the candidates brought them up," Hodgkison says.

Kouns says that the "isolation and insular attitude" SPA members saw from the ASUO executive inspired the group's creation.

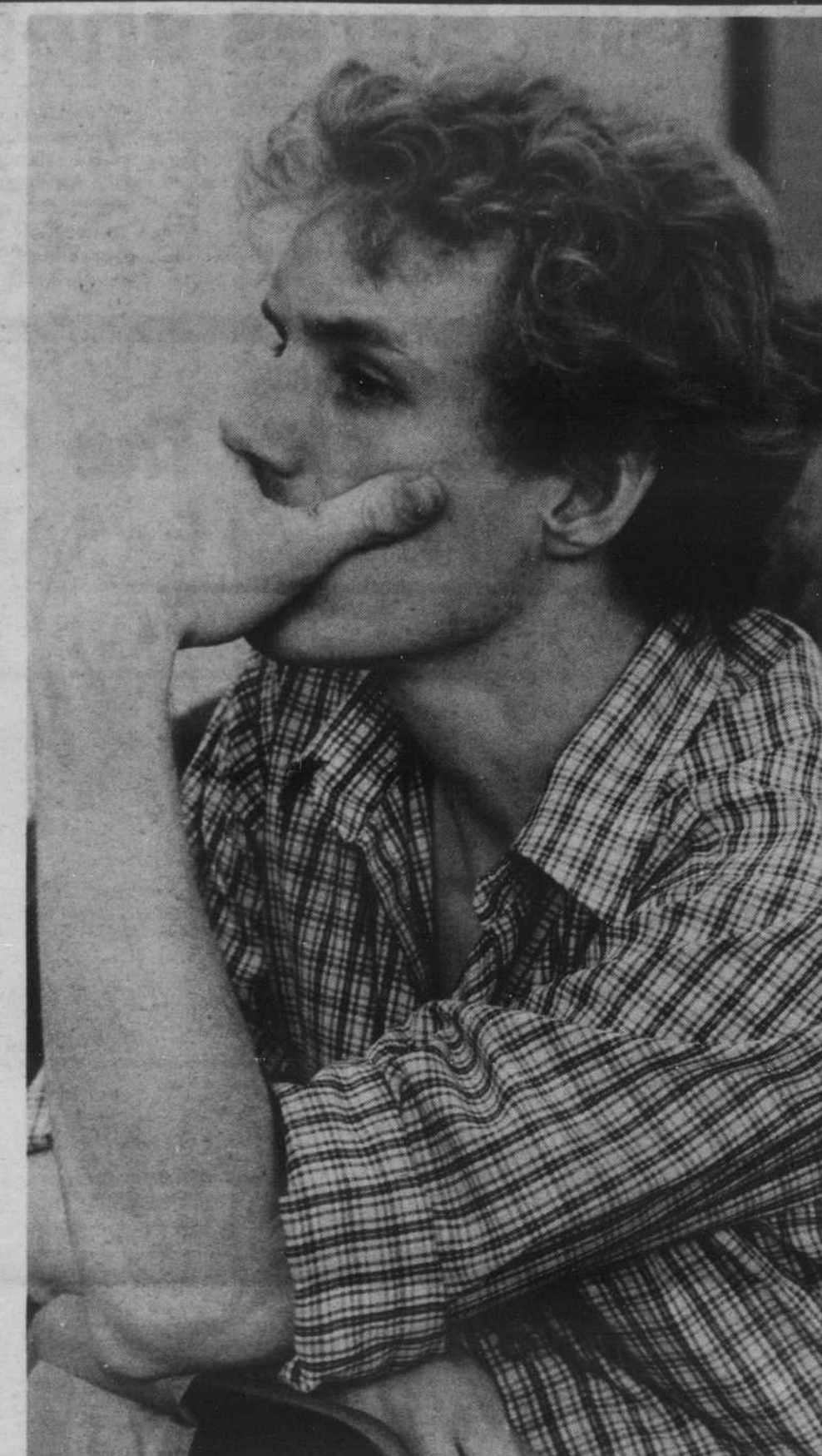
SPA probably will not dissipate, Kouns says. Its name will be registered. Its members will continue to be a "loyal opposition."

Now that the elections are over, Kouns takes a philosophical attitude.

"I have no personal stake in it," Kouns says. "I didn't really intend to run for ASUO president. I don't really care now that I lost."

The issues, Kouns emphasizes, are all that ever mattered.

Analysis by Brent Walth



Emerald photo

**Kevin Kouns** There were a lot of people who looked at us and saw a real alternative

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