Puzzle for October 2, 2006

A university class requires that each student do his or her own program. The university also has a rule that forbids people from looking in other people's directories, and reading other people's files, without permission. A student submits a program electronically. During grading, the TA notices that several files are missing. She emails the student, who responds, "Oh, sorry—get the files out of my home directory, which is unprotected." The TA goes to the student's home directory, and while copying the files out, notices they are dated after the due date. But some earlier versions of those files are dated before the due date. She checks the earlier version, to be sure the student has made no changes. The student has: he deleted the name of the original author of the files, and inserted his own.

The TA reports the matter to her professor, who files charges against the student for cheating. The student files charges against the TA for snooping through the directory without authorization. He contends she should only have looked at the latest versions of the file, not the earlier ones. You are on the Committee for Cheating and Computer Offenses.

1. Do you rule that the student's cheating was discovered properly, and can therefore be used against him?
2. Do you rule that the TA violated the student's privacy by looking at the earlier versions of the files?