All stages of the Joe Ricketts story were recounted and roasted as the TD Ameritrade founder was saluted by an overflow crowd. Katrina Becker of TD Ameritrade was the evening’s emcee.

Roaster Jerry Gress is a former Ameritrade associate who first met Joe when they were 6-year-old Scouts in Nebraska City. “He went to Saint Mary’s on the west side of the tracks,” Gress said, “the white-collar area. I grew up at Saint Benedict’s on the east side. Not to say that we were better than Saint Mary’s, but who’s Pope now?”

Coral Dickau, his longtime executive assistant, drew laughs. She recalled when Joe first offered the position to her, he said: “I can be very demanding and I often run people into the ground.” I thought: “Really? Sign me up. This sounds like just the career move I’ve been looking for!”

“But we all know that Joe Ricketts isn’t the kind of guy who’s used to being told no – unless it’s by Marlene Ricketts (his wife). I went to work for him about five minutes after that conversation ended.”

Her first assignment was to call IT because Joe’s printer wasn’t working. “I
dazzled him with my expertise by taking care of that printer myself. What I haven’t told Joe…was that his printer was just out of paper!”

Son Pete Ricketts echoed the characterizations of his father as a demanding taskmaster: “It wasn’t always chocolates and roses. There’s a reason why I don’t have any hair.”

Longtime Ameritrade associates Kathy Hahn and Mary Fay presented a “Top 10 Reasons to Work for Joe,” ranging from No. 10, “great Christmas parties,” to No. 1, “have your dreams come true.”

Bob Slezak, chief financial officer from 1987-1999, said he had a “3X rule for an entrepreneurial spirit like Joe. Whenever he came to me with a nutzo scheme, I would make him ask for it three times before I acted on it.”

Bill Gerber, the current CFO, noted his perilous status as the only roaster who is a current TD Ameritrade associate. “My first thought (when asked to take part) was, ‘Is Joe on the compensation committee?’” Then I remembered that he was retired, and I told Katrina: ‘Sure, I’d happy to do it.’”

Ricketts resigned from the TD Ameritrade board in 2011. In 2004 he founded High Plains Bison, a retailer of natural bison meat. Some of the bison, as well as Percheron draft horses, are raised on Ricketts’ Wyoming ranch.

In 2008 Ricketts founded the American Film Co., which in 2010 produced “The Conspirator,” a movie dealing with the Lincoln assassination. In 2009 Ricketts created DNAinfo.com, a digital service that covers neighborhood news in New York City. Ricketts also is the founder of Opportunity Education, a charitable foundation that focuses on educating children worldwide.

And of course in 2009, the Ricketts family purchased 95 percent ownership of the Chicago Cubs. All of Joe’s children are involved, with Tom chairman of the Cubs and Pete, Laura and Todd on the board of directors.

In Jim Horan’s caricature for the Face on the Barroom Floor, Joe Ricketts is holding a laptop computer. A soaring arrow on the computer screen indicates that business is good for TD Ameritrade. Also pictured are: an Opportunity Education Foundation logo, a label for High Plains Bison, a Chicago Cubs emblem, Joe’s custom-built Harley Davidson motorcycle, Omaha’s TD Ameritrade Park, the American Film Co. logo, horses and bison grazing on his Wyoming ranch and the Lodge at Jackson Fork.

TD Ameritrade’s current president and CEO, Fred Tomczyk, saluted Ricketts: “No one has had such a profound impact on the brokerage industry as I think Joe Ricketts has.”

Ricketts, in turn, was moved almost to tears as he described how his associates helped his fledgling company get off the ground by learning to clear trades. Ricketts said: “I am quite stunned at everything that’s happening here tonight and all that the people that have showed up from so many different parts of my life.”