No. 137 Joan Squires – May 2013

The president of Omaha Performing Arts is a newsmaker not only in the Omaha area, but nationally as well. Joan Squires is a voting member for Broadway’s Tony Awards, a member of the Performing Arts Center Consortium and the Association of Performing Arts Presenters and an advisor for the Broadway Dreams Foundation.

Squires has been Omaha Performing Arts president since 2003. She oversees the Holland Performing Arts Center and the Orpheum Theater. Her impact on the community has been considerable. OPA is now the largest nonprofit arts organization in Nebraska.

Her roasters at the celebration were her three bosses. She likened her situation to confronting three Donald Trumps on “The Apprentice.” Throwing barbs and bouquets her way were John Gottschalk, David Slosburg and Dick Holland.

Gottschalk is chairman of the Omaha Performing Arts board of directors and retired chairman of the Omaha World-Herald. Slosburg is a director of Omaha Performing Arts and vice president of Slosburg Companies. Holland is vice chairman of Omaha Performing Arts and president of the Holland Foundation.

Gottschalk, who also served as master of ceremonies, told how he recruited Squires in 2003 from Phoenix for the Omaha position. Seeking some indication of her financial expertise, Gottschalk asked Squires: “If I were to give you $20,000 minus 14 percent, how much would you take off?” He claimed her reply was: “Everything but the earrings!”

Slosburg used visual aids to augment his comments, donning a blonde wig while impersonating the Squires laugh and placing a crown upon Joan’s head as “the Queen of the Scene.”

“Joan used to have spiky hair,” Slosburg said, “but changed her style when people began to think that the spikes were really antennae that could detect one’s net worth. She changed to braces, which were eliminated when there was a concern that when she shook someone’s hand, a picture of their brokerage statement was recorded. She has now switched to glasses, a prototype of Google. We’re not certain what they do, but... be afraid.”

Gottschalk noted that the Holland Performing Arts Center and Orpheum Theater constitute the top ticket-selling venues in the nation for their size and that Squires and Omaha Performing Arts have never missed a budget. “To her I will be eternally grateful for her leadership and professionalism.”

Holland summed up: “In most of the roasts I’ve been in, there is something to roast. I hate to say it, but Joan is damn near perfect. Maybe we should call her St. Joan – St. Joan of Omaha.” That prompted a quick retort from Joan: “You know what happened to her!”

Turning to Holland, Squires asked the philanthropist and lead donor for the Holland Performing Arts Center, “How do I roast the Golden Goose, the guy with the big buckets of money?”

The Squires Face on the Barroom Floor created by artist Jim Horan depicts Joan at the center of the performing arts scene in Omaha, with the Orpheum Theater on one side and the Holland Performing Arts Center on the other.

Because Joan frequently visits New York City to look for Omaha shows, she is standing behind the Broadway and 42nd Street sign. And because she is a voting member of the Tony Awards, she is pictured with two of her favorite guys – Tony and Joan’s husband, Tom Fay. Fay was Arizona State University Foundation vice president. He earlier played the oboe with the Pittsburgh Symphony.