Ashford will be ‘Face on Floor’ on May 17

By Tom O’Connor
Communications Committee

Brad Ashford – a political icon and community leader in Nebraska for the past three decades – will be the next “Face on the Barroom Floor” on May 17.

A daily runner, Ashford’s slate of roasters includes two of his running partners as well as several media members, attorneys and even a couple of family members.

The two running partners are Jim Quinley, a pharmacist at Kubat Pharmacy who will serve as emcee, and Chris Burbach, a City Hall reporter for the Omaha World-Herald.

Other roasters will include: Erin Grace, Omaha World-Herald columnist; Chris Abboud, partner, Abboud Law Firm and former Nebraska state senator; Jim Rose, KFAB radio host; Rex Fisher, director of corporate relations, HDR, Inc.; Woody Bradford, partner, Houghton Bradford Whitted Law Firm and the 151st “Face on the Barroom Floor;” and Ann Ashford, Brad’s wife, and John Ashford, Brad’s son.

The event will begin with a reception at 5:30 p.m. followed by dinner at 6:30 p.m. and the roast around 7:45 p.m. Reservations can be made by calling 402-345-8008. Cost is $50 for members and $60 for nonmembers.


Ashford’s term in Congress was highlighted by his ability to find solutions for even the most intractable challenges.

See ASHFORD, Page 3

Bacon to discuss his first 100 days on May 15

By Claudia Bohn
Communications Committee

Freshman Rep. Don Bacon, representing Omaha’s 2nd Congressional District, is a member of the Republican majority tackling challenges like health care, the economy, taxes, immigration and terrorism.

What are Bacon’s priorities as President Trump presents his legislative agenda to the new Congress? What does Bacon realistically think the GOP majority can get accomplished?

The 2017 inductees include:
- Judy Horan - WOWT, freelance writer
- C. David Kotak - Omaha World-Herald
- Patricia Matson - ABC, White House speechwriter & press aide
- Sibyl Myers - Omaha World-Herald
- Alfred “Bud” Pagel - UNL College of Journalism and Mass Communications
- Dave Weiberg - KFAB, KMTV, WOWT

See BACON, Page 5
See HALL, Page 2

See OPC Hall of Fame induction set for June 3
Alfred “Bud” Pagel: An emeritus associate professor of journalism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Pagel taught news courses at UNL from 1982-1997. He grew up in a newspaper family and published his family’s paper in Neligh from 1957-1963. He was city editor at the Norfolk Daily News and a reporter for the Miami Herald and Omaha World-Herald before joining UNL as the Gannett Professional Lecturer. Bud and his mother, Ruth Best Pagel, are the only mother-son members of the Nebraska Press Association Hall of Fame. His other honors include the OPC Career Achievement in Education, the College Legislative Teaching Award, and being named a Distinguished Professor in 1996.

Dave Webber: Dave is one of the most familiar faces and voices in the Omaha community. In demand as a speaker, emcee and genial host, he’s been a popular television figure in the area since 1978. He began his career in radio with stints at KLNG and KFAB. His first broadcast job was at KMEG in Sioux City. He returned to Omaha and KMTV in 1977. In 1978, he became sports director for WOWT, a position he held until 2010. Though semi-retired, Dave still can be seen during WOWT’s “Friday Night Lights” and Husker football coverage.

Complimentary perk for all members except students. Just call or email me the date(s), time frame and how many guests for the space needed. We have three private rooms: the Agnew Room, Lauritzen West and Lauritzen East. We also rent out larger space, including the entire club with or without the Agnew Room.

Elevators: The express elevators to the 22nd floor work only at night from 6 p.m. on Monday through Friday and from 4:30 p.m. on Saturday. If we have a Sunday event, we have the option to run express elevators. Here is the tricky part: There are six elevators, but four go no higher than the 21st floor. If you get out on the 21st floor, there is a spiral staircase to the 22nd floor. Why no exclusive elevator for the club? The fire code dictates that all the building occupants have access to all the elevators.

Holidays: We are open on Valentine’s Day, Easter, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day (Eve) and New Year’s Eve. We are closed on New Year’s Day, Memorial Day, Father’s Day (Sunday), Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

P ark downtown is no exclusive elevator. The club provides “chaser tickets” which have a black square known as a QR code. You first put your parking ticket into the machine, then insert the chaser to have the black square scanned.

3. Club Location: The business office sends out a welcome letter to new members with all the details.

4. Facility Rental: Yes, rental is complimentary perk for all members except students. Just call or email me the date(s), time frame and how many guests for the space needed. We have three private rooms: the Agnew Room, Lauritzen West and Lauritzen East. We also rent out larger space, including the entire club with or without the Agnew Room.

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7. Parking challenges: Twice a year the DoubleTree garage has a parking influx: the Berkshire Hathaway meeting (May 6 this year) and the College World Series (June 16-27/28). Our backup garage is called Central City and is at 17th and Capitol.

8. Newsletter: OPC News is your monthly guide to everything your club has to offer. For a handy at-a-glance guide to coming attractions, check the Events listing on the back page.

9. Faces on the Barroom Floor: In my next column, I will tell the unbridled version! The stairwell doors to each floor are locked, and there is no exit from the stairwell until you reach the ground. Many members and guests have tried to go down (or up), only to get stuck!

-Christine Jones Villamonte, B.S.
Nutrition, Restaurant Manager/Events Coordinator

A MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGER

Part of my daily routine at the club is welcoming and answering questions from members and guests. So I thought a top 10 list of frequent topics might be appropriate:

1. Restaurant Attire: The OPC respectfully recommends business casual -- no shorts, hats, flip flops or tank tops. Exceptions are made during sports-affiliated functions such as the fireworks buffet for the college baseball championships -- a perfect time to wear your favorite team T-shirts.

2. Garage Parking: Members enjoy validated parking at the DoubleTree garage at 16th and Dodge. The gates are automated. The club provides “chaser tickets” which have a black square known as a QR code. You first put your parking ticket into the machine, then insert the chaser to have the black square scanned.

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ASHFORD, continued from Page 1

through public-private partnerships and consensus-building instead of partisan politics.

In 2016, Ashford sponsored HR 5099, a bill that created a new way to construct VA facilities. It marked a rare instance that a freshman representative in the minority party was able to pass a major bill as the primary sponsor. For the first time in history, the bill made it possible that a federal facility could be built locally with private financial support and then be gifted back to the VA. What it means to Nebraska is that after decades of waiting, the Omaha VA will have a new medical facility in the not-too-distant future.

Some of Ashford’s other successes in Congress included a new runway at Offutt Air Force Base and Ebola-related funding for the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

A native Omahan from a fifth-generation Nebraska family, Ashford learned the value of hard work as a boy stocking shelves at his parents’ small business, the Nebraska Clothing Company. A graduate of Westside High School, Ashford earned his undergraduate degree at Colgate University and his law degree from Creighton University.

It was at Colgate that Ashford learned the value of bipartisanship while working for Nebraska U.S. Sen. Roman Hruska. Following law school, Ashford worked as an attorney for the General Counsel’s Office of the Federal Highway Commission in Washington D.C. He then returned to Omaha to join the law firm of Bradford and Coenen.

He became active in the community by accepting appointments to a variety of positions, including as a judge in the Nebraska Court of Industrial Relations and as a hearing examiner for the Nebraska Department of Education. After his first stint in the Legislature, Ashford served as executive director of the Omaha Housing Authority.

Throughout his legislative career, Ashford strived to make Nebraska a great place to own a business. He modernized business incentives making Nebraska one of the best places to start a small business. He also worked to improve education, raise standards for special education, promote career academies, and ensure fair pay for Nebraska’s teachers.

Ashford has always had a strong interest in revitalization of downtown/midtown Omaha. In the 1990s, he helped find funding to preserve the Joslyn Castle and to renovate the Civic Auditorium. He helped develop finance options for the Qwest Center, now the CenturyLink Center, and served as a founding member of the Metropolitan Entertainment Convention Authority (MECA) board. The MECA board secured funding for the construction of TD Ameritrade Park, which allowed Omaha to continue to host the College World Series.

In addition to his wife, Ann, Ashford’s family includes two sons, John and Tom, and daughter Ellie.

A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDATION

The OPC Foundation has made changes designed to strengthen its efforts to raise money for scholarships it awards to journalism students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Nebraska at Omaha and Creighton University.

Those changes were formalized at our March 29 annual meeting, when we elected seven new trustees (many with significant fundraising experience), added a second vice president position to our executive committee and increased the maximum board size from 12 to 15. Trustees also revised the foundation’s committee structure. The new lineup:

- Development, which will brainstorm ideas for events and other revenue-generating activities, including our annual direct-mail appeal.
- Events -- Working closely with Development, the Events Committee will refine ideas for fundraisers and formulate event budgets, then plan, publicize and staff the events with help from other trustees and community volunteers.
- Scholarship -- Firmly at the heart of our mission is the Scholarship Committee, whose membership includes trustees who also are faculty members at UNO, UNL and Creighton. The committee will continue to maintain open lines of communication with the universities and will plan the 2018 OPC Scholarship Banquet.
- Finance -- Essential to smooth foundation operation will be the new Finance Committee, which is in charge of approving all event budgets, tracking all expenditures and keeping trustees updated on the performance of foundation investments.

Back in 1982, I was privileged to receive an OPC scholarship, which helped me continue my education and achieve the goal of becoming a professional journalist. Ever since, I’ve worked to show my appreciation by becoming active in foundation activities that help today’s students.

Please help me help them with a generous donation to the OPC Foundation during this month’s Omaha Gives! event or by becoming involved in our fundraisers with your donation of time, talent or treasure. To donate to Omaha Gives! go to bit.ly/2pW4TLQ.

Contact me at howardkmarcus@gmail.com or 402-333-8588.

By Howard K. Marcus
OPC Foundation President

Howard K. Marcus

May 2017 Page 3
I had a conversation about the Press Club recently with a person who knew very little about it; in fact, he’s from England. He asked me what the club stands for, what’s our purpose? I had to stop and think for a moment.

Are we just a place to have a good time, share stories and consume delicious food? Or are we more than that?

If I had been around the keg in that old streetcar when the idea of a press club in Omaha was hatched, I think I would have heard something about promoting and supporting the journalism profession.

As we all know, the journalism profession is changing rapidly. We’re in the era of the citizen journalist. Take a picture on your smartphone and upload it or share a post on social media. Nowadays, there’s no need for confirmation from three separate sources to publish a story. It was on Twitter, so it has to be true. The pursuit of the truth is getting lost in an avalanche of information. Citizen journalists rarely have the time, determination or interest in finding the truth.

Google is quietly herding us every day to the sources we agree with. Just like Netflix and Amazon “suggested viewing” in your queue – you watched this material, you read this book -- here’s something similar. How are we ever going to find out what other people think? What other ideas are out there?

That’s where the Press Club has an opportunity, a purpose, to provide a forum for diverging opinions, a place for the “free exercise thereof;” with no law “abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.” A place for the First Amendment to live.

You can come to the Press Club and listen to the candidates wanting to be your next mayor. You can be in the same room as your representative to the U.S. House of Representatives and ask him questions in person.

It’s encouraging that despite Twitter trolling and Facebook Live events, journalism is still out there being practiced every day. Just read about the group of young reporters and editors from Pittsburg High School in southeastern Kansas or the writing of Pulitzer Prize winner Art Cullen from the Storm Lake, Iowa Times.

Our purpose is to create an atmosphere where the pursuit of the truth can be celebrated.

I think I’ll tell the Englishman that.

-Marcia Cady, OPC President
The Tom Shatel Lunch Series returned in style on April 18, as the Omaha World-Herald sports columnist delivered a smorgasbord of sports topics ranging from Husker spring football to Creighton and Nebraska basketball to UNO hockey.

It was an invigorating discussion, as Shatel returned to the Press Club lunch series after about a one-year hiatus. The Shatel Lunch Series was launched in 2012.

Most of the conversation centered around Husker spring football. Some of Shatel’s key observations included:

- The expectation level is way up. There is an urgency for the team to win, and Coach Mike Riley has made significant changes to make this happen (e.g. “He fired his best friend, Defensive Coordinator Mark Banker.”)
- The Huskers will be fine at quarterback with Tanner Lee the likely starter. “He has an NFL arm.”
- The Huskers will focus on the running game. “Nebraska doesn’t run enough. A good running game is a habit.”
- Nebraska doesn’t block and tackle very well. “Nebraska needs to get back to the basics of football.”
- The hires of Bob Diaco and Bob Elliott will bring a lot of energy to the defense.

Creighton basketball:
- Bluejays lost their leader when Maurice Watson Jr. went down with an injury.
- Khyri Thomas will likely be the team leader next year.
- On Justin Patton’s move to the NBA: “He had to ride the hot hand while he can, plus he saw what happened to Mo Watson.”
- Creighton fans should get used to players going to the NBA early. “They’ll be turning their roster over every couple years. It means Creighton is growing up.”

Nebraska basketball:
- The struggle of Coach Tim Miles being unable to keep players is a mystery. “Every writer and fan loves him, but he can’t reach the athletes. He’s just plugging holes in the dike. There’s something inherently wrong in the program.”
- Next season will determine Miles’ fate.
- If Nebraska does decide to get a new coach, it would be better served not going for a successful mid-major coach, but rather a top assistant coach at a winning school.
- “We need someone like Johnny Orr (former Iowa State coach). He taught them how to win. Nebraska is a tough job, but so is Iowa State. Somehow, Iowa State has found a way to win.”

UNO hockey:
- Was surprised that UNO is paying new coach Mike Gabinet nearly the same salary ($250,000) as his legendary predecessor Dean Blais.
- On team’s Frozen Four appearance in 2015 and the opening of Baxter Arena that same year – “They’ve had a good run at UNO. Now it gets tough.”
- Shatel concluded by saying that he would likely do another lunch in late August before the beginning of the Husker football season.

OPC hosts lively mayoral debate

Mayor Jean Stothert and challenger Heath Mello clashed throughout their debate at the Omaha Press Club on April 14 as he accused her of leaving the public out of important city matters and she accused him of misstating the facts. WOWT’s Brian Mastre moderated the debate, which drew a full house. It was co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters. The city election will be May 9.

Shatel serves up smorgasbord of sports talk to lunch fans

By Tom O’Connor

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Hours of Operation

LUNCH
Monday - Friday
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4:30 p.m. to close

DINNER
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Submissions for the June issue are due on or before May 20.