Celebrate!

By Marcia Cady
OPC President

The Omaha Press Club is set to celebrate our members on Tuesday, Sept. 26, and Wednesday, Sept. 27, with cocktails and celebrity karaoke.

“It’s time we recognize our members and show them how much we appreciate their support,” said Marcia Cady, OPC president.

The club has been a mainstay in longtime member Gary Kerr’s career and life.

“I joined because I was encouraged to join by (WOWT’s) then-assistant news director, Steve Murphy. This was shortly after I was hired by Channel Six in 1964,” Kerr said. “I’ve stayed a member all these years because the Press Club not only provides a place to eat and drink but because it sponsors debates and panel discussions on a variety of subjects.”

Kerr and his wife, Karen, recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at the club.

On Tuesday, Sept. 26, look forward to Happy Hour cocktails starting at 5:30 p.m. with appetizers, and then stick around for complimentary bites of some new menu items.

Knowing we can’t all make it for one night, there’s Wednesday, too, starting at 7 p.m., again with Happy Hour cocktail prices and hors d’oeuvres. Celebrities will take the stage for some karaoke. And check out the new “special drinks menu.”

Please RSVP for either night by calling the OPC at 402-345-8008.

We encourage our new young members to join us for one of the nights. Jocelyn Houston, vice president of marketing and communications at the YMCA, says it will be worth your while to become a member.

See OPC, Page 5

Film Streams, Dundee Theater will be Noon Forum co-stars

A Film Streams double feature is on tap for the Omaha Press Club’s Noon Education Forum on Sept. 21.

Two speakers will provide an update on all that is going on during Film Streams’ 10th anniversary year. That includes the revival and renovation of the historic Dundee Theater.

One of the speakers will be Rachel Jacobson of Film Streams. Another will be Casey Logan of Film Streams.

See FILM STREAMS, Page 2

New Omaha Press Club Parking Policy

The Omaha Press Club has a new parking policy — and it has become the new default for validated parking in the evenings for OPC members, effective Sept. 1.

A new agreement with the Central City Parking Garage, located at 122 N. 17 St., replaces the previous arrangement with the garage attached to the DoubleTree hotel. The Central City Parking Garage is located west of the original First National Bank building.

OPC members receive up to two hours of free parking in the Central City Parking Garage during the workday and free parking in the evenings from 5 p.m. to 2 a.m. with validation. Members will be able to park in any open space on the rooftop level of the garage at lunchtime, and in any space from #142 on up after 5 p.m.

Evonne and Bill Williams have a new memorial project.

See PARKING POLICY, Page 2

Patriotic couple to be recognized Sept. 28 as next ‘Faces on the Barroom Floor’

Bill and Evonne Williams have been driving force behind Honor Flights, memorial display

By Tom O’Connor
Communications Committee

It wouldn’t be a stretch to call Bill and Evonne Williams the most patriotic couple in Nebraska.

The Omaha couple has been the driving force behind the Honor Flights that have transported more than 3,300 Nebraska veterans back to the U.S war memorials in Washington, D.C.

The duo is now working on another project, which they unveiled in Lincoln in July and nationally, in Washington, D.C. at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial on Sept. 7. It’s called the Remembering Our Fallen Memorial – a large photo display depicting more than 4,500 servicemen and women who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan and related missions since Sept. 11, 2001.

When completed, the memorial will include almost 7,000 fallen on 40 to 45 Tribute Towers, each one 10 feet tall and featuring three double-sided banners with military and personal photos of each service
We welcome back the members after our annual summer break.

During the closing, the club received some new windows, and our lighting was changed from candescent to fluorescent. Many members had asked about our windows, which had perforations and moisture between the panes. Windows throughout the building received a tinting, including our 22nd floor. I personally love the change, as we can now leave 100 percent of our blinds up, giving you, as promised, “The Best View in Town.” Thanks to the tinting, the temperature in the club has become more consistent, with fewer highs and lows. We will still offer you sunglasses though.

For vacation, my family went north to Wisconsin and Minnesota. While in Wisconsin, we attended the wedding reception of Wisconsin and Minnesota. While in Wisconsin, we attended the wedding reception of some amazing wines or beers — you get to choose. The wine/beer dinner allows the chefs to be creative and to work away from the regular menu. I hope you can put it on your calendar for an opportunity to unwind, as the food, wine (and beer) and atmosphere are fabulous. Whether it be a date night or to meet some new friends, it’s a great time all around.

As for the regular dining menu, we will continue with our staple items, but as usual in the fall we are rolling out some new offerings. A teaser: sun-dried cranberry crusted salmon with a cranberry orange astrique. A teaser: sun-dried cranberry crusted salmon with a cranberry orange astrique. As for the regular dining menu, we will continue with our staple items, but as usual in the fall we are rolling out some new offerings. A teaser: sun-dried cranberry crusted salmon with a cranberry orange astrique. We're glad to be back, and hope to see you soon at the Omaha Press Club!

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

October Forum to feature Mayor Stothert

Mayor Jean Stothert’s hopes and plans for Omaha’s next four years will be the subject of the Noon Education Forum on Oct. 19. Stothert was elected to her first term in 2013 and re-elected in May.

Call 402-345-8008 for reservations or email Jeanie at jeanie@opc.omhcoxmail.com

Non-Press Club members are welcome. Reservations must be accompanied by an OPC member number or credit card.

PARKING POLICY, continued from page 1

Important: Bring your parking ticket with you to the club for validation.

Executive Director Steve Villamonte has also negotiated a special rate for non-members in the Central City garage — ask for details! (This rate is also available for event hosts wishing to offer parking to their guests.)

When parking in the Central City garage, take the elevators inside the garage to the basement level (marked B on the elevator). Follow the signs east and proceed through the tunnel into the First National Bank building and take the main elevators up to the Press Club.

OPC members can still receive up to two hours of validated parking in the DoubleTree garage from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. No validated parking will be available in the DoubleTree Hotel garage after 5 p.m. However, you may still park in that garage in the evenings if you wish to self-pay.
member.
For all their patriotic endeavors, the Williams will be recognized on Sept. 28 as the Omaha Press Club’s 154th “Face on the Barroom Floor.” It shapes up to be one of the more memorable “Face” events in Press Club history.

“This is truly a special couple,” said Allen Beermann, executive director of the Nebraska Press Association and an OPC board member. “They’ve given thousands of veterans the opportunity to go to our nation’s capital and reflect and observe the monuments that they helped to erect because of their service.

“It’s an opportunity of a lifetime for these people, and for many of them, it’s probably the last time they will be able to visit. They get to kneel down in front of the monuments and pray – for the families, our nation and the world. It’s a chance for them to give thanks to those whose names are on the memorials.

“The Williamses made all this happen, but they would be the first to say, ‘Oh, but a lot of people helped us.’ That’s the Nebraska way.”

The Williamses will be roasted and toasted by a group of roasters that includes two past “Faces on the Barroom Floor,” the couple’s four sons, and two Honor Flight volunteers.

The two past “Faces” are Hal Daub (No. 23 – June 1983) and Gary Sadlemyer (No. 115 – February 2008). A partner in the Husch Blackwell law firm and a member of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, Daub will serve as emcee.

For Sadlemyer, a longtime radio personality for KFAB-AM, it’s an opportunity to pay homage and get some laughs at the expense of one of his favorite couples.

“They are fabulous, wonderful people,” he said. “I knew Evonne first, and it was easy to see what a quality person she was. Then I met Bill when they started the Honor Flights project, and their work with Patriotic Productions has only amplified my feelings toward them.”

The two Honor Flight volunteers are Bob Scudder and Rick Lienemann. The Williams’ four sons – Ben, Tom, Sam and Max – will be the concluding roasters.

Although neither Bill nor Evonne served in the military, all four of their sons served – two in the Army and two in the Marines.

The Williamses both grew up in rural communities where volunteering and helping others was a way of life. Bill was born in Ames, Iowa, and grew up in Red Oak, Iowa. Evonne grew up on a farm near Byron, Neb. They met when Bill was a teacher at Evonne’s high school. They have been married for 36 years.

A 1973 graduate of Dakota State College in Madison, S.D., Bill was a social studies teacher and coach at Byron High School and Chester-Hubbell (Neb.) High School. He also was director of student services at Nebraska College of Business in Omaha and later held a sales position with Cox Cable and served as a Yellow Pages consultant.

A 2003 graduate of Bellevue University, Evonne worked in the insurance industry for 16 years and was executive director of Make-A-Wish Foundation of Nebraska for 16 years. She also served as deputy director and later interim director at the Strategic Air & Space Museum for about three years.

In 2011, the Williams co-founded Patriotic Productions, the nonprofit organization that has been responsible for the Honor Flights and the Remembering Our Fallen Memorial. They work out of their home, tirelessly collecting photos and background information on fallen soldiers.

Among their numerous awards, the Williams were recognized as Distinguished Nebraskalanders by the NEBRASKAland Foundation in 2016 and as Midlanders of the Year by the Omaha World-Herald in 2013.

THE “FACE” EVENT IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. RESERVATIONS CAN BE MADE BY CALLING 402-345-8008. COST IS $50 FOR OPC MEMBERS AND $60 FOR NON-MEMBERS.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thank you.

The Omaha Press Club is saying thank you to its members this month by showing appreciation with several nights of fun to celebrate why we love this place.

Come for the food, a drink and the view and remember we are much more. This is a place for conversations, face-to-face, a rarity in our fragmented society. We offer access to both sides of an issue like public vs. charter schools. Debates with mayoral and congressional candidates. Recognition of Nebraskans who have changed lives.

We want to be the place where you hear different points of view.

My former boss, Sen. Ben Nelson, gave me a piece of advice about this that I use to this day. He was running for re-election in 2006 and we were traveling across the state. The radio was tuned to KFAB and Rush Limbaugh came on. I was about to change the station when Senator Nelson said keep it there. He said he made it a point to listen to Rush and others like him to get their point of view.

With that in mind we are continuously trying to bring new members and their points of view into the club. This month we are offering membership at $15 a month for the first six months. If you refer a person and they remain a member, you will receive a $25 gift card to the club.

We’re also thinking long-term about what the club will look like in the next three to five years. The board has authorized a Strategic Planning Committee to take a look at what we need to do to stay relevant. You’ll be seeing their recommendations in the coming months.

For this month, come enjoy being appreciated and think about whom you will invite to become a member.

I’ll leave you with one of the 10 best thank-you cards ever written. Marilyn Monroe wrote to the German consulate general back in the 1960s: “Thank you for your champagne. It arrived, I drank it, and I was gayer.”

- Marcia Cady, OPC President
Charter or public school: What’s best for Nebraska’s children?

By Marcia Cady
OPC President

Two different visions of how students should be educated emerged during the Omaha Press Club’s July forum. Katie Linehan, executive director of Educate Nebraska, said charter schools in Nebraska would offer an opportunity to do what’s best for the child, not the system.

Ann Hunter-Pirtle, executive director of Stand for Schools, said public schools are working in Nebraska and should be fixed instead of given up on.

Several school choice bills allowing charter schools in the state have been introduced in the Nebraska Legislature but have gone nowhere. That hasn’t silenced the debate or the push to try again.

Charter schools are publicly funded by tax dollars, but are privately run schools. Their school board members are not elected, and many schools are run by nonprofit organizations. Linehan says that gives the school more latitude to provide the education children need instead of being forced to go to a school that is failing.

Hunter-Pirtle countered that tax dollars that would go with a student to a charter school are lost to the public school they would have attended. That sets back efforts to improve public schools, she said, and leaves them with the majority of poor, minority and academically challenged populations.

Linehan believes the pushback against charter schools is just a defense of the status quo. “We can’t wait for public schools to get better; kids can’t wait,” Linehan said.

“Charter schools are a Band-Aid, not a solution,” Hunter-Pirtle said. She suggested taking what is working in charter schools and incorporating it into public schools.

Time ran out at the forum but the discussion continues. Expect to hear more about charter schools in the upcoming Nebraska legislative session.
Former ‘Face’ honoree, William Kizer, dies at age 92

William Kizer, an Omaha business leader and a pioneer in fostering fitness in the workplace, died Aug. 20 at the age of 92. Kizer was honored by the Omaha Press Club in July 2007 as the 112th “Face on the Barroom Floor.”

Kizer gained national recognition in 1986 when he founded the Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA). The nonprofit was patterned after a local organization he founded earlier, the Wellness Council of the Midlands (WELCOM).


Kizer was chairman of Central States Indemnity Co. of Omaha, a company he helped form in 1977 along with his sons. Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway purchased majority ownership of the company in 1992.

In 2001, Kizer received the Metro Omaha Medical Society’s Community Society Award and the Nebraska Medical Association’s Friend of Medicine Award. He received honorary Doctorate of Humanities degrees from Creighton University (1996) and the University of Nebraska (1997).

Kizer served in the U.S. Naval Air Corps during World War II. He had nine children, who all live in Omaha. His wife, Bunnie, is a community volunteer.

OPC Insider

With Bridget (Weide) Brooks, OPC board secretary

Name: Bridget (Weide) Brooks
Age: 43
Place of employment: Self-employed since 1996 (Image Building Communications)
Title: Communications consultant
Number of years as OPC member: 20 years!
(Since 1998, when we got the contract to produce the Omaha Press Club newsletter.)
Current role with OPC: Board member/secretary, co-chair of Marketing/Membership Committee
Favorite book: “Alas, Babylon” (fiction) and “Ice to the Eskimos” (nonfiction)
Favorite movie: “Legally Blonde”
Favorite memory of your career: It’s not one thing — it’s a lot of little things over a very long time. I remember being thrilled to achieve the five-year mark for our business, because I had heard the statistic that 80 percent of small businesses fail within the first five years. And then, in 2016, we celebrated 20 years in business! It hasn’t always been easy, but it has been memorable!

Brush with fame: I spent 48 hours with “The Amazing Race” host Phil Keoghan as he was riding his bicycle across the country. I appear oh-so-briefly in his documentary chronicling it, “The Ride.” My brother, Sean, rode with Phil from Lincoln to Bellevue and then from Bellevue to Atlantic, Iowa. I was lucky enough to get to tag along (in Sean’s van, not on a bike!).

About your family: Married since 2004 to my high school sweetheart, Jon. I’m the middle child of five and I love my nieces and nephews!

Favorite food: Chocolate desserts! Cheesecake, Oreo balls, zebra brownies… mmmm!

Best advice you ever received: “If you keep on doing what you’ve always done, you’ll keep on getting what you’ve always got.” It works both ways — if you’re stuck, do something different. And if you’re having success with something, do more of it!

Hobbies: Totally obsessed with UNO hockey … Jon and I have never missed a UNO hockey home game since the program began in 1997. We run a fan site, Mavpuck.com.

Favorite dish at OPC: Thunderbird pasta salad. (Love the Thunderbird salad, too!)

Favorite memory at OPC: My wedding reception. I didn’t get to eat hardly any of the amazing food because we were so busy talking with people, unfortunately! If I had a time machine, I’d eat and then talk! The OPC is a perfect event venue!

Why should people visit/become a member of OPC: It’s “where you belong.” I always liken it to “Cheers” — everyone knows your name and the servers know to bring me a Cherry Coke almost as soon as I sit down!

Favorite vacation spot: Hilton Head, S.C. (see my photo!) — but I’ve been to many amazing places that I’d love to go back to! Washington, D.C., Utah, Chicago, Toronto, Portugal. I’ll also go anywhere UNO hockey is playing in the Frozen Four (again)!

Favorite social media app: I like them all!

As a young professional, not native to Omaha, the Omaha Press Club has been a great environment for me to connect with influential minds in the Omaha community and feel more closely connected to the city,” Houston said.

“I’ve received helpful advice from other communications professionals, talked current affairs over intimate drinks, and found my go-to place for business lunches. Plus the spectacular view will always impress your guests. The rich history of the Omaha Press Club and atmosphere is unlike anything else I’ve experienced in Omaha, and I’m proud to call myself a member.”

We also have a membership drive underway in September. We encourage you to reach out to people you know and urge them to join the club. We have a special membership for them, $15 a month for the first six months of their annual membership. If you refer someone and their account is in good standing at the end of the year, you will receive a $25 credit to your OPC member account. Some restrictions apply.

So please share the pride and join us in September!

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Bridget (Weide) Brookst
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Marcia Cady  
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Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska

Claudia Bohn  
Vice President/President-Elect  
Methodist Health System

J.J. Bartlett  
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Secretary  
Image Building Communication

Sean McGuire  
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Communications Co-Chairs  
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Marcia Cady, Claudia Bohn,  
Bridget (Weide) Brooks & Sean McGuire
“Face on the Barroom Floor”  
Tom O’Connor
Hall of Fame  
Todd Murphy
Marketing / Membership  
Bridget (Weide) Brooks

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Marcia Cady  
Cindy Workman  
Bailey Lauerman  
Fox 42  
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Communications Committee

Susan Eustice, Co-Chair  
Claudia Bohn, Co-Chair  
Henry Cordes  
Cindy Workman

Howard K. Marcus  
Don Summerside  
Gary Willis  
Chris Allen  
Jennifer Bull

Committee Chairs

WE'RE ONLINE! READ YOUR OPC NEWSLETTER AT OMAHAPRESSCLUB.COM

Thursday, Sept. 28
“Face on the Barroom Floor”  
Bill and Evonne Williams  
5:30 p.m. reception  
6:30 p.m. dinner  
7:45 p.m. roast

Thursday, Oct. 3
Tom Shatel Lunch Series  
11:30 a.m. lunch, noon program

Friday, Oct. 6
Oktoberfest  
Beer/Wine Dinner  
6 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 19
Noon Education Forum  
Mayor Jean Stothert  
“The Next Four Years”  
Noon to 1 p.m.  
Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m.

Hours of Operation

LUNCH  
Monday - Friday  
11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

BAR  
Tuesday - Saturday  
4:30 p.m. to close

DINNER  
Thursday - Saturday  
5:30 p.m. to close

OMAHA PRESS CLUB STAFF

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Website  
www.omahapressclub.com

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Bill Allen  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Committee Chairs

Are you looking for a perfect party setting? A lunch surrounded by brilliance? A dinner your guests will always remember? Keep the OPC in mind.

CANCELLATION POLICY: All reservations must be cancelled 48 HOURS in advance.