Press Club rocks at Steve Jordon roast

By Don Summerside
Communications Committee

He’s the rock of the newspaper by day, a sometime rocker at night and a Warren Watcher around the clock. That summed up the roast and toast of Steve Jordon, marking his 50th anniversary at the World-Herald and his installment as the OPC’s 152nd “Face on the Barroom Floor.”

Before a full house on March 18, roasters focused on Steve’s age and long career, his drumming talents and his years of reporting on Warren Buffett.

OPC President Marcia Cady said: “I understand Steve was ‘this close’ to landing Warren Buffett as one of his roasters. Then Warren realized that it was Steve Jordon, not Michael Jordan.”
Mike Reilly, former World-Herald executive editor and now vice president of BH Media Group, praised Steve’s longevity and versatility: “I’m honored to represent all of Steve’s editors present and past -- going back to whom, William Jennings Bryan? Steve has been a jack of all trades – covering police, sports, youth, county, education, business, Obamacare. For a while, he drew Blondie. When Heloise is off, guess whose ‘Hints’ we use.”

For the past 35 or so years, Steve’s beat has been business and the economy, with a decade of duty as World-Herald business editor. His Berkshire Hathaway coverage has included the weekly “Warren Watch” column since 2008 and “The Oracle and Omaha” book in 2013.

Mike Holmes, retired World-Herald editorial page editor, said: “Steve is working on another book – his unauthorized autobiography.”

Roast emcee Mike Kelly has worked alongside Jordon for 47 of Steve’s 50 bylined years. The Buffett-Jordon association has grown so close, Kelly said, that “in a quiet ceremony yesterday afternoon at the Douglas County Courthouse, Warren adopted Steve.”

Lyn Wallin Ziegenbein, executive director emerita of the Peter Kiewit Foundation, saluted the “reporter by day, percussionist rock star by night.” In recognition of Steve’s talents, she presented him with drumstick pens – one end for writing and the other for drumming.

Over the years, Steve has played in college bands, big bands, Dixieland and rock and roll. His newest role is that of a conga player in the Monkey Funk fusion band.

By day, Steve’s persona is more subdued. Pat Waters, former business editor at the World-Herald, said: “Steve is a rock, but he’s not what you would call flashy. If the newsroom were a tuxedo, Steve would be a pair of brown shoes.”

Jim Fogarty, co-owner of Legacy Preservation Book Publishers and a former World-Herald reporter, picked up his guitar and closed the roast portion of the program by singing “Watching Warren.” With harmony assistance from John Prescott, the ditty concluded:

“Now we have some fresh news about Steve’s career
“And Warren’s friend Hillary (they’re both shedding tears):
“We know for certain – and this is no bunk –
“Warren’s hired Steve to spy on Donald Trump.
“So watch for the new column from Washington D.C.
“Warren says ‘it’s better than Steve following me’.”

Artist Jim Horan’s “Face” caricature depicts reporter Steve writing in his spiral notebook. He is flanked by the World-Herald Building on one side and Warren Buffett on the other. There is a trail of newspapers headlining some of Steve’s big stories. Also in the picture: tennis and golf equipment (Steve’s favorite sports) and various percussion instruments.
In response to the roast, Steve noted the jokes about his age and said: “When you’re 70 you’ve got a great advantage. You’ve managed to skip early-onset dementia and you go right to the real thing.

“This has been a terrific evening. And we really should have a little bit of news. So last night I wrote down when I’m going to retire.”

Steve disappeared for a moment and then returned to hold up a card in front of the video camera with the words: “Maybe Never.”