



Roasters salute a man of many words

By Don Summerside, OPC Communications Committee

Fans of the late comedian Joan Rivers will remember her catchphrase: “Can we talk?”

If the roasters of Steve Martin, the newest “Face on the Barroom Floor,” were looking for a catchphrase, it could have been: “Can he ever talk!”

Martin, the newly retired CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, heard a lot about his chatty personality while being installed March 22 as the OPC’s 156th “Face.”

As roaster Susan Courtney, Blue Cross executive vice president, put it: “Steve really likes to talk, REALLY likes to talk.”

And from David Scott, co-founder of Tetrad Property Group: “You say, ‘Hello, Steve,’ and that is the last word you’re going to get in before you walk away.”

Terry Kroeger, publisher of the *Omaha World-Herald*, said that when Martin played football at Washburn University, he was known as “the guy who couldn’t stop talking in the huddle. He set a single-season conference record for causing delay-of-game penalties.”

Emcee Mary Maxwell pointed to Martin’s willingness to expound on about any subject: “The first time I met him at a Blue Cross and Blue Shield function, I asked him what time the meeting would begin. He said: ‘Did you know that Aristotle defined time as the measure of motion?’ He then went on to improvise a 10-minute tutorial on how grandfather clocks worked. I wasn’t just impressed. I was struck dumb. I hid in the ladies’ restroom until I was sure he had moved on.”

Karen Aman, vice chair of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield board of directors, recalled that she was part of the CEO search committee back in 2002. “During the interview, we asked Steve: ‘What do you anticipate as hiring pay?’ His response: ‘Pay me what you think I’m worth.’ Well, we learned our lesson on that one.”

Martin’s fondness for single malt whisky and other things Scotch also was noted by the roasters. Maxwell said, “Steve comes to us tonight already familiar with a barroom floor, having hosted several ‘Burns Nights’ at the Dundee Dell, which may have ended badly. At least tonight he’s face up.”

Martin’s “Face on the Barroom Floor,” created by artist Jim Horan, depicts Steve holding the Blue Cross emblem in his right hand and the Blue Shield emblem in his left hand. To represent the thousands of Blue Cross customers. Horan inserted about 200 people into the background of the caricature. At the front of the drawing is a cross section of health providers and the people they serve. Also pictured are the Blue Cross headquarters and the Les Bruning sculpture in front of the building.

After all the jokes about Martin’s speaking style, the audience might have anticipated a lengthy rebuttal to the roasters, particularly when Steve began his remarks with “Get comfortable.” However, he then promised to “surprise you with my brevity,” and he delivered, concluding with: “I’m humbled that you came. Thanks to all of you . . . Enjoy taking a walk on my face.”

Artist Jim Horan's Description of the "Face":

Steve Martin – president and CEO, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska

Steve is holding the Blue Cross emblem in his right hand and the Blue Shield emblem in his left hand.

Of course, I had to have a little fun with these emblems, so I made the little guy inside the circle at the top of the cross look like the Pillsbury Doughboy, and the snake on the shield....well, he looks like he's having some reflux issues....like he might have bit himself.

Obviously, Blue Cross and Blue Shield are in the business of taking care of people. That's what insurance companies do.

So, I've drawn hundreds of people in the background behind Steve's Face. They represent the hundreds of thousands of people who have been taken care of by Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

In the front row of this mass of people I put a cross section of health providers and the people they help. So, there's a doctor, a young man, a mother holding her baby, a surgeon wearing a mask and rubber gloves, a nurse, a cardiac patient with an X-ray of his heart, a pharmacist, and a very healthy looking Nebraska football player.

Behind all these satisfied policyholders is the beautiful home office – the Blue Cross Centre. Towering above the crowd, I've drawn the wonderful sculpture designed by the artist, Les Bruning.

The sculpture seems to have a slight smile on its face. I think it must be pleased that Blue Cross and Blue Shield is finally getting someone's face on the barroom floor at the Omaha Press Club.

So there you have it, that's my rendering of Steve Martin, the 156th Face on the Barroom Floor.