From junior high to barroom floor, Warrens have long history of leadership, service

April 13 Face event for Aileen and Thomas Warren brings in large crowd for Press Club

By Don Summerside, Omaha Press Club

From the king and queen of Horace Mann Junior High to the “Face on the Barroom Floor.” Those are titles that bookend the long history of professional leadership and community service by Thomas and Aileen Warren.
Thomas has been president and CEO of the Urban League of Nebraska since retiring as Omaha police chief 11 years ago. Aileen is assistant vice chancellor for business and finance and director of human resources at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

The two, married for 34 years, were saluted and roasted as Face No. 160 on April 13 before a full house of friends and admirers at the Omaha Press Club. The Warrens are the first African American couple to be recognized as a Face on the Barroom Floor.

Emceeing the festivities was Brenda Council (Face No. 62 in 1995), sister of Thomas Warren and a sharp roaster as well.

As Council put it, Aileen and Thomas, a couple since those junior high days, have succeeded in their "mixed marriage. She's a North High Viking; he's a Tech High Trojan."

Brother Thomas, Council noted, is the youngest of the four Warren children. "Mom was suspected of having a tumor before her pregnancy was correctly diagnosed," Council said. "So we called him Tommy the Tumor when we were kids."

The grown-up Thomas? "He's so tight his shoes squeak," Council said. ("I call it being fiscally responsible," Thomas retorted. "I'm frugal.")

Leading off the roasters was Douglas County Treasurer John Ewing, a Horace Mann classmate of Thomas and Aileen. "I've known Tommy since we were 6 years, and I've known Aileen since junior high."

At Horace Mann (now King Science Center), the three were competitors for top geography student in the ninth grade, and Ewing said he finished No. 1. However, Thomas and Aileen might declare themselves the long-term winners.

As Ewing later added, "Tom and Aileen started studying together to try and beat me in geography and eventually started dating, so I'm actually responsible for them getting married."

Thomas Warren's mannerisms and habits seemed to make him the easiest target of the two-pronged roast.

Roaster Jason Hansen, senior vice president at American National Bank, has been a Warren friend and close observer during his service on the Urban League board. Hansen drew laughs with his description of the Thomas Warren scowl and the Warren "awkward smile."

Roaster Ivan Gilreath, CEO of Boys and Girls Clubs of the Midlands, had a dart or two for Aileen Warren. "She's a sweetheart, but she hates to be hugged." (Not so, replied Aileen. "I'm not against hugging; I'm against hugging you!")
Jessica (Jay) Warren-Teamer, one of the Warrens’ three children, anchored the lineup of roasters with jokes about her parents’ reluctance to abandon old technology (“No CD player in the new car was a big disappointment”) and her mother’s sleeping habits (“in bed by 8!”).

The “Face on the Barroom Floor,” created by artist Jim Horan, depicts Aileen Warren in running shoes, a nod to her jogging workouts and marathon experiences. Pictured with Aileen, UNMC human resources director, are the “resources” – doctors, nurses and other employees.

As Urban League CEO, Thomas Warren is pictured in his customary white shirt while holding a police shield from his previous career. Behind him is a Morningside College Mustang, his alma mater, and Thomas running for a touchdown in his No. 22 jersey.

And the last words from the honorees?

Thomas Warren: “You guys went easy on my wife.”

Aileen Warren: “We love Omaha.”

**AILEEN & THOMAS WARREN – FACE DESCRIPTION BY ARTIST JIM HORAN**

Aileen is holding some UNMC papers dealing with her job as director of human resources. She is very well dressed, but her footwear is a little different – red Nike running shoes. The shoes and the Chicago Marathon poster in the background are a reflection of Aileen’s devotion to running.

Behind Aileen are some of UNMC’s human resources – doctors, nurses, orderlies – and, yes, some fun-loving disorderlies.

As president and CEO of the Urban League of Nebraska, Thomas is very well dressed. He is holding a large chief of police shield from the Omaha Police Department, representing the four years he served as police chief.

Behind him is a Morningside College Mustang – his college alma mater. I show Thomas heading for a touchdown wearing his No. 22 jersey.

So that’s my rendition of Aileen and Thomas Warren – one of the great couples that make Omaha such a special place – and our newest Faces on the Barroom Floor.