A Message From the Executive Director

T he pandemic has affected us all in many ways. The Omaha Press Club, like many restaurants, has been adversely affected. First National Bank of Omaha closed the building on March 18 except for essential personnel, with no reopening date determined.

The OPC had no choice but to close. I personally filed for unemployment for club staff (a mass furlough) immediately. Everyone was nervous at first, but, because of the timeliness of the filing, all received support within a few weeks, which also included the government stimulus.

Initially after the club closing, Christine and I continued to work from our home office, and occasionally at the club. We were busier than ever, transitioning the 1970s-era ACES software to a combination of bookkeeping software that includes QuickBooks online, Toast for our Point of Sale (POS) software, and finally Cohesion, which ties the two together. This was a project that had been in the works for more than a year and was at the final stage. Many final pieces had to be completed, including the audit of almost 1,400 member accounts.

Once we finally did get to a point of creating statements, we had to learn how to print the statements all in one print job. We had previously given notice to members that the club was transitioning to email monthly statements and newsletters. For the April statement we had predetermined that the club would both print and mail the statement and newsletter. This was our biggest mailing in 20 years and was at the final stage. Many final pieces had to be completed, including the audit of almost 1,400 member accounts.

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Former ‘Face,’ Eric Crouch, named to College Football Hall of Fame

By Tom O’Connor
Communications Committee

Eric Crouch, who was honored by the Omaha Press Club in 2005 as the 102nd “Face on the Barroom Floor,” was among 17 All-American players and two coaches who were selected to the 2020 College Football Hall of Fame class on March 18.

The class will be officially inducted during the National Football Foundation Annual Awards Dinner on Dec. 8 in New York.

Crouch is one of four athletes with Nebraska ties who went on to immortality during the National Football Foundation Hall of Fame’s recognition. Crouch won the Heisman in 2001. The other “Face” honorees and the year they won the Heisman were: Mike Rozier (1983), Johnny Rodgers (1972) and the late Nile Kinnick (1939).

Rozier and Crouch were present for the “Face” event, while Rozier sent a taped message. All three played for the University of Nebraska. Kinnick played for the University of Iowa and attended Omaha Benson High School. He was killed in action during World War II.

With four honorees to toast, the “Face” ceremony went into overtime (three hours) in front of a large turnout.

The roasters included:
• Retired Omaha Northwest High School Principal Jack Hallstrom, who provided a tribute to Kinnick;
• Former Nebraska sports information director Don (The Fat Fox) Bryant, who roasted Rodgers. Bryant was “Face” No. 25 in 1983; and
• Former KETV sports anchor John Schuetz, who remembered Crouch’s stint as an analyst for KETV.

Hallstrom and Bryant are now deceased.

Crouch finished as the third quarterback in NCAA history to rush for 3,000 yards and pass for 4,000 yards during his career. In 2001, Crouch also won the Walter Camp Player of the Year, the Davey O’Brien Award, and the Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year Award. He led the Huskers to the national championship game, which they lost to Miami.

Other headliners in this year’s Hall of Fame class were Eric Dickerson and Steve McNair. A Pro Football Hall of Famer, Dickerson was leader of the “Pony Express” at Southern Methodist University from 1979 to 1982. McNair, who died in 2009 at the age of 36, made his name as “Air McNair.” He was the first player from Alcorn State to enter the College Football Hall of Fame.

Others in the 2020 Hall of Fame class include: LSU defensive tackle Glenn Dorsey, Alabama defensive end E.J. Junior, Georgia defensive end David Pollack, Florida offensive tackle Lomas Brown, Ohio State running back Keith Byars, Michigan offensive tackle Jumbo Elliott, Washington State kicker Jason Hanson, Maryland linebacker E.J. Henderson, UCLA quarterback Cade McNown, Oklahoma State defensive tackle Leslie O’Neal, Virginia defensive back Anthony Poindexter, Minnesota defensive end Bob Stein, Colorado receiver Michael Westbrook, Houston receiver Elmo Wright, and former coaches Dick Sheridan (Furman/North Carolina State) and Andy Talley (Villanova).

The OPC remembers: Galen Lillethorup, 88

Retired television and advertising executive Galen Lillethorup, a longtime Omaha Press Club member, died April 16 at age 88.

Lillethorup graduated from Omaha North High School in 1948, served in the Air Force during the Korean War and earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism at then- Omaha University in 1956.

His TV career began at KMTV Channel 3, where he spent three years in the news department, then spent several years writing commercials and creating campaign strategies for KMTV’s advertising department.

In 1964, Lillethorup left KMTV for Bozell and Jacobs advertising agency, where he became vice president/creative director and went on to lead the Los Angeles location for several years. One of his most notable accounts was “Mutual of Omaha’s Wild Kingdom,” where he traveled the world with hosts Marlin Perkins and Jim Fowler. Galen also worked on TV commercials for Union Pacific Railroad, Winnebago Motorhomes, and Old Home Bread.

For Old Home Bread, Galen teamed up with friend Bill Fries to co-write commercials featuring a character Fries created named C.W. McCall. The series of commercials won national awards and helped launch Fries’ recording career as C.W. McCall.

In 1980, Lillethorup began an advertising firm with Nellie Sudavidicous MacCallum, an art director from Bozell and Jacobs. Galen & Nellie, Inc. landed clients including Northwestern Bell Telephone Company, Opera Omaha, Vise-Grip Tools, and Diamond Scientific. In 1989, Lillethorup started a smaller company, Galen Group, and continued working for a select list of clients until his retirement in 1996.

Lillethorup was a flying enthusiast and owned a plane for more than 30 years. In his later years, Galen renewed his model airplane hobby and also enjoyed going to lunch once or twice a week with old friends from the Press Club.

One of his popular sayings was: “I’ve been in assisted living for 63 years!” He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Marcene, daughter Kerri, son Tim and wife Krisha, and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
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**Minutes and late fees are waived during closing**

Quarterly minimums and late fees are being waived while the Omaha Press Club continues to be closed.

If you have any questions about your bill, the best way to reach us is via email. Please email opcbusinessoffice@gmail.com.

Speaking of emails, we would appreciate it if you would make sure the email address we have for you is correct. You can submit your email using this form: bit.ly/OPCEmail.

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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.