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A Message From the Executive Director

No April events, but we look forward to reopening

By Steve Villamonte
OPC Executive Director

In accordance with the directive by the Douglas County Health Department to limit gatherings to 10 people or less, we made the decision to close the Press Club temporarily — but indefinitely — last month.

We considered converting to takeout and delivery like many other restaurants; however, only essential personnel are in the First National Bank building and tower at this time, so there was not a sufficient customer base to draw on to make it a viable option.

In the meantime, we are taking this opportunity to complete the transition from our legacy software (1970s-era Aces software) to QuickBooks Online, as I have mentioned in previous columns.

Christine and I are working from our home office to accomplish this. The process includes auditing every existing member account and establishing a new account in

QuickBooks. We are progressing slowly, but getting faster with this process every day.

There is not a bright side to this crisis, but as this accounting transition process is very tedious and time-consuming, it's important to be able to focus on the task. Having the time to devote to this important task has been beneficial.

We are still planning on printing and mailing statements for the time being (the new software allows us to email statements automatically, leading to time and cost savings), but we will be testing email statements in April, so watch for that.

Phone calls to the Press Club are forwarded to our home office, but the best way to reach us is via email. If you have questions for our business office, please email opcbusinessoffice@gmail.com.

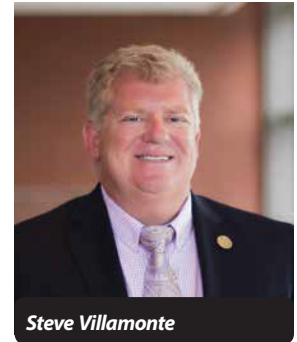
Many people have inquired about our amazing staff and how they are doing during this difficult time. I have helped the staff apply for unemployment benefits during this temporary layoff and they will be benefiting

from the stimulus assistance like many in the restaurant industry. We — and they — appreciate your thoughts and well wishes. I have never seen anything like this in all my years in the hospitality industry.

Finally, all of our April events have been postponed, but we are hopeful to reschedule them as soon as we get the go-ahead that we can reopen. We will update the website with this information as well as send out emails.

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/OPCE-mail.

Thank you again for your support of the Omaha Press Club, and stay safe and healthy.



Steve Villamonte

A Message From the President

Empty chairs at empty tables

By Tom Shatel
OPC President

This is one heck of a year to be president of the Omaha Press Club.

I had a lot of plans for 2020. Being stuck in my home was not among them. You are probably reading this from your own house.

These are unprecedented times we live in. As I write this, the Press Club sits empty, as do restaurants, bars and stores all across



Tom Shatel

Omaha. The images that come across our TV every night are unbelievable.

Our lives are on hold. And so, too, is the Press Club.

The club was off to a rousing start when the virus hit in early March. It was going to be a bigger spring. A "Face" event with Othello Meadows in late March. And our inaugural First Amendment Night, featuring Sen. Chuck Hagel, on April 18.

Both events have been postponed indefinitely, as have all OPC events. They will be rescheduled, hopefully for this year. That's the plan.

For now, Steve and Christine Villamonte are the club. In a note to the OPC Board, Steve indicated he had filed for a temporary staff layoff. Note the word "temporary."

Steve and Christine are the pillars of the club. Their work ethic and passion for the

club are incredible. They work thankless hours and are personally transitioning the club's accounts to a new software to make future billing easier.

God bless 'em. Even while quarantined at home for a week, they continued to do the club's work.

The next time you see them, shake their hand and thank them. Or, perhaps a fist bump will be the new rules of future greetings.

As for the board, we still plan on meeting monthly via conference call. I'm going to have to find my own chili.

We will see you soon. Keep in touch with omahapressclub.com and this newsletter for updates on the club's reopening and rescheduled events.

Until then, stay safe.

Chuck Roberts was honored as a “Face on the Barroom Floor” in 2004 and was inducted into the OPC Hall of Fame in 2015.

Former ‘Face’ Roberts got stormy start in Omaha

By Sherry Bale
Communications Committee

You could say Chuck Roberts has very specific memories of the Omaha Press Club, particularly his first day in Omaha in 1975, which was also his first time at the venue.

“KMTV’s news director Mark Gautier and special correspondent Ninette Beaver treated me to my first Omaha meal to discuss a new, local Today show anchor insert position.” And although he had been offered a weekend anchor job in Dallas at the same time, Omaha felt like a better fit. “Everybody at the Press Club was great, and Mark and Ninette said they had big plans for me.”

That may have been an understatement. The meal at the Press Club was on the same day the May 6 tornado hit the city—a storm that killed three people and injured 130. Suddenly, the 99th “Face on the Barroom Floor” inductee (December 2004) and his colleagues were launched into 14-hour days to cover the crisis.

“We were getting victims’ stories, attending multiple, mayoral update news conferences, doing three stand-ups a day and gathering news for NBC. It was all-consuming and baptism by fire.”

As Roberts rose to KMTV’s weekday evening news anchor job, other Omaha stories he covered that stand out in his mind include the rise of Ed Zorinsky from Omaha mayor to U.S. senator; being in the middle of major floods along the Missouri River; the hoopla of the 1976 Bicentennial; the decline and fall of the Omaha Stockyards; and the exciting growth of the Old Market as a major commercial catalyst for the city.

After five “great years” in Omaha, Ted Turner and his Turner Broadcasting Company in Atlanta came calling for Roberts to be part of a new, all-news

cable channel, CNN2, which was eventually launched as Headline News. “I was told Ted ‘fancied’ me, and although they said they probably couldn’t match my salary or give me a contract, they wanted to know if I’d like to take the chance.”



Roberts, of course, took the job and as they say, the rest was history. He went on to not only appear on Headline News, but also on CNN, reporting stories such as the Challenger space shuttle explosion (“that hit everyone really hard”) and 9/11. “I looked across at my producer as

that second plane hit the Twin Towers, and he said, ‘This is the biggest story since the Kennedy assassination.’”

With 30 years, Roberts was (and still is) the longest-serving anchor on the CNN networks. After he left cable, he taught mostly in China for his alma mater, the Missouri School of Journalism, to help start a newscast from scratch. He then went on to work five years as a street reporter and anchor at an all-news radio station in Atlanta, calling the experience “very gratifying.”

While the longtime Atlantan seems to have done it all, Roberts thinks Omaha has “tremendous news standards,” and “that there’s nothing like the Omaha Press Club in the country. It serves so many functions. Where else can you run down to City Hall to speak with the mayor and then the next minute at the club, run into the chairman of the Omaha National Bank or Lee Terry or Mike Boyle? That’s where I got a lot of my better stories. And those conversations weren’t always at the bar.”

Forum set in May if club reopens

Religious persecution and warring factions have been a fact of life in Iraq for decades.

If the nationwide coronavirus health crisis has abated and conditions permit the reopening of the Press Club, a May 21 Noon Education Forum will present a brilliant and dynamic speaker who has seen the situation in the Kurdistan region of Iraq first-hand for several years.

Tamara Zuñiga-Brown has taught, volunteered and assisted the Chaldean Catholic Church of the East in establishing the English Language Preparatory Department at Catholic University in

Erbil, Iraq.

Tamara was raised and educated abroad in a bilingual, multicultural diplomatic family whose combined professional foreign relations experience totals over 80 years. She has earned a Master’s in Education degree from the University of Nevada at Reno and has over 25 years’ experience in the field of international student education.

The OPC Forum is scheduled to run from noon to 1 p.m., with lunch service beginning at 11:30 a.m. The cost is \$17, and non-OPC members are welcome.

OPC Insider with Roger Humphries

OPC president-elect



Roger Humphries

Age: 68.

Place of employment: Currently semi-retired. Have a photography business, Roger Humphries Photography www.rogerhumphriesphotography.com Prior to that I was the customer relations coordinator for the U.S. Postal Service where I handled public relations. I dealt with the media, organized events and handled customer issues.

OPC background: I became a member in 1993.

Favorite book: No favorite book. However, my favorite author is John Grisham.

Favorite movie: "Harold and Maude." Old classic . . . very dark humor, but it does have Ruth Gordon as one of the stars. She was a hoot.

Favorite career memory: Being promoted to customer relations coordinator, a new position created through a reorganization of the Postal Service in 1993. This position came about by combining two positions: Consumer Affairs and Communications. I was selected to this position by the new postmaster for Omaha, Carl Schroeder. It not only changed my career path; it was the foundation for my being involved in the Omaha community. This included serving on many boards, through city appointments and various nonprofits.

Brush with fame: Gerald Ford when he came to Omaha in 1977 for the dedication of the Ford Birthsite and Gardens. I was authorized to create a special postal cancella-

tion to commemorate the event and got to present it to the former president. I used a Nixon postage stamp on the card. It seemed fitting as Ford had pardoned him in 1974.

Favorite famous person you met: Actor David McCallum. Very down to earth. He asked me about my accent, and I said I had been born and raised in Kentucky. He then smiled and broke out in song . . . "My Old Kentucky Home."

About your family: I am divorced with two grown children. Christopher works for First National Bank as a recruiter (and is thus an OPC member) and my daughter, Jillian, works for Frost Media Group; doing videography and more (and is also an OPC member). A Press Club Show nugget: Both of my children were in several OPC Shows, with Jillian being the youngest to ever have a speaking part. She was 7.

Hobbies: Singing -- I sing lead with the Heartland Harmonizers Barbershop Chorus. UNO Hockey -- I serve on the UNO Hockey Blue Line Board and am the immediate past president. And, of course, photography.

Favorite Dish at OPC: Prime rib with the Thunderbird salad.

Favorite memory at OPC: It is a toss-up: Daughter Jillian's college graduation party or my own retirement party. However, meeting Cathy Hughes at her "Face on the Floor" event was awesome.

Why should people visit/become a member of OPC: Can't beat the view, food and, of course, the service. I enjoy that you are always greeted in a pleasant manner; by name and knowing what you want to drink even before you sit down. Also, you never know when you will see a famous person having a drink or dinner at the club.

Favorite vacation spot: Wherever my travels take me.

Favorite social media app: Facebook

Current board memberships: Downtown YMCA, Downtown Omaha Inc (immediate past president), Omaha Press Club (president-elect and chairman of the Face on the Floor Committee, UNO Hockey Blue Line Club, National Association of Postal Supervisors/Branch 10 (secretary and legislative chair).

OPC debate cancelled

The scheduled April 16 debate by the three Democratic candidates for Congress in the 2nd Congressional District has been cancelled because of the coronavirus crisis.

Ann Ashford, Kara Eastman and Gladys Harrison were to debate at the Press Club prior to the May 12 primary election. The winner will face Republican Congressman Don Bacon in the November general election.

Conditions permitting, a debate is tentatively planned in October between Bacon and the Democrat who wins the upcoming primary.

The OPC remembers: Former 'Face' Chuck Trimble, 84

Charles "Chuck" Trimble – who founded the American Indian Press Association, directed the National Congress of American Indians and was an OPC "Face on the Barroom Floor" – died March 2 in Omaha at age 84.

The Oglala Lakota businessman and journalist was born on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation. He graduated from the University of South Dakota, served in the U.S. Army and later earned a master's in journalism at the University of Colorado.

Trimble founded the American Indian Press Association in 1969. He was executive director of the National Congress of American Indians from 1972-78.

Trimble was honored by the Press Club as its 69th "Face" in June of 1997. He also was a member of the South Dakota Hall of Fame.

He is survived by his wife, Anne, and daughter, Kaiti Fenz-Trimble.

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Canceled

2nd Congressional District
Democratic primary debate
(Was scheduled April 16)

Postponed

First Amendment Night
(Was scheduled April 18)

Scholarship and Awards Dinner
(Was scheduled April 24;
new fall date to be determined)

Still Scheduled

Thursday, May 21

Noon Education Forum
Education, religion
and war in Iraq
Noon to 1 p.m.
Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m.
Open to the public – cost \$17

Saturday, June 6

Hall of Fame Dinner
5:30 p.m. non-host social
6 p.m. dinner and awards
\$50 OPC members, \$60 non-members

Thursday, June 18

Noon Education Forum
Omaha Bee Club
Noon to 1 p.m.
Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m.
Open to the public – cost \$17

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.

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

**Temporarily
Closed**



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Submissions for the May
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