



Dr. Gold honored with Face on the Barroom Floor

By Karen Burbach, UNMC strategic communications

The Omaha Press Club honored UNMC Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD, on April 28 with its most prestigious honor — the Face on the Barroom Floor.

During the event, filled with good-natured jabs and serious accolades, Dr. Gold became the 168th Face on the Barroom Floor, joining high-profile notables such as Warren Buffett, Gerald Ford, Bob Gibson, Johnny Carson and Tom Osborne.

Roasts were given by University of Nebraska Athletic Director Trev Alberts; Nebraska Medicine CEO Jim Linder, MD; former UNMC HR director Aileen Warren, now president and CEO of ICAN; UNMC Strategic Communications videographer Rich Watson; and Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert. Remarks by Omaha philanthropist and UNMC supporter Mike Yanney were read in absentia.

Roasters poked fun at Dr. Gold's 2:30 a.m. emails that say: "If you're up, just wanted to let you know..." and noted how he likes coffee (light and sweet), drives an electric BMW, has a large ballcap collection and enjoys Hy-Vee pizza.

Attendees learned that Dr. Gold, who also serves as provost and executive vice president of the University of Nebraska System and board chair of Nebraska Medicine, is a BBQ rib expert who collects and uses fountain pens to address letters in calligraphy with purple ink. And, they said, when he's not at UNMC or Varner Hall, he's likely at an airport traveling to and from Washington, D.C., for business or to see family in New York and Chicago.

It's no surprise that his most prized title — the roasters acknowledged he's had many and often at the same time — is grandpa. But, "one-take Jeff," as he's known by campus videographers, isn't shy in front of the camera and has appeared in more than 700 UNMC videos and nearly 130 "Rural Health Matters" segments for RFD-TV.

Beyond the jabs, roasters praised Dr. Gold's extraordinary work ethic, intelligence, commitment to UNMC and the state of Nebraska and ability to inspire those around him.

In developing the Face on the Barroom Floor caricature, artist Jeff Koterba described Dr. Gold as an accomplished "renaissance doctor." His caricature shows Dr. Gold with a New York City skyline to illustrate both where he's from and still has roots. A baseball — yes, he's a Yankees fan — is seen soaring from the Big Apple toward the Midwest, where a caduceus is growing in the cornfields of Nebraska. His passion for rural health and work with RFD-TV is reflected with the RFD-TV logo on a Nebraska sunset.

Also, in the caricature, is Dr. Gold's wife, Robin, an ophthalmologist. She stands at his side and near a painting that includes an "I HEART my family," which not only depicts his love of family but also his time as a heart surgeon and his love for collecting art.

Drawn among the New York skyscrapers is a towering stack of books and articles he's authored and a conductor who looks like Andre Previn, a friend of Dr. Gold's and a reflection of Dr. Gold's connection to the arts. Back in Nebraska, the UNO bell tower represents his time as UNO chancellor, and the UNMC logo signifies his tenure at UNMC.

During his brief rebuttal, Dr. Gold thanked the crowd and artist and then shared that, next to family, "the second-best decision I made in my life was coming to Nebraska.

"This is a unique community with remarkable people," Dr. Gold said, and "if you dream big you can make things happen."

Big things, he said, happened shortly after his arrival to UNMC in February 2014. That September, the U.S. State Department asked for the medical center's assistance in caring for an American doctor who had tested positive for the Ebola virus while working in West Africa. Rick Sacra, MD, arrived at the medical center for treatment on Sept. 5, 2014 – the same day the chancellor celebrated his investiture as the eighth chancellor of UNMC.

It was the only fall weekend in Nebraska history, Dr. Gold joked, that there “was more media attention in Omaha than in Lincoln.”

UNMC connections

Among the past Faces on the Barroom Floor with connections to UNMC are:

- Chancellor Emeritus Harold M. Maurer, MD, and his wife, Beverly (Face No. 111, 2007);
- Renowned oncologist James Armitage, MD(No. 86, 2002);
- Public relations guru Tom O'Connor (No. 148, 2016); and
- Human resource leader Aileen Warren and her husband, Thomas Warren (No. 160, 2019).

The numerous donors and supporters honored include:

- Mike Yanney (No. 166, 2021);
- Ruth and Bill Scott (No. 150, 2016);
- Chuck and Margre Durham (No. 87, 2002);
- Walter and Suzanne Scott (No. 95, 2005); and
- C.L. Werner (No. 122, 2009).