The late Rudy Smith was known as the Omaha World-Herald’s first Black employee and long-time photojournalist. But family, friends and colleagues remembered him for much more during the Omaha Press Club Foundation’s Rudy Smith Scholarship campaign kickoff event on Nov. 15.

In his opening remarks, Foundation President Henry Cordes described his late colleague as “a great gentleman and true journalist.” He thanked Viv and John Ewing for agreeing to be the honorary co-chairs of the scholarship campaign, which to date has raised about $15,000, including donations of $1,200 on “Giving Tuesday.”

Also on the agenda is the election of 2023 club officers, including:
- **President:** Angella Arndt, Freelance Writer
- **President-Elect:** Dr. Robert Meyers, Retired
- **Treasurer:** Dale Ervin, First National Bank
- **Secretary:** Jeremy Maskel, Omaha Public Schools

Board members continuing their terms are Allen Beermann, Woody Bradford, Bridget (Weide) Brooks, Tom Shatel, and Taina Evans.

For those who wish to vote but are unable to attend the meeting, a proxy ballot is on page 5. Please mail the ballot to the Press Club or email it to opcchristine@gmail.com.

**Rudy Smith Scholarship campaign kicks off**

By Elaine Allen
Communications Committee

The late Rudy Smith was known as the Omaha World-Herald’s first Black employee and long-time photojournalist. But family, friends and colleagues remembered him for much more during the Omaha Press Club Foundation’s Rudy Smith Scholarship campaign kickoff event on Nov. 15.

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“We’re delighted to be honorary chairs of this campaign and help his legacy for years and years to come,” Dr. Viv Ewing told event attendees. Douglas Country Treasurer John Ewing said Rudy Smith “modeled consistent Christian behavior. He’s the type of person whose legacy should be honored.”

Rudy Smith Jr. told a few stories about his father’s parenting style. He said it was amazing how big an impact his father had during his career. As a UNO student, his father protested against the segregation of Peony Park, for better treatment of Black athletes at UNO and for the establishment of UNO’s Black Studies program.

former City Council member Brenda Council recounted Rudy being on the front lines of protests when he went downtown to picket the Omaha World-Herald because it had not hired any Black people. “A man came out of the building and offered Rudy a job and he was there for 45 years!”

Council said the Rudy Smith Scholarship “will open doors for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) students” in Omaha.

Checks made payable to the Omaha Press Club Foundation can be mailed to:

**Omaha Press Club Foundation**
**P.O. Box 4842**
**Omaha, Nebraska 68104**

You may also donate online at opcfscholarships.org or send an email to opcscholar@yahoo.com for more information.

**OPC will close for a week in January**

The Omaha Press Club will be closed from Jan. 15 through Jan. 22 for the staff’s winter break.

In addition, the club will close during the holiday weekends of Dec. 24-26 (Saturday-Monday) and Jan. 1-2 (Sunday-Monday).

Meanwhile, don’t forget two of the OPC signature and always popular events this month: the Santa Brunch on Sunday, Dec. 18, and the New Year’s Eve Buffet on Saturday, Dec. 31. Check the menu details on page 5 and reserve your table at 402-345-8008.
Face is saluted, hair is singed in fun-filled Meadows roast

By Anne Walsh
Communications Committee

It was a night 2½ years in the making, delayed by COVID-19 and aligning prominent roasters traveling from Atlanta, Boston and Charlotte. An excited crowd filled the club Nov. 3 to honor the 170th Face on the Barroom Floor, Othello Meadows III, an Omaha legend who improves the community by helping people most in need.

Accolades focused on Meadows’ hair and athletic prowess. “He waited 46 years to have a haircut like Mr. T,” observed Justin Miller, an attorney for Morgan and Morgan, Atlanta. “I do not like your new haircut; get a new style immediately. And your jump shot is broke.”

Meadows graduated from Creighton Prep High School in 1994 and was a star player on the Class A state champion basketball team. He accepted a full-ride scholarship to play NCAA Division I basketball at East Carolina Central University, where he was a three-year starter. Meadows earned a BA in psychology from ECU, then received his law degree from North Carolina Central University School of Law in Durham.

Miller said he met Meadows studying for the bar exam, which “they both passed the first time because they were smart.” Practicing law with Meadows in Atlanta after Meadows started his own law firm there, Miller said he took the native Nebraskan under his wing.

“I knew if he was going to survive in Atlanta, I’d have to save him. He was green as Huckleberry Finn, as green as Kermit the Frog. He’s here today because of me.”

Also claiming bragging rights was “famous as he is handsome” emcee Damon Nash, founder, DNash, LLC of Charlotte, who was asked by Meadows 20 years ago in Raleigh, “Can you tell me how to be cool?”

Commenting on Meadows’ hairstyle, Nigerian-born Ben Ebong said he liked the way his friend’s hair was combed “so the horns don’t come out.”

An Omaha native, Ebong met Meadows at age 14 during a basketball dunk contest that attracted many show-offs. Although Meadows’ mother had described her son as humble, “when he strutted out there with his big head – he had to balance it – he dunked the ball like no one had ever seen before. Othello threw the ball off the wall behind the backboard, it bounced in front of the rim and he dunked it. It was the opposite of humility,” said Ebong, a former professional basketball player; senior group product manager, Intuitive, and founder/president of BEREADY Atlanta, a youth leadership academy.

After proclaiming Miller and Ebong “soft” on their roasts of Meadows, emcee Nash also couldn’t help becoming sentimental about his friend. “I could talk forever about what he means to me and what he means to the people in this room,” Nash said, describing Meadows as “a brother you can lean on and be leaned on. I love you for real.”

The edge returned, however, as Dr. Saida Grundy took the podium. “There are a lot of people in here. I do not understand why you all paid to be here. I am his sister-in-law, which means I did not choose him, and I want to make that clear.”

An assistant professor of sociology, African-American studies, and women’s and gender studies at Boston University, Dr. Grundy lamented, “Nothing about Othello is worth the inconvenience of getting here. Every time I fly out, I have to connect in Chicago, because Boston doesn’t offer direct flights to red states.”

Unveiling Meadows’ portrait, Omaha artist Jeff Koterba described how he integrated the honoree’s characteristics: “There’s upward movement and hope, and positive energy.” Koterba said the “Face” drawing includes a basketball representing the state championship and time at ECU; a tool belt depicting Meadows’ building of the community; a gavel denoting his law degree and legal practice in Atlanta; and other elements representing his professional career after returning to Omaha:

• From 2009-2011, executive director of Omaha Workforce Collaborative, a nonprofit designed to restructure the community’s workforce development efforts.

• From 2011-2020, president/CEO of Seventy-Five North Revitalization Corp., an Omaha-based community development organization.

• In 2020, managing director-portfolio strategy and management for Blue Meridian Partners, a pioneering philanthropic model for finding and funding scalable solutions to problems limiting economic and social mobility for America’s young people and families in poverty. The five investment portfolios have pooled more than $3 billion to invest in strategies dismantling structural inequities that have long excluded people of color from power and opportunity.

• Owner and operator of The Meadows Group, a neighborhood redevelopment consulting firm, and board member of several Omaha-area organizations.

Continue on Page 3
Linda Beermann of Lincoln dead at 76

Linda R. Beermann of Lincoln, a path-breaking television weather reporter and newscaster and community volunteer, died at home Nov. 25 at age 76.

Linda was born in Nebraska City to Walter and Rosalin Dierking on Oct. 13, 1946. After graduating from Nebraska City High School, she attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she majored in broadcast journalism and graduated as a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

Linda worked as a reporter for KMTV in Omaha before joining Lincoln’s KOLN/KGIN-TV in 1968 as a reporter and photographer. She became the weekend weather newscaster in 1970 in addition to continuing to work as a reporter and news assignment editor.

She married Allen J. Beermann, who was then serving his first term as Nebraska’s secretary of state, on May 23, 1971.

Linda continued her broadcasting career and in 1979 became the station’s full-time evening weather newscaster, the first woman in the country to hold such a position at a local television station. She resigned in 1986 to spend more time with her pre-school sons, Matthew and Jay, and to join Allen in his political and civic activities.

The couple traveled to more than 50 countries and hosted numerous international visitors during Allen’s years as secretary of state and his subsequent service as executive director of the Nebraska Press Association. Allen is a member of the Nebraska Journalism Hall of Fame and an Omaha Press Club board member.

In addition to her political involvement with Allen, Linda also co-chaired the centennial celebration of Arbor Day, co- emceed two governors’ inaugural balls and was involved with the Nebraska Mothers Association’s Mother of the Year program, among other activities.

In addition to her husband of 51 years and their two sons, Linda is survived by brother Bill Dierking of Golden, Colorado, and by two grandsons.

Meadows story; continued from page 2

Closing out the evening by asking if anyone had a place for Dr. Grundy to stay, Meadows said it was clear that several themes had emerged during the roast, including “follicle envy.” He then thanked Koterba for drawing the “beautiful representation” of his life; shared his love for family, friends and two children, and remembered family members who have passed, including his cousin Rufus, his father, Othello II, and sister, Nikki.

He led the crowd in a standing ovation for his mother, Felicia, who he said has served as his model in life and epitomizes the words “sacrifice and dedication. She sacrificed all the things she wanted for all the things I needed.”

No one achieves success alone, he said, and he credited a “huge support system,” most of all his wife, Tulani. “She helps me see whatever greatness I might have in me, even when I don’t see it. And she has always pushed me to believe in myself in a way that exceeds what anybody else thinks.”

The OPC remembers:

Wayne Sealy, 74, former ‘Face’ artist

Wayne Sealy, a former Face on the Barroom Floor artist for the Omaha Press Club, died Nov. 7 at the age of 74. Sealy succeeded Jim Horan, the OPC’s original “Face” creator, after Horan stepped down in December 2019.

Born in Dallas, Texas, and raised in Southern California, young Sealy was encouraged to pursue art by an artistic aunt and high school art instructor. Sealy started to pursue an art degree from Woodbury College in Pasadena, Calif. and eventually wound up getting his degree from Bellevue College.

In 1968, he joined the U.S. Air Force, serving eight years, with the last four years of service at Offutt AFB as art editor of the Combat Crew magazine. Sealy was later employed as an advertising illustrator for the Richman Gordman Stores. Over the years he had many freelance jobs as a cartoon portrait artist at county fairs, weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, birthday parties, and post proms.

When not working as an artist, Sealy ran the Mystery Manor at 718 N.18th St., just north of Creighton University’s soccer field. Wayne discovered an old, rundown, three-story brick duplex that was up for sale. He bought the house and went to work. Curious and talented friends began to join in and created room after room, a house that was filled with thrills and chills. The project came to life and was named Mystery Manor. He operated this project for more than 38 years.

Sealy’s artistic caricatures for the Press Club included Tom Shatel, No. 161, Jim and Todd Murphy, No. 163, and Viv and John Ewing No. 164.

Sealy is survived by sons Matt, Mark and Rocky Sealy. He is also survived by three granddaughters, numerous nieces, nephews and a host of other relatives and friends. His Celebration of Life was held Nov. 15 with graveside services held with military honors Nov. 16 at the Omaha National Cemetery.
Governor Ricketts roast full of dignitaries, fun and laughter

By Angella Arndt
Communications Committee

Gov. Pete Ricketts was honored on Nov. 10 as the 171st Face on the Barroom Floor at a dinner and roast in front of a crowd of 200 that included family, friends, colleagues, community leaders, OPC members, and elected officials.

Gary Sadlemyer, Omaha radio icon, KFAB's morning show host, and the 115th Face on the Barroom Floor served as the event's emcee. He thanked the governor for inviting him, saying, "It is great to honor Governor Ricketts."

Scott Cooney, the owner of several health care businesses in Omaha and Lincoln, was the first roaster. Cooney congratulated Ricketts on the honor before saying he didn't understand the big deal. "Face on the Barroom Floor award – I mean, I won this honor three times."

Cooney recognized several members of the governor's team before congratulating him on the "Face" honor and wishing him the best in the future.

Rick Bettger, owner of Omaha Car Care, reminisced about his friendship with Ricketts since they met when Bettger ran for City Council in 2004. He said he and the governor have been through a lot together.

"One thing I can say about the governor is that he has never changed. He is someone who is genuine and has never wavered off his principles. And his friendship has never wavered, which is saying something in this world."

The final roaster was Dan Whitney, also known as Larry the Cable Guy. He first met Ricketts at a Husker game.

"He somehow snuck past my security into my suite. I'm going to be honest; we've pretended to be friends since then." Whitney praised the governor's leadership and thanked him for inviting him to be a roaster.

"I want to live in Nebraska because Nebraska is led by solid, conservative people that have good family values, and Nebraska is a good place to raise kids. I love this state so much, and I'm glad we are being led by people like Pete. Thank you for keeping the state awesome. Git-R-Done."

Roger Humphries, chair of the OPC Face Committee and OPC past president, unveiled the "Face" caricature drawn by Omaha artist Jeff Koterba. Caricature highlights include the governor and his family on a bicycle built for five, a Chicago Cubs jersey, the State Capitol citing tax relief, and three Governor's Cups awards recognizing the administration's commitment to economic growth.

Ricketts took his turn at the podium, thanking his parents, Joe and Marlene Ricketts; his wife, Susanne Shore, and their children. "Anyone involved in politics knows you can't do it if your spouse isn't supportive, and my wife has been tremendously supportive."

He also had some fun teasing emcee Sadlemyer and his three roasters.

Before ending his remarks, the governor recognized the state senators in attendance and thanked his cabinet members and other administration members.

"I'd like to think we've had a lot of success in this administration, but it is only because of the team we have had," Ricketts said. "It is definitely a team effort, and we have a lot of people who work very hard, and I appreciate them so much."

OPC hears FBI’s Omaha chief

Eugene Kowel, the special agent in charge of the FBI’s Omaha Field Office, headlined the Omaha Press Club Noon Forum on Nov. 17. Kowel joined the FBI in 2005 and was assigned to the Joint Terrorism Task Force in the New York Field Office, where he led the criminal and counterterrorism investigations. In 2019, he was named chief of staff and section chief in the Intelligence Branch of the FBI. In the fall of 2020, FBI Director Christopher Way appointed Kowel to head the Omaha Office. Photo by Gary Willis.
**Santa Brunch**

**Sunday, Dec. 18, 2022**
Two Seatings: 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.
Adults $28.50 • Children $16
Bring a new, unwrapped toy to donate to the Salvation Army

**Buffet**
- Steamship Round of Beef
- Baked Ham with Maple Whiskey Sauce
- Chicken Crepes Supreme
- Baked Tilapia Lemon Butter
- Garlic Whipped Potatoes & Gravy
- Seasonal Vegetables
- Build-Your-Own Omelet a la Carte
- Multi-Topping Pancake Bar
- Salad Display, including Thunderbird Salad
- Salmon Chaud Froid & Fresh Fruit
- Fresh-Baked Pastries, Tortes & Cheesecakes
- Chocolate Driscoll Strawberries
- Deep Dish Apple Crisp
- Brandied French Vanilla Ice Cream
- Spiked French Vanilla Eggnog

**OPC New Year’s Eve**

Dec. 31, 2022 • 6 p.m.
$100 Per Person
Tax & Service Fee included

**Buffet**
- Hors d’oeuvres
- Continental Cheese & Fruit Display
- OPC Famous Thunderbird Salad with Sauté Toppings
- Peruvian Clam Chowder
- Prime Rib of Beef with Au Jus & Chantilly
- Chicken Marsala Sautéeéd in a sweet Marsala wine with Mushrooms and Bordelaise
- Blackened Tilapia Topped with a Black Bean & Corn Salsa and Lemon Buerre Blanc
- Dauphine Potatoes & Asparagus Citron

**Dessert Choices**
- Cherries Jubilee, Brownie a la Mode, Blackstone Cheesecake
- Live Music
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Liz Hruska | Legislative Fiscal Office
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(2022-2024)
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Woody Bradford | Houghton Bradford Whitted
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Submissions for the January issue are due on or before December 20.