The future of Journalism is here

By Jon Brooks
Communications Committee

The June Noon Forum assessed the future of journalism in Nebraska. According to Cate Folsom, editor-in-chief of Nebraska Examiner, and Matt Wynn, executive director of the Nebraska Journalism Trust, which operates the Flatwater Free Press and Silicon Prairie News, the future is already here, and it includes nonprofit news organizations supplementing traditional news outlets.

Folsom and Wynn co-presented the forum, taking turns talking about their respective organizations.

Wynn said the nonprofit news movement started in 2009 with the rise of organizations like ProPublica and The Texas Tribune. The Nebraska Journalism Trust was incorporated in April 2021. He says their news organizations are “platform agnostic — (we) run stories on (our) website, social media, and give (them) to everyone who might want to run (them).” He employs six full-time staff members (including two fellows and an operations director) and will be at 13 full-time employees by the end of this summer. The organization has offices in Lincoln and Omaha but says the geographic focus for their employment is “Nebraska, not Omaha or Lincoln.”

The Nebraska Examiner launched in January 2022. Folsom, who had retired from the Omaha World-Herald at the end of 2019, oversees a staff of three full-time reporters and one intern. They have an office in Lincoln (one reporter and one intern) and herself and two reporters in Omaha. The Examiner focuses “mostly on state issues, state government, housing and labor.”

Where are they now: Shane Osborn, Navy hero, was OPC Face in 2003

By Tom O’Connor
Communications Committee

When Navy Lt. Shane Osborn was honored by the Omaha Press Club in 2003 as the 89th Face on the Barroom Floor, he was 28 years old and the youngest person to ever receive the recognition.

Now, 20 years later and following a brief stint in state politics, Osborn has established himself as a successful entrepreneur managing two thriving businesses – one in the energy field and another that helps people recover unclaimed property.

In 2001, Osborn became a national hero as the aircraft and mission commander aboard the U.S. Navy-operated EP-3E reconnaissance plane that was unintentionally struck by a Chinese F-8 fighter jet over international waters in the South China Sea. The pilot of the Chinese aircraft was killed, while Osborn’s plane was severely damaged, losing its nose and suffering major damage to its left wing and two of its four engines. The plane went into an inverted dive for more than two miles before Osborn was able to regain control.

“The plane was so damaged,” Osborn said, “that it was disintegrating.” He told the 23 crew members to prepare to bail out. They initiated an emergency plan to destroy all intelligence equipment and sensitive documents on board.

Rather than bailing out, Osborn elected to make an emergency landing at Lingshui Air Base on Hainan Island, China. It was a landing Osborn will never forget. “Our plane was 25,000 pounds overweight.

Hall of Fame to induct 7 on Sept. 9

Mark your calendar: OPC’s Journalists of Excellence Hall of Fame will induct seven honorees on Sept. 9.

Wally Dean
Ron Kaplan
Sue Baggarly Seline
Buddy King Sr.
Todd Lemke
Hugh Reilly
Robert T. Reilly

Look for further details in the September OPC newsletter.

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KVNO’s new chief to speak at July Forum

By Robert Coate
Education Committee

The next Noon Educational Forum at the Omaha Press Club will take place on Thursday, July 20. The featured speaker will be Sherry Kennedy Brownrigg, newly appointed general manager of KVNO-90.7, Omaha’s classical music station.

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Journalism Forum story: continued from page 1

organization is part of a broader network — the States Newsroom, a nonprofit organization with offices around the nation. They publish six days a week at a minimum.

The unique nature of nonprofit journalism is how its funded. Folsom said their nonprofit is supported by donations and grants — from across the nation as well as Nebraska readers, “who might give a one-time gift or monthly gift.” She noted that States Newsroom publishes the names on their website of anyone who donates $500 or more.

Wynn said the Nebraska Journalism Trust is “based on transparency, so you will find if someone gives us money, we put it on the website. We make (that) clear to our donors.” He said their goal is 25 percent funding each from major gifts, foundations, supporters (one time/monthly), and corporate sponsorships, although their current funding mix is heavily weighted to foundations (almost half), with “other pieces coming online as we grow.”

Both agreed the need for new news sources is needed, as some “traditional” media is declining. Folsom pointed to Pew Center research that found newsroom jobs at newspapers declined by 47 percent nationally between 2008 and 2020, while 26 percent of radio newsroom jobs were lost. She also noted that the number of newspapers with statehouse reporters dropped by 25 percent during the period from 2014 to 2022.

“That’s the scary thing — that’s what encouraged me to come back,” Folsom said. “If you have fewer reporters, you have less news.” She added that it’s important for democracy to examine and reveal what is going on in government.

Wynn added that “when things get cut in traditional newsrooms, the first stuff to go is investigative reporting, which requires a person to dig into stuff, and lawyers. They might spend six months on something, and it might not turn into anything.” The vision of the Flatwater Free Press was to provide investigative reporting but also “the yin/yang,” which he described as “really good stories about people in Nebraska.” With Silicon Prairie News, they focus on startup and high growth businesses, along with feature stories on the business community across the state.

One of the things that sets the news organizations apart is that they freely share their content, with the public and with other news organizations.

“Nonprofit journalism as a public service,” said Folsom. “Traditional journalism is a business, but we see the journalism

He also noted the potential impact of nonprofit journalism on small markets. “In small towns, where small town (news organizations) were decimated, I think they will get involved in this. I think this is the future for unbiased information.”

In response to a question posed by Dr. Robert Meyers, who was moderating the event, both mentioned the role nonprofit journalism will play in reversing the decline in students pursuing journalism careers.

“The fact that you see — in Nebraska of all places — two successful ventures, it’s inspiring for journalism instructors and students to see there is a future out there,” Folsom said. She said the national States Newsroom organization is committed to training journalists through internships and fellowships.

Wynn added, “There is no better job on the freaking planet … you get to ask people whatever you want to know. We have to be more purposeful about attracting the next generation. We have to tell our own story a little more. The Press Club has a role. The Nebraska Journalism Trust has a role. ‘The work is attractive, and remains attractive, (especially) if we can tell this story more. We are changing the narrative … here are 20 new jobs that didn’t exist.”

Both expressed surprise at how quickly they were able to make an impact.

“I have been flabbergasted by the level of success — the number of people who read our work,” Wynn said. “I thought more people would read my work at the Omaha World-Herald. That was an incorrect assumption. You can immediately reach that big of an audience — or bigger. I would have never expected that to be the case.”

Folsom agreed. “At the end of the first year, we had 2.3 million pageviews of our product, and I was staggered. We started getting donations before we even launched. That’s the biggest surprise to me as well: How rapidly people came to know us.”

For more information about the Nebraska Examiner, visit nebraskajournalismtrust.org. For information about the Nebraska Journalism Trust, visit nebraskajournalismtrust.org.
From basement to the pinnacle, Deeb honored as the latest Face on the Barroom Floor

By Hunter Samuels
Communications Committee

H e started a real estate company in a basement, but on June 8, he found himself on the 22nd floor.

Van Deeb received the honor of being the 173rd Face on the Barroom Floor with more than 130 guests in attendance. The longtime real estate magnate-turned-motivational speaker and author wore a sharp suit and a big smile, even as he was peppered with repeated barbs from his friends and family.

Gil Cohen of Omaha Publications served as emcee, taking several opportunities to poke fun at Deeb’s time “playing” football at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Playing is in quotes because, as Cohen pointed out, Deeb rarely entered a game outside of the closing seconds of blowouts.

The cast of roasters included three close friends of Deeb with distinguished careers in journalism and media. Julie Cornell of KETV NewsWatch 7 (Face No. 155), Andee Hoig of Midlands Business Journal (Face No. 134), and Kristi Andersen of CBRE, formerly of MECA and several television newsrooms around the country, all took their turns heckling Deeb and sharing anecdotes that showcased his personality.

Even Deeb’s daughter, Courtney, made the trip from her home in Ohio, so she could see her father honored and to get in a few jabs of her own.

While each roaster had their own unique viewpoint of Deeb and their history together, there was a common theme with many of the punchlines – Deeb’s love for his dog, Baxter. Time after time, Deeb’s friends – as well as his daughter – noted that Baxter was almost always the most important thing in his life.

Deeb himself said he loves seeing the faces of people when he says he has “two kids, a 29-year-old daughter and a 4-year-old son.” Deeb has been very involved in philanthropic activities throughout his career (“As long as there’s publicity,” joked Courtney), going back to a campaign where he would raise money for Children’s Hospital & Medical Center by sitting on the roof of the building. Deeb said the inspiration for that was the fact that Courtney’s birth came with some complications that kept her in the hospital, and he wanted to give back to support an organization that does such important work.

The roasters made sure to poke fun at Deeb never missing a moment to self-promote or sell his four books, while also noting that his work ethic is what took his real estate company literally from his own basement to become one of the largest real estate firms in the entire region.

Face on the Floor Committee Chair Roger Humphries unveiled the Face – drawn by Jeff Koterba – to the delight of the crowd. Considering that Deeb grew his real estate company to one of the largest in the Midwest, Koterba felt the perfect setting for him was to be confidently situated on the floor plan of a large house.

In the various rooms, Koterba depicted different aspects of significant events related to Deeb’s life:

• There’s the basement, where his business began;
• The football in the garage reminding us of his time playing football at UNO;
• The trophy room with his many awards and accolades; and
• The library with the stacks of books written.

Additionally, Koterba drew Deeb with his trademark smile, megaphone in hand, symbolizing his motivational speaking.

to mention the microphone for his work as a radio host.

In the distance, we see the Omaha skyline harkening to Deeb’s time on the Omaha Planning Commission, and then in the front yard, what better way to remind us of who the guy in the picture is, but with a real estate sign emblazoned with his name – Van Deeb.

Oh, and you won’t see any doghouse out back. That’s because his favorite furry companion, Baxter, is right there by his side.

Deeb then took his opportunity to return the favor to his roasters, though amidst the jokes was a moment when he became overwhelmed with emotion talking about Courtney, and how, even though he loves Baxter, Courtney is always his top priority.

KVNO story: continued from Page 1

Sherry will talk about “The Future of Classical Music Radio.” She has succeeded Chris Allen, who retired recently as manager of the UNO station. Sherry is no stranger to Omaha radio, having worked on-air at several stations, as well as general manager of KVSS.

The OPC program will begin at noon. Admission is $19 and includes lunch, which is served at 11:30 a.m. For reservations, call Christine at 402-345-8008.
The Press Club Board of Directors issued a resolution of gratitude for the service of the Allens, presented by past-president Bridget Weide Brooks. The Allens have been ambassadors for the club, providing exceptional support and spending countless volunteer hours.

The Omaha Press Club wishes the Allens the very best in their next chapter.


Osborn continued his military service until 2005 when he entered the Naval Reserve. In all, his military career spanned 13 years, including nine years of active duty and four years in ROTC. Following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Osborn flew combat missions in Afghanistan, racking up an unprecedented 300 combat hours in one month.

At his 2003 Face on the Barroom Floor event, Osborn was honored in remarks by several Nebraska political figures including Sen. Ben Nelson, Congressman Lee Terry, Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey, Tom Janssen, state director for Sen. Chuck Hagel, and Roger Massey, state director for Congressman Doug Bereuter.

After ending his military service, Osborn began his political career. In 2007, he successfully ran for the office of Nebraska state treasurer and held this post for four years. In 2014, Osborn lost to Ben Sasse in the Republican primary race for the U.S. Senate.

“I’m glad I lost,” Osborn said. “After I lost in the primary, I went in the next morning and started my own business – I’ve never looked back.”

The business – RWH (Return With Honor) Energy – is on the list of the Department of Energy’s approved energy services companies. The company is headquartered in Florida, with Osborn serving as CEO and its executive core group including 12 disabled veterans. The company works with subcontractors to install energy-efficient systems that basically pay for themselves through the reduction in utilities costs. Some of the jobs recently completed by the company include five FBI buildings and three different school systems, including Las Vegas.

In addition, Osborn serves as CEO of Treasury Services Group, a company that audits for unclaimed property as an agent for 43 states.

A native of Mitchell, South Dakota, Osborn moved to Norfolk, Nebraska when he was 4. Currently, his primary residency is a lakeside home in Waterloo, Nebraska, and he also maintains a place in Boca Raton, Florida. He and his wife of 13 years, Stacie, have a blended family that includes a son and three daughters.

Twenty years later, he still remembers his Face event fondly. “That was a fun night – the place is so cool.”

Amazingly, one of his best friends attended an Omaha Press Club reception this spring for Cheryl Logan, the retiring superintendent for Omaha Public Schools. He called Osborn and mentioned how impressed he was with the Press Club. He couldn’t believe it when Osborn told him that his face is hanging on the wall.
Hot, baby, hot!
Come to your club and beat the heat.

The OPC atmosphere tends to be quiet in the summer as the lakes and other outdoor activities beckon and the vacation season is in full swing.

Nevertheless, your club is bubbling with fun events both day and night this summer and into the early fall. For starters: a welcoming social in August after we return from summer break, Hall of Fame inductions in September (usually a sellout), Face on the Barroom Floor events, Noon Forums, and the popular wine dinners.

Check out our events on the last page for dates, times and prices. Some of these events will have limited space or sell out, so don’t delay your reservations.

And a reminder that the next quarterly periods are July-September and October-December to meet your $40 minimum. That number is easy for lunch or dinner (or maybe a liquid meal; I do not judge!).

During our summer closing, check the reciprocal club list below, or call us for the names of additional clubs. There are some new names this year. These are social clubs, with an introductory letter generally needed prior to a planned visit. Reservations should specify the number of guests and times. Check for dress codes and pack accordingly.

Remember: Reciprocation is a bonus and fun occasion, and be sure to pay the bill at the end of your visit.

– Christine Villamonte
Restaurant and Events Manager

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Reciprocal clubs (Call the OPC for additional cities)

**California**

- Los Angeles Press Club
  4773 Hollywood Blvd
  Hollywood, CA 90028
  Ph: 323-669-8081
  info@lapressclub.org

- Council Bluffs Country Club
  4500 Piute St.
  Council Bluffs, IA 51501
  Ph: 712-366-0525
  cbcountryclub.com

**Colorado**

- Denver Press Club
  1300 Glenarm Place
  Denver, CO 80204
  Ph: 303-571-5260
denverpressclub.org

- Denver Country Club
  6000 E. Alameda Ave.
  Denver, CO 80210
  Ph: 303-832-1200
denvercountryclub.com

**District of Columbia**

- National Press Club
  529 14th St. NW 13th Floor
  Washington, DC 20045
  Ph: 202-662-7500
  press.org
  members@press.org

**Iowa**

- Des Moines Embassy Club Downtown
  666 Grand Avenue
  Des Moines, IA 50309
  Ph: 515-244-CLUB
  embassyclub.com

- Des Moines Embassy Club West
  520 Market St.
  W. Des Moines, IA 50266
  Ph: 515-244-CLUB
  embassyclub.com

- Council Bluffs Country Club
  4500 Piute St.
  Council Bluffs, IA 51501
  Ph: 712-366-0525
  cbcountryclub.com

**Kansas**

- The Petroleum Club of Wichita
  Nations Bank Building
  100 N. Broadway, Ste. 900
  Wichita, KS 67202
  Ph: 316-262-6471
  petroleumclubwichita.com

**Missouri**

- The University Club of MU
  University of Missouri
  704 Conley Ave.
  Columbia, MO 65211
  Ph: 573-882-2586
  uclub.missouri.edu

- Saint Louis Club
  7701 Forsyth Blvd.
  St. Louis, MO 63105
  314-726-1964
  stlclub.com

**Nebraska**

- Fremont Golf Club
  2710 N. Somers Ave.
  Fremont, NE 68026
  Ph: 402-721-6641
  fremontgolfclub.org

- Lochland Country Club
  601 W. Lochland Rd.
  Hastings, NE 68901
  Ph: 402-462-4151
  lochlandcc.com

- Oak Hills Country Club
  12325 Golfing Green Dr.
  Omaha, NE 68137
  402-895-3636
  oakhillscountryclub.org

**New York**

- Overseas Press Club of America
  40 W. 45th St.
  New York, NY 10036
  Ph: 212-626-9220
  opcofamerica.org
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Hall of Fame  
Hunter Samuels  

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Bridge (Weide) Brooks  

CANCELLATION POLICY: All reservations must be cancelled 48 HOURS in advance.

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.

WE’RE ONLINE! READ YOUR OPC NEWSLETTER AT OMAHAPRESSCLUB.COM

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Every Thursday  
Prime Rib Night  
5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.  

Thursday, July 20  
Noon Forum  
“The Future of Classical Music Radio”  
Sherry Brownrigg,  
KVNO general manager  
11:30 a.m. lunch, $19  
Noon to 1 p.m. speaker  

July 23 - Aug. 14  
Annual closing  

Monday, Aug. 15  
Club reopens  

Thursday, Aug. 18  
Welcoming Members Social  
4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.  

Thursday, Sept. 28  
Face on the Barroom Floor  
311 Band  
5:30 p.m. social  
6:30 p.m. dinner  
8 p.m. roast  
$75 members, $85 non-members  

Saturday, Sept. 9  
OPC Hall of Fame  
5:30 p.m. social  
6:30 p.m. dinner  
$65 members, $75 non-members  

Thursday, Sept. 21  
Noon Forum  
Michael Forsberg  
“Conservation Photography in the Great Plains”  
11:30 a.m. lunch, $19  
Noon to 1 p.m. speaker  

Thursday, Oct. 19  
Noon Forum  
Eileen Wirth  
“Women Who Made Omaha”  
11:30 a.m. lunch, $19  
Noon to 1 p.m. speaker  

Friday, Oct. 27  
Winemaker’s Dinner  
6 courses, wine pairings  
6 p.m. social, 6:30 p.m. dinner  
$75 members, $85 non-members  

Hours of Operation

LUNCH  
Monday - Friday  
11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.  

DINNER  
Thursday - Saturday  
5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.  

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Submissions for the September issue are due on or before August 20.