



Schmaderer roast mixes barbs, bravos

By Katie Raine Thomas, Communications Committee

The Omaha Press Club hosted an evening of celebration, humor and recognition honoring Omaha Police Chief Todd Schmaderer as the 185th Face on the Barroom Floor, celebrating his decades of service and lasting impact on the Omaha community.

Set against the warm glow of the Press Club's storied walls – where history quite literally surrounds the room – the evening carried a distinct energy: part celebration, part reflection, and part tradition unfolding in real time.

Emceed by WOWT 6 anchor Brian Mastre, the evening began with a nod to the tradition of the event, where, as Mastre noted, “nothing is off limits” and “there will be things that probably should have been left unsaid,” setting the tone for a program that blended lighthearted roasting with meaningful reflection.

Mastre also acknowledged Schmaderer's 30-year career in law enforcement, including more than 13 years as chief – “that's rare,” he noted – highlighting the longevity and significance of his leadership in a major metropolitan department.

In keeping with the spirit of the evening, Mastre joked early on, “We'll be collecting your badges, tasers and guns now.”

The evening's roasters included a mix of colleagues, elected officials, media figures and close collaborators, each offering a unique perspective on Schmaderer's career and character. As the program unfolded, the rhythm of the evening moved effortlessly between laughter and reverence – a signature of the Face on the Barroom Floor tradition.

Omaha City Attorney Matt Kuhse opened with humor rooted in their professional relationship, joking, “I am Todd's therapy animal. I don't salute him. I don't kiss his ass. I treat him terribly.” He then shifted to a more sincere tone, noting, “You're a great police chief and an even better friend.”

He also drew laughs from the audience with the remark, “I'm glad we could all be here to give attention to someone who never gets any attention.”

Attorney Mike Dowd, who has worked closely with law enforcement leadership for years, described Schmaderer as “a stoic leader who has steadfastly committed himself to protecting the city,” while also adding humor to his remarks, noting, “We know the serious Todd... the very serious Todd... and the super serious Todd.”

Media voices also took the stage, including KFAB's Scott Voorhees, who reflected on Schmaderer's consistent presence in the public eye and the demands of leading during high-profile moments. Adding to the evening's humor, Voorhees joked that Schmaderer had been recognized as “hunkiest cop” and “most likely to fight his roasters,” and quipped that “several women have been known to commit crimes just to see if Todd would show up.”

The program also featured remarks from civic leadership across multiple administrations. Former Mayor Jim Suttle reflected on Schmaderer's tenure with both humor and perspective, noting, “You've done over a million things right... and only a couple wrong,” while joking, “I asked you to change your name... and you didn't do it,” before adding more seriously, “We needed a police department that could evolve, and you fulfilled that promise.”

Current Omaha Mayor John Ewing Jr. offered both praise and humor, telling the audience, “I am the luckiest mayor in the United States of America,” and joking, “I have been carrying you since the moment you were recommended.” He added, “It has been great watching you grow as chief.” He expressed his appreciation for Schmaderer's service to the community.

In video remarks, former Mayor Jean Stothert highlighted their long-standing working relationship, noting Schmaderer's professionalism and media presence, adding with a smile, "You look pretty darn good on TV." She also joked about his book, saying their work together was captured "not in a chapter... not in a page... but in a paragraph." She noted that he could easily turn his experience into "a TED Talk."

Moments throughout the evening revealed not just a career, but a community – one shaped by shared experiences, long-standing relationships, and a collective investment in the city's future.

The tone of the evening shifted toward reflection during remarks from Schmaderer's fiancée, Carla Liberty, who offered insight into his life beyond the public role. Balancing humor with sincerity, she noted, "Roasting my fiancée in front of 200 people and still expecting the wedding to happen... that takes courage," before reflecting on his leadership and commitment, adding, "He stayed. He weathered the storm."

She concluded with a heartfelt tribute: "No one deserves this honor more... Omaha is better because of you." She noted that Schmaderer's leadership has played a key role in shaping public safety and civic confidence in Omaha over the past decade.

The highlight of the evening was the unveiling of Schmaderer's caricature, a hallmark of the Face on the Barroom Floor tradition.

The artwork depicts him at a podium surrounded by media microphones, symbolizing his role as a steady and visible communicator throughout his tenure. Additional elements in the piece reflect his career, education and personal life, including references to his book, "Synergy of Influence: Leadership, Law Enforcement and the Media," as well as nods to Omaha's skyline and his professional journey.

With the Face unveiling, Schmaderer officially joins the historic wall of honorees that decorate the Press Club – becoming the first active Omaha police chief to receive the distinction. In closing remarks, Schmaderer reflected on his career with humility, telling the audience, "All I really did was steer – everybody else did the hard work," and adding, "I couldn't have done it without my tremendous staff and the people in this room."

The evening served as both a celebration of a distinguished career and a reflection of the leadership, relationships and service that have helped shape Omaha's public safety landscape.

Here's a description of the caricature of Todd Schmaderer. the 185th Face on the Barroom Floor:

With his Hollywood looks and macho personality, Omaha Police Chief Todd Schmaderer gives our city an impressive flair in the law enforcement world. It wouldn't be a huge

stretch to compare his character to the role of Frank Reagan, the New York City police commissioner played by Tom Selleck in the popular TV show, "Blue Bloods."

Being behind a microphone and podium is nothing new for Schmaderer, who is known for being in complete control when dealing with media. He's done nearly 100 news conferences in his 13+ years as Omaha's police chief. He has been featured in national media outlets such as Dateline NBC, CNN, Fox News and Washington Post Live. The artist depicts Schmaderer standing behind the podium with a bank of media microphones in front of him.

On the left side of the drawing, you can see the building that is home to the Omaha Police Department, while Todd's fiancée, Carla Liberty, is sitting at a table with a stack of books in front of her. The book is called "Synergy of Influence: Leadership, Law Enforcement & the Media." It was written by Todd and was shaped by 10 years of reflection on his career as police chief. On the table skirt, the artist lists two major awards Todd received from the University of Nebraska Omaha – the Alumni Award for Excellence and the Lifetime Achievement Award.

On the right side of the drawing, the artist shows the Omaha skyline and an airplane on its way to warmer climates. Todd and Carla were engaged in 2025 at one of their favorite beaches in Orange Beach, Alabama. You can see an Orange Beach, Alabama sticker on their suitcase. A golf course and a couple palm trees depicts one of their favorite pastimes.

Below the podium is a string of pennants showcasing Todd's educational background as well as his favorite sports teams. The pennants include:

- Roncalli High School, where Todd went to high school and was a multi-sport athlete;
- Wayne State College, where Todd went to his first year of college and played football;
- University of Nebraska Omaha, where Todd earned his undergraduate degree;
- University of Nebraska Lincoln – Todd is a big Huskers fan;
- Creighton University – Todd is a big Bluejays fan;
- University of Cincinnati, where Todd received his master's degree in criminal justice; and
- Louisiana State University, which has become another favorite team, as Carla is a native of New Orleans.

So, there you have it. The artist's rendition of Todd Schmaderer, the 185th Face on the Barroom Floor, and the first active police chief to ever be honored as a Face by the Omaha Press Club.