

NEWS

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Sarpy County attorney is 187th Face on Barroom Floor

Lee Polikov learns that law and order doesn't prevail at Omaha Press Club roast

By Tom O'Connor
Communications Committee

For 53 years, Lee Polikov has been bringing law and order to Sarpy County. However, as the 187th Face on the Barroom Floor, he learned very quickly that law and order fly out the window when one is being roasted at the Omaha Press Club.

The laughs began immediately when the Rev. Steven Boes, former CEO of Boys Town, delivered his opening prayer and inadvertently referred to the honoree as Don Kleine, the Douglas County attorney.

Bob Batt, retired executive vice president for the Nebraska Furniture Mart, served as emcee for the event. He started his remarks by honoring his late grandmother, Rose

Blumkin, the legend who helped build NFM into the powerhouse it is today.

Blumkin, who was honored as the OPC's 35th Face in 1987, always preached there would be a sale starting tomorrow. Batt flipped over his necktie to reveal the word SALE in large letters. Then the fun began.

Batt, Face No. 124 in 2010, said he and Polikov had been friends for about 55 years and Lee was one of his best men "at my latest wedding."

"It's a tough job being county attorney," Batt said. "Everyone either loves you or



hates you." Thanks to his close friendship with Polikov, he said, "I've had prosecutorial immunity in Sarpy County for the past 27 years."

Jeff Davis, retired Sarpy County sheriff, said, "Lee came to work early every day – early afternoon." He said that Polikov had studied hypnotism and had even used it once to procure a statement from a suspect. On a kinder note, he praised Polikov as someone who "always stuck up for the underdog."

Jay Lerner, president and founder of the Lerner Company, said he first met Polikov in 2002 when he was developing Shadow Lake Towne Center in Sarpy County.

"Lee took it as a personal mission that I never got too comfortable – he always had something for me to do," said Lerner, who

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A MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGER

... As the seasons change, so will the home of your Press Club

Summer is soon changing to a fast fall. Be glad the Nebraska heat is almost over. Around the corner, we look forward to football and tailgating, harvest season, jackets and jeans, homemade soup and stews.

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the four seasons. I lived in Southern California for a brief time, where there is one season, one only.

Nothing beats the Midwest with our hometown fall. Hopefully you feel this way at your Press Club. We are proud to say the OPC chef cooks from scratch... sauces and all, no scissors and plastic bags here. Come visit when we reopen on Oct. 2.

The club is officially closed during August and September for a complete remodel



of the entire building. NUSyle, the new owner, buys historical buildings and turns them into apartments. The owners want the club to stay on the 22nd floor. They will be removing and replacing HVAC and plumbing for the entire building. Starting from new is something they do first and foremost.

The OPC Members Mixer on July 23 revealed four blueprints for most of the building. The first four or five floors will be untouched for several years, but the rest of the building will be converted into apartments.

The blueprints for 13 to 20 floors show 16 apartments on each floor. Two of the apartments (north and south views) on each floor are two bedrooms; the rest are one-bedroom apartments.

Our 22nd floor will include six apartments on the west side of the building. OPC will stay the same, with a few up-to-code alterations. Besides the HVAC and plumbing replacements, the Agnew Room

will have a code-required additional exit on the southwest corner of the room. This door will open to a catwalk behind the elevators and restrooms, exiting on the west stairwell.

Because of the two-month closure, the club is waiving third-quarter minimums. Reciprocal clubs are an option during this time. Club listings are in this newsletter and also on the OPC website under membership, <https://www.omahapressclub.com/membership>.

The steps for reciprocating:

1. Make a reservation.
2. Ask for the dress code; each club is different. The club location and the the reservation details are attire factors attire as well.
3. Pay at the end of the visit.

See you at the club in October!

- Christine Villamonte
Restaurant and Events Manager

NO QUARTERLY MINIMUM FOR JULY-SEPTEMBER

admitted he had never stepped foot in the OPC before.

Two-hour cigar smoking sessions with Polikov helped Lerner see a side of Lee that most people never see. "He has made Sarpy County a better place," Lerner said. "You can be tough without taking yourself too seriously."

Rose Ann Shannon, retired news director at KETV (Ch. 7), called Polikov a "died-in-the-wool Republican."

In the spirit of our current president, she said Polikov intends to tear down the Sarpy County jail and "build a big, beautiful ballroom." Polikov's nickname for Shannon is "fake news."

With Shannon's husband, Phil Johnson, a former photographer at the Omaha World-Herald, serving as her assistant, Shannon proceeded to unveil three blow-up photos featuring Polikov: Sitting next to Sen. Bernie Sanders – the photo begs the question, Shannon said, "Is Lee Polikov a socialist?" Next to Sheriff Andy Griffith with Polikov's face superimposed over Deputy Barney Fife (Don Knotts) – Shannon said Sarpy County is "a lot like Mayberry."

Swimming in the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool with a piece of algae on his head – Shannon, who is a member of the OPC Hall of Fame, linked Polikov to the controversial 300-foot gash in the reflecting pool.

Martie Cordaro, president of the Omaha Storm Chasers, called Polikov "one of the most determined people you will ever meet... he always makes sure everyone in the room understands his point and knows that he is right." He added that most attorneys bill by the hour, Polikov bills "by his opinion – whether you ask for it or not...he refuses to

take no for an answer."

To help deal with the pressures of being around Polikov, Cordaro said Lee's wife of 50 years, Terry Calek, has grown to appreciate long instrumental musical pieces. It allows her to block out her husband, while imagining that she's listening to Mannheim Steamroller.

Cordaro, Face No. 179 in 2024, praised Polikov, who was one of the key negotiators in helping Sarpy County become the home for the Storm Chasers, for "keeping baseball in our town." He also cited Polikov's focus on mental health – "when people are in their darkest hour, you are there."

Gil Cohen, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Omaha Magazine, began by saying, "We're so glad to have Don Kleine with us tonight."

Polikov has been around so long, Cohen said, that "Wyatt Earp was his first boss and Nebraska was still a territory." Like Barney Fife, Cohen said Polikov, who was chief deputy in Sarpy County for 26 years prior to becoming county attorney, carried an "unloaded gun with a single bullet in his pocket."

He said Polikov loves to use his legal skills in everyday life. When watching "Law & Order" on television, Polikov has been known to

say, "Objection – that's not how the chain of custody works." When Lee is ordering food at the McDonald's counter, he begins by saying, "May I approach."

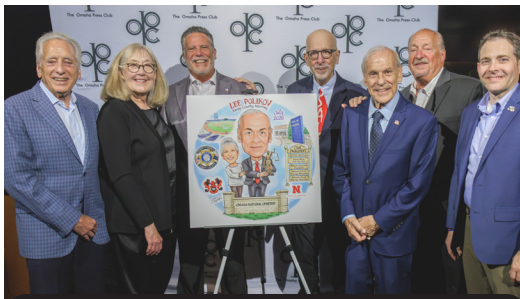
Cohen said people love to receive mail, but nobody wants to hear from Lee – he sends subpoenas.

More than 100 people attended the roast, including notables such as Rep. Don Bacon, Nebraska Lt. Gov. Joe Kelly, John Reisz, chief deputy county attorney for Sarpy County; Jack Stark, regent for the University of Nebraska, and Mark Pettit, former news anchor for KMTV (Ch. 3), who now lives in Atlanta. Pettit worked closely with Polikov on the case of serial killer John Joubert IV,

who was arrested in Sarpy County in 1983. Pettit has written three books about the Joubert case.

Polikov thanked those in attendance. He said to Bacon, "Since we'll both be out of work at the end of the year – let's talk later." His roasters, he quipped, "will be appearing at the Funny Bone."

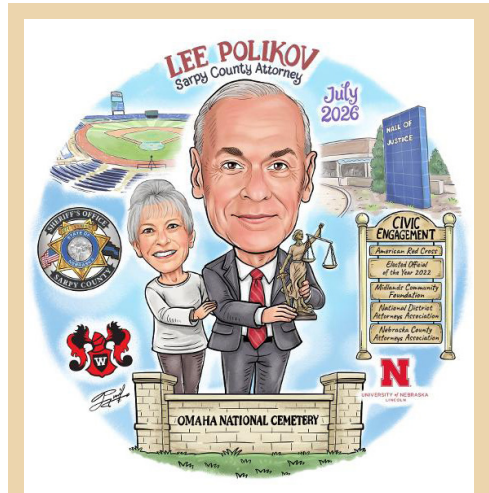
He concluded by saying, "Remember – anything said here tonight is absolutely inadmissible in court."



The honoree with his roasters. From left, Jay Lerner, Rose Ann Shannon, Gil Cohen, Bob Blatt, Lee Polikov, Jeff Davis and Martie Cordaro.



Lee Polikov signs Face No. 187. Photos by Kurt A. Keeler.



Lee Polikov has been a key player in Sarpy County for more than five decades and has been a driving force in helping Sarpy become the state's fastest growing county.

Not only has Lee served as the county attorney for the past 27 years, he also has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to build the Sarpy community. Two of his biggest achievements were being a key negotiator in helping Sarpy County become the home for the Omaha Storm Chasers and Werner Park, and serving on the committee that made the Omaha National Cemetery possible in Sarpy County.

The Face caricature features Werner Park on the left side of the drawing, while Lee and his wife of 50 years, Terry Calek, are standing in front of the entry sign to the Omaha National Cemetery. On the right side of the drawing, you can see the Sarpy County Hall of Justice, where Lee has worked the past 53 years.

An Omaha native, Lee is a graduate of Westside High School and earned his undergraduate and law degrees at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The artist has included the Westside crest and the UNL logo on the drawing.

Prior to becoming Sarpy County attorney, Lee served as chief deputy in Sarpy County

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for 26 years. On the left side of the drawing, you can see a badge for the Sarpy County Sheriff's Office.

Civic engagement has been a key part of Lee's career, so the artist has put together a display listing some of Lee's top achievements. The list includes:

- the American Red Cross, which Lee served as chair of the Donor Recruitment Committee for a number of years;
- His award as Elected Official of the Year in 2022 given by the Sarpy County Chamber of Commerce for his involvement in innovative initiatives such as Teen Court, Alcohol Diversion, Mental Health Diversion, and Wellness Court;
- The Midlands Community Foundation, an organization that supports philanthropic, educational, and community-driven programs that benefit Sarpy and Cass Counties and the surrounding region – Lee continues to serve as a longtime board member for this foundation;
- The National District Attorneys Association – Lee has been a member of this association for more than 20 years and served a three-year term as vice president; and
- The Nebraska County Attorneys Association – Lee served two terms as president of this association.

So there you have it – the artist's rendition of Lee Polikov, the 187th Face on the Barroom Floor – a true star in our community's law enforcement efforts and a tremendous addition to our illustrious Faces on the Barroom Floor.

OPC Mixer crowd gets preview of building transformation

By Anne Walsh
Communications Committee

A festive crowd of about 50 members attended the Omaha Press Club's annual Members Mixer July 23, where a \$20 ticket provided an excellent array of hors d'oeuvres and a choice of drinks. Many remained for the 2-for-1 Prime Rib Night, enjoying conversation and the club's unique ambiance before the two-month, temporary closure began Aug. 1.

OPC President Joshua Gear spoke about NuStyle Development's tremendous success in transforming downtown Omaha office buildings into residential properties. Past renovations include the former Northern Natural Gas building (now The Highline), AT&T building (now The Wire Apartments), Peoples Natural Gas building (now The Slate Apartments) and the Creighton University Medical Center St. Joseph Hospital (now The Atlas Apartments – the largest apartment

building in Nebraska).

The OPC's Education Committee provided Mixer members with a detailed look at the First National Bank Building's planned transformation into 300 apartments, displaying NuStyle's architectural drawings around the fireplace. Gear said the building renovation will create membership growth opportunities, as the Club becomes a "go-to" lunch and dinner stop for future residents, as well as "last call" evenings around the circular bar.

The Press Club's closure will allow replacement of the building's HVAC and plumbing systems, and changes to the elevator hallway.

Third-quarter membership minimums will be waived, but Gear encouraged Mixer attendees to stay alert for upcoming details on a "Future Fund." It will involve a voucher system, allowing the club to develop a "nest egg to weather any storm," he said. Details are still being finalized.



Members enjoy hors d'oeuvres while listening to OPC President Joshua Gear discuss the building renovation and the club's future. Photo by Gary Willis.

KFAB Winemaker's Dinner delights OPC guests

By Angela Arndt
Communications Committee

Wine, fabulous food, and great company combined for a memorable Winemaker's Dinner hosted by KFAB radio personality Chris Baker on July 17..

Guests were treated to chef Steve Villamonte's superb five-course dinner featuring Alaskan King Salmon, Classic Thunderbird Salad, Steak Diane, and a finish of Chocolate Mousse Framboise.

Sommelier Mark Surprenant selected wines from California, Oregon and Italy, each pairing perfectly with its course.

A special thanks to chef Villamonte, OPC manager Christine Villamonte, and the entire OPC staff for another evening to remember.



Dinner host Chris Baker. Photos by Gary Willis.



Omaha Press Club Reciprocal List 2026

California

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

The Los Angeles Athletic Club
431 West 7th St.
Los Angeles, CA 90014
Ph: 213-625-2211
laac@laac.net

Quail Lodge Resort & Golf Club
8000 Valley Greens Dr.
Carmel, CA 93923
Ph: 866-675-1101
quailodge.com

The Tower Club
300 Esplanade Dr. Ste. 1455
Oxnard, CA 93036
Ph: 805-983-7777
topatowerclub.com

University Club
1332 Santa Barbara St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Ph: 805-966-0853
uclubsb.org

University Club of San Francisco
800 Powell St.
San Francisco, CA 94108
Ph: 415-781-0900
uclubsf.org

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Denver Press Club
1330 Glenarm Place
Denver, CO 80204
Ph: 303-571-5260
denverpressclub.org

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press.org
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Atlanta Press Club
191 Peachtree St., NE
Atlanta, GA 30303

Ph: 404-577-7377
atlantapressclub.org

Indian Hills Country Club
4001 Clubland Drive
Marietta, GA 30068
Ph: 770-971-2605
indianhillsccl.com

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Des Moines Embassy Club Downtown
666 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50309
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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
cbbcountryclub.com

Illinois

The Decatur Club
158 West Prairie Ave.
Decatur, IL 62523
Ph: 217-429-4200
thedecaturclub.org

Kansas

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

Minnesota

University Club of St. Paul
420 Summit Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55102
Ph: 651-222-1751
universityclubofstpaul.com

St. Paul Athletic Club
Downtown Clubhouse
340 Cedar St.
St. Paul, MN 55102
Ph: 651-291-7722
thespac.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
Ph: 314-726-1964
Stlclub.com

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The Great Southern Club
2510 14th St.
Gulfport, MS 39501
Ph: 228-865-0200
greatsouthernclub.com

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Fremont Golf Club
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Fremont, NE 68026
Ph: 402-721-6641
fremontgolfclub.org

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

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Omaha, NE 68137
Ph: 402-895-3636
oakhillscountryclub.org

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New York, NY 10036
Ph: 212-626-9220
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400 N. Olive St.
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Hours of Operation

1620 Dodge St., Omaha NE 68102

LUNCH

Tuesday-Saturday
11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Closed Mondays

DINNER

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



August, September

Closed for HVAC, plumbing remodeling

No quarterly minimums

Friday, Oct. 2

Club reopens

Every Thursday beginning Oct. 8

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

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.

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

OMAHA PRESS CLUB STAFF

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