

NEWS

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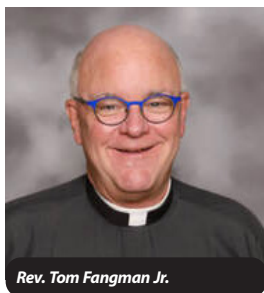
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Sellout anticipated for Oct. 30 event

'Most connected person in Omaha,' Rev. Tom Fangman Jr., to be next Face on the Barroom Floor

By Tom O'Connor
Communications Committee

When it comes to connecting with people, there's nobody better than Rev. Tom Fangman Jr. Whether it's providing a heartfelt eulogy at a funeral, celebrating marital vows, or just giving his weekly homily at Sunday mass, Fangman is the man for the job.



Rev. Tom Fangman Jr.

For more than 30 years, he has been using his amazing skills to spread joy, comfort, peace and love to his parishioners, while establishing himself as one of the most beloved members of the clergy in our community.

On Thursday, Oct. 30, the Omaha Press Club will honor Fangman for his unique skill set when he will be enshrined as the 184th Face on the Barroom Floor.

Since 2016, Fangman has served as pastor at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Elkhorn. With more than 3,300 households and more than 11,000 members, St. Patrick's is one of the largest parishes in Nebraska.

Prior to St. Patrick's, Fangman served at Sacred Heart Parish in Omaha (1998-2016), Sacred Heart Parish in Norfolk, Nebraska (1996-1998), and at St. Philip Neri in Omaha (1992-1996). While working at Sacred Heart in Omaha, Fangman served as CEO of CUES (Christian Urban Education Service), a program that provides support to Catholic schools in inner-city Omaha. He also served as president of All Saints School and as a foundation member of the Heart Ministry Center.

"He's the most well-connected person

in Omaha that I've ever met. If you add up all the people he says were his classmates, it would be in the thousands and would even include women who went to all-girl schools," joked the Rev. Dave Korth, who will offer a lighthearted prayer to get the OPC roast started. Korth succeeded Fangman as pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Omaha in 2016.

Fangman started at St. Patrick's right before the tragic deaths of Lane Graves, a 2-year-old Elkhorn boy who was tragically killed at Walt Disney World in Florida, and Aspen Seemann, a 3-year-old who drowned near his family home in Waterloo, Nebraska.

"He is at his very best when responding to tragedies," Korth said. "His immense heart provides comfort for those most in need."

A native of Omaha, Fangman is a 1980 graduate of Creighton Prep High School and a 1985 graduate of the University of Kansas.

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Was honored as Face on Barroom Floor in 2015

Stunning victory over Alvarez propels Crawford to elite status in boxing world

By Tom O'Connor
Communications Committee

This Bud's for you.

That was the message in 2015 when Omaha Press Club Artist Jim Horan unveiled his caricature of Terence "Bud" Crawford, the 145th Face on the Barroom Floor.

Horan joked, "It's probably the only time you will see Bud Crawford's face on any floor."

No truer words have probably ever been uttered. After moving up two weight classes to defeat Canelo Alvarez on Sept. 13 in Las Vegas in the biggest prize fight of the year, Crawford is unquestionably on top of the boxing world.

He is only the second boxer in history (Floyd Mayweather Jr. was the first) to be undisputed champion in three weight classes



Bud Crawford was the 145th Face on the Barroom Floor in 2015.

— light welterweight, welterweight and super middleweight. During his illustrious career, Crawford is undefeated in 42 bouts, including 31 knockouts, and he has held 18 world championships spanning five weight classes.

The fight aired on Netflix and was viewed by millions around the world as well as more than 70,000 people in Allegiant Stadium.

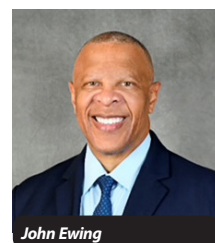
As always, Crawford was a huge ambas-

Continue on Page 4

Mayor Ewing to look back on 100-plus days in office

By Gary Willis
Communications Committee

Sept. 17 marked the passing of 100 days since the installation of Omaha's new mayor. John W. Ewing Jr. will discuss his first months in office at the Oct. 16 Noon Forum.



John Ewing

John Ewing is an Omaha native who graduated from Northwest High School and the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

He was elected five times to the Douglas County Treasurer's Office. After serving as treasurer for 18 years, Ewing became Omaha's 52nd mayor on June 9, 2025, the first Black person elected to this post.

Continue on Page 2

Nebraska chief justice lists challenges and successes

By Mike McKnight
Education Committee

Nebraska Supreme Court Chief Justice Jeffrey Funke was the featured guest of the Omaha Press Club, invited by veteran news reporter Mike McKnight to discuss the work and priorities of the state's highest court. The program, originally held as an Evening Education Forum presentation, has since been released as a podcast.

Funke opened his remarks by sharing his career path, tracing his service from county judge to district judge to the Nebraska Supreme Court, where he was sworn in as chief justice on Nov. 1, 2024. He noted that preparation for his first "State of the Judiciary" address required careful reflection on how the branches of government can collaborate effectively.

He acknowledged that the most recent legislative session brought challenges tied to statewide budget shortfalls but emphasized the judiciary's ongoing commitment to serving Nebraskans through an efficiently managed court system, guardian and conservator programs, probation services, and problem-

solving courts.

Funke also reviewed the structure of the judicial branch, including the work of trial and appellate courts. He reminded the audience that Justice Lindsey Miller-Lerman will soon retire after 33 years and that her presence on the court will be missed.

Among broader challenges, Funke highlighted concerns about "legal deserts" in Nebraska, where more than half of the state's counties have limited or no access to practicing attorneys. He also pointed to declining public confidence in institutions, an issue he said the courts must work to address.



Jeffrey Funke was sworn in as chief justice on Nov. 1, 2024.
Photo by Gary Willis

Efforts to increase transparency include expanded media coverage in courtrooms, which began with a collaboration between judges and reporters. Through Nebraska's Bench Media Committee, training for both groups, along with continuity in rulemaking, has helped ensure coverage that serves the public while respecting the rights of litigants.

Funke acknowledged that criticism of the courts can sometimes be unfair and difficult to address, while security issues have also grown in importance. At the same time, he sees technology as key to strengthening access and efficiency. Nebraska's electronic filing system has already made court processes more cost-effective, and work is underway to expand to electronic exhibits. A major priority ahead is replacing the state's '90s-era case management system — a significant financial undertaking, but one that will better serve the public.

"As a court system, we are a public service," Funke reminded the audience, adding that despite financial challenges, Nebraska is fortunate to have high-quality judges dedicated to their communities.

The OPC remembers:

Barry Combs led club in 1978

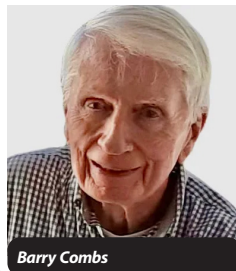
By Don Summerside
Communications Committee

Barry B. Combs, a former Union Pacific executive, bookstore operator and president of the Omaha Press Club in 1978, died Sept. 21. He was 92.

Combs rose to director of public relations and advertising during his U.P. career. After retirement from the railroad, Barry began a second career. He and his wife, Athena, opened two Combs and Combs Bookstores.

Combs' love of history led him back to his alma mater, Omaha Central High School, where he became the unofficial historian of the oldest high school in the city. He was a 1950 graduate and a member of the Central High School Hall of Fame.

In 1997, Combs joined the founding members of the Central Alumni Association. He gravitated to the association's history



Barry Combs

committee. In that role, according to his Hall of Fame biography, Combs helped document and catalogue more than 100 boxes of school memorabilia, from old yearbooks and class rings to sports uniforms. He helped select the historical items put on display in the Central courtyard, and he and Jim Wigton created a 54-page timeline of the school's history.

Combs' interest in history was not limited to Central. He served on the board of the Douglas County Historical Society. In 2004, he also co-edited a two-volume book entitled "Their Man in Omaha," documenting early life in Omaha through the correspondence of Omaha pioneer Joseph Barker.

Combs is survived by his wife, Athena, four children, five grandchildren, one great-grandchild, and a brother, Mike.

Ewing story; continued from Page 1

Ewing served the Omaha Police Department for nearly 25 years, from 1981 to 2006, and retired at the rank of deputy chief. He is also an associate minister with Salem Baptist Church.

At the OPC Forum, Mayor Ewing will discuss his first days in office and his goals for the future for Omaha. A Q-and-A will follow his talk.

The Press Club presentation begins at noon and continues until 1 p.m. Lunch, at \$19 per person, is served beginning at 11:30 a.m.

Reservations can be made on the Press Club website; click on reservations for all events (right side RSVP tab) or call the club at 402-345-8008. Non-Press Club members are welcome to attend.

Face roast for Gutman, Wilhelm is double the fun

By Joshua Gear
Communications Committee

A dynamic duo of Omaha business and community development spent the evening of Sept. 25 at the Omaha Press Club, receiving a rare gift for their hard work: a good old-fashioned roasting.

The event honored Vic Gutman and Roberta Wilhelm, a pair whose outstanding work and passion have powered nonprofits and businesses for decades. Setting off the celebration was Emiliano Lerda, the CEO and co-founder of Elevator Co-Warehousing+Community. The event's emcee remarked on meeting the couple, having encountered Wilhelm through her husband.

"Usually, when you know Vic, people just write you off by association, so thank you, Roberta, for not doing that!" Lerda said. Recalling how a Catholic man from Argentina became friends with a Jewish man from New Jersey, Lerda said their connection was automatic.

"I got to know Vic like most people did, by arguing with him," Lerda said before celebrating Wilhelm's passions for colorful language and colorful illustrations.

And turning to Roberta: "People say she should perhaps publish her doodles in a book. It would undoubtedly outsell anything Vic has ever written or spoken," Lerda said before celebrating the couple's accomplishments.

"Together, they're two of the most incredible, kind, funny, amazing people in Omaha," Lerda said.

Next, the couple's friend and associate, Emily Mwaja from the Sherwood Foundation, stepped to the mic. Sherwood's director of capacity building has worked with Roberta and Vic on a number of occasions over the past two decades before becoming collaborators at Sherwood.

"Roberta has been begging for money in this community for so long!" Mwaja said. "Finally, her bestie Susie (Buffett, Sherwood Foundation founder) came to her and said, 'Do you need a job?'"

Mwaja brought several items from Wilhelm's office, adorned with hilarious, profanity-laced sayings she's known to spout. Next, she turned her attention to Gutman, remarking how he fell for his wife during her time leading the Rose Theater.

"Nothing says desperate like working for your crush and still being the least-favorite

contractor," Mwaja said, before welcoming the couple's grandson Jamal to the microphone as a surprise guest, using his familial knowledge to crack jokes about them both.

"I know them better than anybody!" Jamal told the room, setting up his thoughts



first on his grandmother.

"Grandma was like, 'girls are the world' and was working at Girls Inc. like, 'girl power, girls rule,'" Jamal said. "Meanwhile, she's got seven grandsons! Ain't no girl power at that family reunion."

Jamal then turned to his grandfather, talking about his busy days leading operations like the Farmer's Market, Holiday Lights Festival and Summer Arts Festival.

"Even though he was busy, we never had to second-guess who he loved the most," Jamal said. "It was always... his dogs." With a heartfelt comment celebrating the pair, the young roaster turned the mic back to Mwaja.

"Thank you for investing in making Omaha a cooler and more vibrant city," Mwaja told the honored couple. "Thank you for always being in my corner and supporting the work I do. Your mentorship has meant the world to me."

Next, Julie Walker took the stage. The Rose Theater managing director played down her theatrical day job, cutting straight to the jokes.

"I spent all day in business planning, so I'm going to divide everyone up into groups," Walker said. "There's sticky notes on the table, share your thoughts and make your notes." Having worked with the couple for a number of years, she commented on their celebrations of women in the workforce.

"Roberta taught everyone to make women strong, smart and bold. You know who took that advice to heart? Vic Gutman," Walker told the room. "He's surrounded himself with strong, smart and amazing women, present company included."

Remarking on their work together, Walker took the opportunity to thank Gutman and Wilhelm.

"I'm happy to roast Vic and I'm happy to toast Roberta," Walker said. "Roberta is who I want to be when I grow up. Vic absolutely deserves some roasting."

Finally, Face on the Barroom Floor Chair Roger Humphries headed to the front of the room to introduce the couple's official artwork. The colorful Face features nods to the pair's educational backgrounds and joint efforts creating cultural and community touchstones in Omaha, including the Rose, Summer Arts, Farmer's Market and Holiday Lights.

Then Gutman and Wilhelm took center stage at the gathering, thanking the guests and taking turns to poke fun at the night's roasters, before closing their remarks with one missed opportunity.

"If you really wanted to provide this group entertainment, you would have had Roberta and I roast each other!" Gutman told the room. "It would have been brutal."

In 1992, he completed his seminary training at Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis, where he served as president of the student body.

“Tom Fangman has gentle ways that touch hearts and souls,” said Liz Hruska, a longtime OPC board member and parishioner at Sacred Heart in Omaha. “Father Tom is so beloved by so many this will be a sellout event.”

Active in the Omaha Archdiocese, Fangman has served on the personnel board, the Priest Council, and as the priest representative for the Domestic Violence Pastoral Project Advisory Board with Catholic Charities.

“Tom brings being Catholic and spiritual down to a level you can use every day,” said Mike Moylan, president of Shamrock Development and a friend of Fangman since grade school. “He is human. He is our friend. He is funny, charming, ambitious, petty, competitive...and very loving.

“Tom’s leadership and success in his roles and his individual connection to so many is truly remarkable. Tom’s true gift from God is bringing people together with God in times of joy...in times of sorrow...in times of love. He has done this tirelessly for so many his whole life.

“He shined again recently for our family at our mother’s recent funeral. None of us will ever forget his moving, loving and impactful celebration of our mom’s beautiful life. All I know is the Holy Spirit is alive and

well in Fr. Tom Fangman, and he shares it so generously.”

From 2018-2025, Fangman has served on the board of V.J. and Angela Skutt High School. Prior to this, he held board/committee posts with Omaha, Inc., Creighton Prep, Creighton University, and the Root to Fruit Initiative of the Mammel Foundation. He currently serves on the boards of the Christ Child Society and the Children’s Scholarship Fund of Omaha.

In 2025, Fangman received the Father Edward Flanagan & Mother Catherine McAuley Lifetime Achievement Award from the Omaha Irish Cultural Center. In 2016, he was recognized with the Sword of St. Ignatius Award from Creighton Prep. Other organizations that have honored Fangman include Catholic Charities, National Catholic Educational Association, Boys Town, Creighton University, Merrymakers, and the Archdiocese of Omaha. In 2013, he was inducted into the Court of Honor with the Aksarben Coronation.

In 1997, Fangman was named Teacher of the Year and received the Golden Apple Award from Norfolk Catholic High School.

Fangman will be the fifth priest in the 54-year history of the Face on the Barroom Floor to be honored by the Omaha Press Club. Previous priest honorees included: Rev. Val Peter, Boys Town (No. 58, 1994); Rev. Don Doll, Creighton University (No. 66, 1996); Rev. Elden Francis Curtiss, Archdiocese of Omaha (No. 77, 1999); and Rev. John Schlegel, Creighton University (No.

114, 2007).

Roasters for the Fangman Face event will include:

Emcee – Nikki Boulay, vocalist, Finest Hour Band, and female voice actor and voice-over talent; former radio personality on several Omaha and Denver radio stations; Joe Finocchiaro, Tenaska associate, and lifetime friend of Tom Fangman; Greg Boulay, president/CEO, Pella Windows & Doors of Omaha & Lincoln and high school classmate of Tom Fangman; Meg Huerter Brudney, head of school, Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart; and Joe Lang, founding principal, RDG Planning & Design architecture firm.

FACE ON BARROOM FLOOR – REV. TOM FANGMAN JR

WHEN: THURSDAY, OCT. 30; 5:30 P.M. – RECEPTION; 6:30 P.M. – DINNER; 8 P.M. – ROAST

COST: \$90 FOR OPC MEMBERS; \$100 FOR NON-MEMBERS

RSVP: THE EVENT IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. CALL THE OPC AT 402-345-8008 OR GO ONLINE OR EMAIL OPC-CHRISTINE@GMAIL.COM. MEMBERS CAN CHARGE TO THEIR OPC ACCOUNT. NON-MEMBERS NEED TO PROVIDE THEIR CREDIT CARD INFORMATION.

Crawford story; continued from Page 1

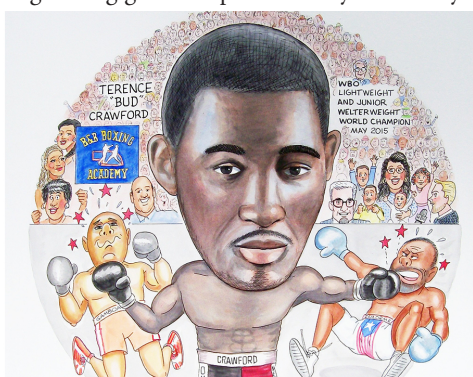
sador for his hometown, wearing “Omaha” proudly on the back of his trunks and even wearing a mouthguard with the Nebraska Cornhusker logo featured prominently in the center.

When the unanimous decision was declared, the ringside announcer prefaced his hugely anticipated proclamation by saying, “The winner – the fighting pride of Omaha, Nebraska.”

As Crawford and his team exited the stadium to celebrate the huge victory, the Netflix cameras captured almost the entire team wearing their Nebraska ball caps.

“Congratulations to Terence ‘Bud’ Crawford,” said Omaha Mayor John Ewing. “We could not be any prouder of you, Bud. You showed up. You represented Omaha. You made history. Wow!” Ewing, along with his wife, Viv, was honored by the Omaha Press Club in 2021 as the 165th Face on the Barroom Floor.

Ewing is not the first Omaha mayor to sing Crawford’s praises. At the 2015 Face on the Barroom Floor event, then-Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert joined the fun by wearing boxing gloves to present a key to the city



Crawford caricature

to Crawford.

She said, “Terence, you and I have a lot in common, believe it or not. There are many

days when I go to work that I need to put my gloves on and fight for things that I think are best for the city of Omaha. And I take some jabs from the left and the right and the media.”

A longtime boxing fan, Horan said he had followed Crawford’s career for quite some time. He called Bud’s ability to attack with both his right and left hands as “nothing short of amazing.” He said boxing analysts have compared Crawford’s ambidextrous skills to another all-time great boxer – “Marvelous” Marvin Hagler.

Horan’s illustration showed a punch from Crawford’s right hand putting one of Crawford’s opponents (Yuriorkis Gamboa) on the canvas, while a lethal left hook is flooring another opponent (Thomas Dulorme).

He depicted Crawford wearing his Omaha trunks and said, “The first time I saw him fight on HBO, I thought his name was Omaha.”

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In the background of the illustration, Crawford's parents are sitting at ringside, with his mother showing him a wicked one-two punch – something Horan actually saw her doing in the Dulorme fight. His father is wearing a big grin, and his two sisters are just so beautiful, they're "knockouts."

Crawford's four children at the time are cheering him on, and their mother is beaming with pride. In the background is a sign depicting the B and B Boxing Academy, which Crawford and Brian "BoMac" McIntyre, his co-manager and head trainer, started in Omaha.

HBO's Jim Lampley and Max Kellerman are giving the thousands of fans attending and the millions watching worldwide a spirited account of the action. One face in the crowd stands out – Warren Buffett is enjoying the action in the nose-bleed section. Horan said he actually saw Buffett, honored in 1985 as the 30th Face on the Barroom Floor, on HBO at the fight.

Crawford was a decided underdog against Alvarez, who now has a 63-3-2 record in his 20-year boxing career. From 2019 to 2022, Alvarez was ranked the world's best boxer, pound for pound, by The Ring magazine. With winnings of more than \$110 million in 2023, Alvarez was the top earning boxer and made the list of the world's highest-paid athletes compiled by Forbes magazine.

Crawford paid no attention to the experts and controlled the bout from the opening bell. The most telling stat was that Crawford attempted 95 more punches (442-347) than Alvarez during the 12-round fight.

Following his victory, Crawford was showered with accolades by boxing experts. Comments included, "Crawford is the GOAT (Greatest of All-Time)." "Crawford is a great fighter...he knows the sweet science of boxing." "Crawford has everything...he made no mistakes...he outsmarted Alvarez...he dictated the tempo." "Crawford had superior conditioning, amazing stamina."

Most telling was a comment made in the post-fight news conference by Alvarez, who fought Mayweather in 2013 and lost in a

controversial majority decision. Mayweather was 50-0 in his boxing career, which spanned 1996-2017.

Alvarez said, "I think Crawford is way better than Floyd Mayweather."

**PHONE 402-345-8008
FOR RESERVATIONS**

Past Presidents Dinner

Nov. 13, 2025 • 6 p.m. • \$45

Soup

Lobster Bisque

Amuse

Thunderbird Salad Parmesan Cup

Sorbet

Mango

Entrée

Surf & Turf

Loaded Twice-Baked Potato
Asparagus

Dessert

Chocolate Souffle

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It was a long summer of juggling between work and softball games for our daughter. Anyone who has a softball daughter knows the amount of time spent on that sport. Justine is now a senior in high school, is driving and just finishing her final year of high school softball.

As a parent, the amount of time spent on senior activities is exhausting and yet rewarding. Justine is hoping to continue playing softball while attending nursing school in college.

After finishing his first college year with honors, our son Gabe started his sophomore year at Bellevue University and is playing fall baseball.

At the club, we are now in the fourth quarter of the year, and what we call the busy season for restaurants. This is the time of year when companies plan and begin having annual parties, families celebrate the holidays, and members increasingly enjoy the club's restaurant. We have multiple opportunities for attending events and dinners during the next few months.



Steve Villamonte

- Every Thursday night we have a prime Rib 2-for-1 special.
- Our monthly Thursday lunch forum on Oct. 16 will feature Mayor John Ewing.
- The next Face on the Barroom Floor, for Rev. Tom Fangman on Oct. 30, is quickly selling out.
- The fall wine dinner on Nov. 7 will feature a six-course gourmet presentation with each course paired with a fine wine. This is a great dining benefit because we do not put a limit on the wine you consume with each course.
- The wines are then available for purchase at the end of the dinner, if you have a favorite.
- The annual Past Presidents Dinner is scheduled for Nov. 13, with a favorite menu for those who regularly attend. The dinner includes a crab bisque, surf & turf, and a chocolate souffle.

Being on the top floor of a mostly vacant downtown high-rise, without a captive customer base, offers challenges for our operation. I encourage you to visit the club for lunch or dinner and take advantage of our best-in-town view, food and pricing.

And to First National Bank employees: Check out the FNBO intranet Omaha Press Club link for our daily lunch specials and discount pricing for bank employees.

See you at the club,

- **Steve Villamonte**,
Executive Director

Fall Winemaker's Dinner

Friday, Nov. 7, 2025

5:30 Social • 6 p.m. Dinner

\$90 members, \$100 non-members

Appetizer

Waldorf Salad Flatbread
with Goat Cheese
Wine

Amuse

Butternut Squash Cheese
and Balsamic Glaze
Wine

Salad

Classic Thunderbird
Parmesan Croustade
Wine

Sorbet

Pumpkin Sorbet

Entrée

Broiled Sirloin on a bed
of Harvest Vegetables
and Oven-Roasted
Garlic New Potatoes
Wine: San Polo, Brunello di Montalcino

Dessert

Apple Crisp in a Ramekin
Served with a Chocolate-Covered
Spice Vanilla Ice Cream

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

Thursday, Oct. 16
Noon Forum
Mayor John Ewing
The first 100 days
11:30 a.m. lunch
Noon to 1 p.m. speaker
\$19

Thursday, Oct. 30
Face on the Barroom Floor
Fr. Tom Fangman
(space limited)
5:30 p.m. reception
6:30 p.m. dinner; 8 p.m. roast
\$90 members, \$100 non-members

Friday, Nov. 7
Winemaker's Dinner
5:30 p.m. social, 6 p.m. dinner
\$90 members, \$100 non-members.

Thursday, Nov. 13
Past Presidents Dinner
6 p.m. social, 6:30 p.m. dinner
\$45

Thursday, Nov. 20
Noon Forum
Queen's Butterfly House
11:30 a.m. lunch
Noon to 1 p.m. speaker
\$19

Thursday-Friday
Nov. 27-28
Closed for Thanksgiving

Sunday, Dec. 14
Santa Brunch
Two seatings
10 a.m. to noon
12:30 p.m. to 2-ish

Wednesday, Dec 31
NEW YEAR'S EVE!!!!
Dinner details to come

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.

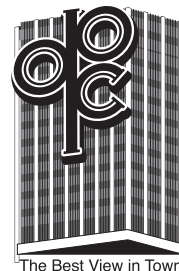
CANCELLATION POLICY: All reservations must be cancelled 48 HOURS in advance.

Hours of Operation

1620 Dodge St., Omaha NE 68102

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

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



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

