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Making Omaha a better community has been goal of Vic Gutman and Roberta Wilhelm

Couple will be honored Sept. 25 as 183rd Face on Barroom Floor

By Tom O'Connor
Communications Committee

For the past 50 years, Vic Gutman and Roberta Wilhelm have gone about their business, managing a wide variety of special events and nonprofits, with one goal in mind – to make our community a better place to live.

On Sept. 25, the duo, who became a married couple in 1998, will be honored for all their efforts to help make Omaha the gem that it is when the Omaha Press Club honors them as the 183rd Face on the Barroom Floor.

A native of Detroit, Gutman moved to Omaha in 1974 and started his own company – Vic Gutman & Associates – in 1978. Inspired by the ambience of the Old Market, Gutman established an arts festival that premiered in 1975 and became known as the Omaha Summer Arts Festival. The festival celebrated its 50th and final event last sum-

mer. He continued to create new events in Omaha, including Christmas at Union Station, the Omaha Food Fair, and the Winter Art Fair.

An Army brat, Wilhelm lived her childhood years on Army bases around the coun-



Vic Gutman and Roberta Wilhelm

try and overseas. She moved to Omaha in 1984. Her first job out of school was at the Emmy Gifford Children's Theater, now The Rose, where she served in a variety of artistic and administrative positions over a period of

20 years, including the last six years as executive director.

For the past two years, Wilhelm has been serving as director of capacity building at Sherwood Foundation. She is probably best known for her previous position at Girls Inc., where she worked for 19 years and served as executive director.

Gutman earned his undergraduate degree at the University of Michigan and his law degree from the Creighton University School of Law. Wilhelm received both her undergraduate degree in theater and her master's degree in acting and directing from the University of Kansas in Lawrence.

Gutman and Wilhelm first met when working at the Rose Theater in 1991. Their combined family includes five children and eight grandchildren, as well as two dogs.

Working with dozens of nonprofit clients to raise money for operating, programming

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Sept. 18 Evening Forum to feature Chief Justice Jeffrey Funke

By Gary Willis
Communications Committee

The Omaha Press Club will host an Evening Forum on Sept. 18 featuring Chief Justice Jeffrey Funke of the Nebraska Supreme Court.

Funke has served as the chief justice since 2024. He previously served as an associate justice on the court from 2016 to 2024. Funke received his undergraduate degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1991 and his Juris Doctor degree from



Justice Jeffrey Funke

the University of Nebraska College of Law in 1994.

After graduating law school, Funke worked in private practice. He also served as a county attorney and as a deputy public defender. Funke served as a county court judge from 2007 to 2013 in Otoe and Sarpy counties, and as a district court judge in Otoe and Cass counties from 2013 to 2016. Both court appointments were by former Gov. Dave Heineman.

Funke was one of seven applicants who sought an open seat on the Supreme Court. He was appointed to the court on June 15, 2016, by Gov. Pete Ricketts to succeed Justice William M. Connolly, who retired effective Aug. 1, 2016. At the time of Funke's appointment, he was the court's youngest

jurist at age 47.

On Oct. 25, 2024, Gov. Jim Pillen announced that he had chosen to elevate Funke to replace retiring Michael Heavican as the chief justice.

Please join us to hear Chief Justice Funke talk on the state of the judicial system in Nebraska. The forum, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at \$25 per person, begins with a social hour and includes a drink ticket (beer, wine, soda) and light hors d'oeuvres.

Everyone is welcome, especially non-OPC members. Reservations can be made on the OPC website. Click on reservations for all events (right side of the RSVP tab) or phone 402-345-8008 option 1.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Mike McKnight
OPC President

Start spreading the news! I'm taking a line from Ol' Blue Eyes to promote a very important event for the Omaha Press Club. On Sept. 18, the OPC Education Committee is hosting an early evening forum with the Honorable Jeffrey Funke, chief justice of the Nebraska Supreme Court.

Be sure to check the story on Page 1 of this newsletter for details and reservations. This will be the first major evening forum for the OPC.

We hope it will give many members of the Omaha area legal community a taste of OPC



Mike McKnight

hospitality and maybe consider joining our wonderful club. The forum will give them a chance to hear from Nebraska's top judge and ask him questions. A bit of a turnaround from arguing a case in front of the state's highest court.

But the event isn't just for the legal profession. Anyone who

wants to learn more about this important branch of state government that affects all Nebraskans will find the forum interesting. So please put the evening of Thursday, Sept. 18 on your personal docket.

Thanks, and see you at the club.

-Mike

Broadcasters induct OPC president

OPC President and WOWT First Alert 6 Investigative Reporter Mike McKnight was inducted into the Nebraska Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame on Aug. 12.

McKnight, a tireless advocate for seeking out the truth and exposing wrongdoing, has taken on big business, government agencies, sketchy contractors and many others despite threats often made against him.

McKnight joined Omaha WOWT TV in 1977 and never dreamed that 49 years later he'd still be holding people accountable as a one-man watchdog through his investigative reporting. One of Nebraska's most respected

reporters, Mike has earned regional Edward R. Murrow Awards and an Eric Sevareid Award along with numerous awards from AP, the NBA, Omaha Press Club and others.

The Broadcasters Association has also recognized McKnight for being on the ground floor in establishing courtroom camera access in Nebraska.

Also inducted at the NBA convention in LaVista were radio legends Dave Wingert of Omaha and Dale Johnson of Lincoln, and Dennis and Kathi Brown, husband-wife owners and operators of Chadron radio stations KCSR-AM and KBPY-FM.

Young journalists need your support more than ever

By Steve Jordon
OPC Foundation

Ispent an inspiring morning this spring with a group of young journalists, along with their parents and teachers, who were honored and given financial support by the Omaha Press Club Foundation and the Nebraska Broadcasters Association.

During a brunch at the club, 20 college students received about \$50,000 total in scholarships for the upcoming school year. Perhaps just as important, their selection from among the state's top journalism students carries the affirmation by more senior journalists that their career paths have value for society at large.

As Marissa Lindemann of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln told the audience:

"Now, more than ever, we need journalists who care, who want to make the world a better place, who want to ask the hard questions and shine light on the issues that are swept under the rug."

And from Ally Sedlacek of the University of Nebraska at Kearney:

"Whether it's telling the story of someone in a small town or shedding light on issues that matter, I've learned how powerful a single voice can be when given the platform to speak."

These scholarships, now in their 49th year, don't happen by accident. Previous and

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Gutman & Wilhelm story; continued from Page 1

and capital campaigns, Gutman branched out to create one of the region's most respected fundraising and consulting companies. As part of this work, Gutman managed the Rose Theater from 2004 to 2007. The company also raised funds to build the Tri-Faith Center, and the mosque on the Tri-Faith grounds.

At Girls Inc., Wilhelm continued the tradition of having a yearly lunch that brought big-name speakers to Omaha to help grow the nonprofit and inspire young ladies to be "strong, smart and bold." Speakers included President Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, Madeleine Albright, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Warren Buffett, all three Clintons – Bill, Hillary and Chelsea – and Barbara and

Jenna Bush, the twin daughters of President George W. Bush and his wife, Laura.

Roasters for Gutman and Wilhelm will include:

- Emcee - Emiliano Lerda, CEO and co-founder, Elevator Co-Warehousing + Community;
- Emily Mwaja, director of capacity building, Sherwood Foundation; and
- Julie Walker, managing director, The Rose Theater.

All the roasters will be roasting both Gutman and Wilhelm.

FACE ON BARROOM FLOOR – VIC GUTMAN AND ROBERTA WILHELM

**WHEN: THURSDAY, SEPT. 25;
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. MEMBERS CAN CHARGE TO
THEIR OPC ACCOUNT. NON-MEM-
BERS NEED TO PROVIDE THEIR
CREDIT CARD INFORMATION.**

Remembering Rosalee Roberts, an Omaha PR legend

By Tom O'Connor

Communications Committee

Rosalee Roberts, APR, Fellow PRSA, a legendary public relations professional in Omaha and a longtime supporter of the Omaha Press Club, died in her home on July 29 at the age

of 81. In 1995, Roberts and another Omaha PR icon, Bill Ramsey, were honored as the OPC's 59th Face on the Barroom Floor.

Ramsey, who died in 2016 at the age of 86, was OPC president in 1974 and was recipient of the club's Distinguished Member Award. He was founder of the PR agency Bill Ramsey Associates. He authored a history on Council Bluffs and a book, "The Times I've Seen." A veteran, Ramsey was pictured in the Face drawing wearing his corporal stripes as a reminder of his service in the U.S. Marines during the Korean War.

An Omaha native, Roberts graduated from Cathedral High School in 1961 and earned a cum laude double Bachelor of Arts degree in English and drama from Duchesne College of the Sacred Heart in 1965.

Her illustrious career spanned more than five decades, beginning as a copywriter/broadcast producer and advertising/public relations account executive for several small Omaha advertising agencies in 1966 to ultimately establishing her own firm, Rosalee Roberts Public Relations, in 1998, with clients in health care, food and entertainment.

Roberts spent 22 years at Bozell & Jacobs, an international advertising and public relations firm, advancing from public relations director to partner of Bozell Worldwide, Inc. As part of her work with Bozell, Roberts was instrumental in making the Henry Doorly Zoo one of the top tourist attractions in



Rosalee Roberts

Nebraska, and she successfully publicized and promoted live shows, such as Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus, Disney on Ice, and Monster Jam.

After leaving Bozell, she held a dual position as vice president of community relations and development at Children's Hospital and executive director of the Children's Hospital Foundation.

At the end of her career, she served as public relations director for Omaha Performing Arts, retiring in 2019.

An accredited member of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the world's largest organization dedicated to the profession, Roberts was one of only two Nebraskans elected to PRSA's College of Fellows, the highest PRSA honor. Eligibility for the College of Fellows was extended to only an elite group of senior members based on their experience, talents, contributions and dedication to the profession.

In 1992, Roberts became the only Nebraskan elected national president of PRSA. While president, she initiated global communications opportunities, encouraged the return to organizational strategic planning and helped create the multicultural affairs program. Prior to becoming president, Roberts served as a PRSA director-at-large for two years and as secretary and president-elect. She was a past national president of the PRSA Foundation, served as the chair of PRSA's Nominating Committee and was the national chair of a PRSA Task Force on the Study of Ethical Issues.

Roberts was affiliated with numerous professional and civic associations and boards, both locally and nationally. These included All Our Kids, the national and Heartland Chapter of the American Red Cross, Better Business Bureau, Child Saving Institute, Keep Omaha Beautiful, Nebraska Humane Society and the media committee for the Omaha Metropolitan Media Response System. She also was active in the American Advertising Federation, QUAD and the Salvation Army.

Roberts received countless professional honors and awards. They included:

- the Distinguished Journalism Award from Kappa Tau Alpha, the national journalism society through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln;
- the Communications Achievement Award from the University of Nebraska Omaha's Communications and Journalism Department;
- six national PRSA presidential citations for outstanding service in the public relations field;
- being named Public Relations Professional of the Year and earning a special service award from the Nebraska Chapter of PRSA;
- being selected as one of eight Outstanding Women of Distinction by the YWCA for her continued efforts to eliminate discrimination;
- being named Woman of the Year by the Omaha Federation of Advertising for her work with civic and charitable organizations and her dedication to the continued education of young people entering the communications field;
- receiving the Outstanding Achievement in Road Marketing & Press Award and Publicist of the Year Award from the Broadway League; and
- numerous other awards including the Omaha Press Club's Career Achievement Award, Phi Chi Theta Businesswoman of the Year Award, several local and regional ADDY Awards, the Arthritis Foundation National Volunteer of the Year Award, and a Small Business Administration Achievement Award.

Roberts also served as a visiting professor for the University of Nebraska Omaha and was regularly asked to serve as a guest lecturer at several colleges and universities.

She was preceded in death by husband Robert W. Roberts, parents Leo J. and Madeline M. Ohlinger, brother LeVern "Vern" Ohlinger, sisters Judy Sampier and Joyce Cockson. She is survived by daughter Cathy Roberts Martin and many other family members.

Jordon story; continued from Page 2

current generations of journalists and others devoted to freedom of information raise money and make donations to provide long-lasting support and encouragement to future generations of journalists. You may recall the Omaha Press Club's 50-plus years of gridiron shows, which provided the foundation for

the scholarships.

The OPC Foundation continues the scholarship tradition, with this year's students joining more than 400 past recipients. The goal is to maintain a corps of journalists who, under the First Amendment's free press doctrine, will inform our citizens far into the future.

In this age of ubiquitous communica-

tions, from sources factual and otherwise, the light future journalists will shine is indeed important.

Jordon (steve.jordon@gmail.com) is a former reporter and editor at The Omaha World-Herald, past president of the Omaha Press Club and a founding director, past president, and director emeritus of the Omaha Press Club Foundation.

A MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGER

This hot summer is almost behind us. Fall brings something new starting with an evening forum on Sept. 18 with Nebraska's Chief Justice Jeffrey J. Funke.



Christine Villamonte

A 4:30 p.m. social will feature light hors d'oeuvres and a drink ticket for \$25. Funke will speak at 5:30 p.m. for an hour. There will be time for questions and answers. The chief justice has quite a resume, so join us at the club for a most interesting evening.

Sept. 4 is the date for our biannual New Member Reception. Come join the committee chairs and the new members to get in-depth knowledge of the OPC. Learn a little or a lot about the city club you call yours.

Another special event this month is the Face on the Barroom Floor honoring Vic Gutman and Roberta Wilhelm on Sept. 25. The roasters will be leading the fun and telling stories for the 18-and-older crowd... just kidding, but the lineup will keep you laughing.

The club will be closed on Sept. 26th for lunch (dinner is open). Steve and I will be dancing in front of our daughter (and the entire school and facility!) for the Plattsmouth senior skit from 12:30 to 1 p.m. (open to the public).

We both work the OPC lunch shift since

Covid-19 (keeping the dues down until the new tenants move into our building). So my apologies for closing the kitchen on the 26th.

Daughter Justine does not read these newsletters, so we are safe to say we are going to have some old-fashioned embarrassing memories to create as this is a SURPRISE. More than 60 parents (very few men) have been practicing our skits on Sunday nights in the school gym. The theme is 1990s and 2000s music with a dance-off between the two split groups.

For the record, no dancing skills make for better comedy. Steve and I did this for our son, Gabe, two years ago when he was a senior. The memories are still vivid for the entire family and maybe the entire Class of 2024. Gabe is now a second-year student at Bellevue University playing baseball. Both of our kids have worked at the club for many years when available. Introduce yourselves; have them share a story.

Fr. Tom Fangman of St. Patrick's Parish in Elkhorn has agreed to be a Face on the Barroom Floor on Oct. 30. It promises to be an amazing event.

We do four Face events a year. If you are interested in nominating someone, go to the omahapressclub.com site, Faces icon and scroll down to the nominate button. Our Face Committee, chaired by Roger Humphries, reviews and votes on the nominees.

Looking farther down the line, our next Winemaker's Dinner will be Nov. 7. The traditional Friday night date shakes off the dust of the work week with five wines during a

six-course meal (the sorbet cleanser does not have a wine paired). The food menu is always distinctive with a flair straight from Steve's creative mind.

Come and enjoy the fun with Mark from Johnson Brothers boutique wines. Mark is a sommelier (only five in the state of Nebraska). Sommeliers must pass rigorous classes and wine tastings.

Sounds rough, right? Ask Mark how many sensors are on his tongue to identify the many hundreds of wines he must taste. He talks about wine at your level, so ask away and just enjoy the knowledge he shares. He'll go from table to table to give more information if you entertain the idea.

See you this fall at your club!

- Christine Villamonte
Restaurant and Events Manager

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

**The Omaha Press Club
celebrates its 183rd
Face on the Barroom Floor
Vic Gutman & Roberta Wilhelm**

Thursday, Sept. 25, 2025
\$90 members, \$100 non-members
Business casual attire
5:30 p.m. cocktails
& hors d'oeuvres
(cash bar)
6:30 p.m. dinner

Salad

OPC's Signature Thunderbird Salad

Dual Entrée

OPC Signature Filet Maître d'hôtel
Butter & Chicken Madeira
Twice-Baked Potato
Vegetable Medley

Dessert

Apple Crisp a la Mode

First 100 days for Mayor Ewing

By Gary Willis
Communications Committee

September will mark the passing of 100 days since the installation of Omaha's new mayor. John W. Ewing Jr. will address the Oct. 16th Noon Forum on his first 100 days in office.

Ewing 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.

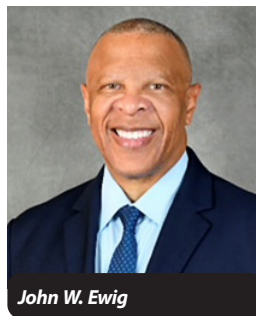
John Ewing served the Omaha Police Department for nearly 25 years, from 1981 to 2006, and retired at the rank of deputy chief. He is also an associate minister with Salem Baptist Church.

At the OPC Forum, Mayor Ewing will

discuss his first 100 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.



John W. Ewing

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Education Dr. Robert Meyers
Executive Committee Dr. Robert Meyers, Jeremy Maskel,
Mike McKnight, and Hunter Samuels
"Face on the Barroom Floor" Roger Humphries
Hall of Fame Dr. Robert Meyers
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WE'RE ONLINE! READ YOUR OPC NEWSLETTER AT OMAHAPRESSCLUB.COM



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

Thursday, Sept. 4
New Member Reception
4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Light hors d'oeuvres
and drink ticket, \$10
Reservations required

Thursday, Sept. 18
Evening Forum
4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Nebraska Supreme Court
Chief Justice Jeffrey Funke
Light hors d'oeuvres
and drink ticket, \$25

Thursday, Sept. 25
Face on the Barroom Floor -
Vic Gutman/Roberta Wilhelm
5:30 p.m. reception
6:30 p.m. dinner; 8 p.m. roast
\$90 members, \$100 non-members

Friday, Sept. 26
Closed for lunch
Steve's and Christine's
school skit debut
(See the manager's column)

Thursday, Oct. 16
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
5:30 p.m. reception
6:30 p.m. dinner; 8 p.m. roast
\$90 members, \$100 non-members

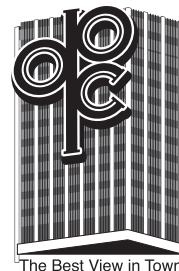
Friday, Nov. 7
Winemaker's Dinner
5:30 p.m. social, 6 p.m. dinner
\$90 members, \$100 non-members

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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Don Summerside Copy Editor

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

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.