



#131  
 John and Kate Cavanaugh  
 November 2011

The caricature features a logo for Building Bright Futures where John Cavanaugh has been executive director since 2007. Also in the illustration are Nebraska’s Capitol and the U.S. Congress. John was elected in 1972 to the Nebraska Legislature for two terms and then to two terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. While living there, Kate wrote a column “Letter from Washington” for the Omaha Sun Newspaper. In 1980 John returned to Omaha to practice law.

In the drawing, Kate is holding her best-selling book “Pete Goes to Grand Island” (she wrote three children’s books) and displaying pictures of their eight children. Kate also published two volumes of her popular weekly Omaha World-Herald column. She was director of community relations for the Omaha Children’s Museum for five years. She is president of KAC INC, a book publishing company, and has been an adjunct professor at Creighton University. A poster shown for United Nations World Environment Day is a reminder of Kate’s service as Omaha chairman in 2010.

Whooping cranes are patting John on the back for his 20-year service to the Platte Valley Habitat Trust. Also in the drawing, an infant with a can of baby food illustrates John's experience in international business law introducing American food companies into the former Soviet Union.

The OPC celebration attracted a full house to the roast at the OPC. (Or, as roast emcee James Fogarty observed: "I didn't know there were this many Democrats left in Nebraska.") The festivities began with a blessing of the roasters by Father George Sullivan, S.J., past president of Creighton Prep. Then Fogarty and John Prescott kicked off the roast with a new version of the folk song "Red River Valley." A sampling of the Prescott lyrics:

*"Once we sent John and Kate off to Congress.  
They were happy with what they found there.  
The Republicans thought they were Commies  
When they saw all their kids had red hair.  
John worked hard in the House for Jimmy Carter  
And Kate landed a newspaper job.  
Then John said two terms were sufficient  
And he stuck all of us with Hal Daub."*

Other roasters included former Mayor Mike Fahey, philanthropist Dick Holland and educational consultant Diane Flynn, former principal of Sacred Heart School. Sen. Ben Nelson sent written congratulations. Flynn remembered Kate's tabletop dancing whenever her hometown song "Chicago" was played. Fahey saluted the Cavanaughs as "the Kennedys of Omaha"; however, he noted Republicans might call them "the Sopranos of Omaha." Holland wondered how the Press Club "ever figured out how to get all the Cavanaughs in here. My daughter says whenever she can't sleep, she starts counting Cavanaughs.

Several of their eight children performed as the Cavanaugh Family Players. They needled their parents with lines such as: "Mom and Dad, you treated us all equally and never showed favoritism – well, except when you wrote three books about Pete." John and Kate teamed up at the microphone to respond to their roasters:

To Fogarty: "Your Sunday morning TV program is single-handedly credited with getting people to go back to church on Sunday mornings."

To Fahey: "The only criticism I've heard about the naming of Mike Fahey Street is that you're not dead yet."

To Holland: "He prides himself on being called 'The Old Man'. But he's not nearly as old as he looks. He is, however, much richer than he looks."

Artist Jim Horan concluded: "This is possibly the most people I've ever drawn in one picture for a Face on the Barroom Floor."