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Otter thrives at Loaves and Fishes roast

By Michael Brown
Editor

BOISE — The 2009 Loaves and Fishes Gala benefiting Catholic Charities of Idaho was a veritable feast with grilled steak, baked salmon and, by the end of the night, roasted Otter.

Stings and barbs were traded by the target of the political roast, Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter, and his roasters, Lt. Gov. Brad Little, state Sen. John McGee and A.K. Leinhart-Minnick, wife of Democratic U.S. Rep. Walt Minnick.

When it was Otter's time to return volleys, he was more than up to the task, before offering reflections on the work of Catholic Charities amid difficult economic times.

"These are tough times, but we've been there before," Otter said, recalling that as a young boy and son of an electrician, his large family often struggled to make ends meet when there was no work available.

"One Christmas, the only gifts we had we found in the Christmas basket left for us by our local Catholic Charities," he said.

Otter, who attended Catholic elementary and high school, recalled how he got the nickname "Butch," from the Sisters of the Holy Cross



OTTER ON TOP — After being skewered and roasted by politicians and pundits from each party, Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter rises to the podium to respond at the Third Loaves and Fishes Gala Oct. 16 at the Stueckle Sky Center's Double R

Ranch Room, located at Bronco Stadium in Boise. Almost 250 attended the event, which raised money for programs run by Catholic Charities of Idaho. A CCI spokesman said the agency met its goal with the event. (ICR photo)

who taught at the former St. Teresa Academy in Boise. His parents named him "Clement," Otter said, a moniker he detested. "There were about seven Pope Clements, and half of them were bad."

However, the real burner

was a 1950s' character called "Clem Kadiddlehopper," popularized by comedian Red Skelton. Otter recalled getting into frequent scuffles with his classmates during recesses after being teased because he had the same

first name as the fictitious country bumpkin.

"After a while, the nuns agreed for the sake of peace in the schoolyard, that it was better to call me 'Butch,'" he said, and the name stuck.

The governor also singled

out Father W. Thomas Faucher, pastor of St. Mary's in Boise and longtime friend. Both entered the seminary, with Father Faucher studying at Mount Angel in Oregon

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and Otter entering St. Martin Abbey, a Benedictine school of formation in Washington. "I went there because I thought they were the guys who made the brandy," Otter said. "Well, Tom made it (to ordination) and I didn't."

A successful business leader, Otter entered politics in 1972, but the issue of religion didn't surface until his successful 1986 race for lieutenant governor. A local reporter asked him if God was calling him to the political office. Off the record, Otter recalled, his reply was succinct. "I didn't get a call from him (God), but I did get calls from a few precinct committeemen."

Earlier in the evening, as people were finishing dinner, a lesser-known star took to the dias: Sossan Razaee. Razaee is the daughter of an Afghan general whose family fled their homeland during earlier unrest. First the family settled in Pakistan, then Iran, each time being forced to move on short notice after receiving threats against their lives. The family settled in Boise in 2003. Catholic Charities of Idaho offered programs that helped them, Razaee said.

Her father now serves in the U.S. Army and she is studying biology at Boise State University with plans to be a neurosurgeon. "I am very grateful to be in the U.S.," she said. "You rock!"

Just under 250 attended the dinner, held at the Stueckle Sky Center Double R Ranch Room Oct. 16. That number was a significant increase over similar events. While declining to say how much was brought in by the event, a CCI spokesman indicated that this was the agency's largest fund raising event and "achieved its goal."



Good times at Loaves and Fishes

Catholic Charities of Idaho's Oct. 16 Loaves and Fishes Gala featured a political roast, but also meant meeting new friends and greeting old ones. Above, Deacon Pierce Murphy, chairman of the Board of Directors of CCI, thanks Sossan Razaee for telling her story to those gathered, as CCI Executive Director Rosio Gonzalez looks on. Razaee is a member of an Afghan family assisted by CCI in resettling in Boise. At left, Boise State University President Bob Kustra sets the table with roasters, from left, A.K. Leinhart-Minnick, wife of Democratic Rep. Walt Minnick; state Sen. John McGee; and Lt. Gov. Brad Little. At right, in cowboy boots, is Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter. (ICR photos)