



THE
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF THE
FIRST FRIDAY
BREAKFAST CLUB, INC.

First Friday News & Views

NOVEMBER
2005
VOLUME
10
ISSUE
11

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CALENDAR

▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, November 4 @ Hoyt Sherman Place.

The speaker will be Sheila Hanke, Curator of the Iowa Civil War Battle Flags Preservation Project.

▼ R.S.V.P. by Tuesday, November 1 to <Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com> or 288-2500.

To Hell in a Horn of Plenty

By Jonathan Wilson

It's getting harder to get into heaven. It was one thing in years gone by to know and ignore the plight of a few folks living in your hometown. With instant, world-wide communications, however, we're being damned by graphic, irrefutable evidence of indescribable squalor suffered daily by our fellow human beings around the world.

The news from Niger has been sobering, and the pictures horrifying. Fully one quarter of the children there die before the age of five. Life expectancy is the ripe young age of 46 years. The Grim Reaper is nothing other than garden-variety starvation. As I write this, as you read this, and all the time in between, human beings are *starving* to death. And they will keep on dying indefinitely for lack of basic sustenance. There is no apparent end in sight. Loving mothers and fathers are watching helplessly as their children waste away until they are too weak to cry and eventually stop breathing altogether. The silence then must be deafening. They are denied information and resources for family planning, and the cycle of privation repeats, endlessly.



JONATHAN WILSON

And at the same time, obesity is the fastest growing health challenge in the United States of America.

Our "Christian nation" is undoubtedly the wealthiest on earth. Thanksgiving is just around the corner. Are we to thank God that ours is the most profligately wealthy nation in the history of humankind? Is our affluence the work of a just God rewarding our virtue or an accident of birth, history, and geography? If our circumstances are the reward of a just and loving God, what did the folks in Niger do to offend him?

Regardless of who or what we have to thank for it, our affluence happens to be killing us. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions. By the year 2000, all of the 50 states except Colorado had obesity prevalence of 15 percent or greater, with 22 of the 50 states having obesity prevalence as high as 20 percent of the population, or more. The

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over-all average for obesity in the United States increased by 56% in 2001 alone; it has increased by about 75% in less than 10 years. We've got a growing number who can't see their genitals without a mirror. We are eating ourselves to death while others are dying of starvation. Look around the table at Thanksgiving dinner. Visit the Iowa State Fair. Take a look at Jerry Falwell. Take a look at William Bennett. Use a wide angle lens if you want a picture. The sin of gluttony is upon us. And the guilty are without remorse, preoccupied with pointing the accusing finger at the hyped short-comings of others.

We respond apparently to nightly commercials for easy weight loss schemes, often guaranteeing success without sacrificing favorite foods. Those of us looking for a no-sacrifice diet just want to keep stuffing ourselves without looking like blimps. We want to change our looks, not our lives. When we still don't lose tonnage, we turn to liposuction to remove some of the most unsightly rolls of fat. It's estimated that with over 400,000 liposuction procedures last year in the United States alone, we

annually shed over 1000 TONS of unwanted fat the fast way, and without fasting.

Worse, our television programming has actually turned to eating contests, of all things. Featured are two men who have obviously not missed many meals. They station themselves side-by-side behind platters of food on pedestals, and they proceed to shovel food into their mouths by the hands-full, while the clock ticks. As they get close to an empty plate, a faceless staff member replenishes it and they continue non-stop. It's decadent, destructive, and disgusting. It's a celebration of sin. I shudder at the thought of those images getting to Niger, instead of relief. And some of us still can't figure out why we would be hated.

Those to whom much is given, much will be required. We're eating; they're starving; the clock is ticking . . . or is it a time bomb. We'd better be praying there isn't a just God. If there is, we're going to have hell to pay. Our plenty and the privation of others is not just killing us and them, it's condemning us.

—Jonathan Wilson

Think "Outside" the Classroom

By Jay Cole Simser

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The things taught in schools and colleges are not an education, but the means to an education."

It may be time to rethink "outside" the classroom.

Teaching our children to become productive citizens has followed a pattern. A teacher with a certain number of pupils goes through a set curriculum for nine months, after which the pupils move on to another teacher and repeat the pattern until they graduate. With that pattern, students today are not necessarily being prepared for the world in which they will live and function.

As a classroom teacher for 38 years, I always tried to give students skills for success at the next level of their schooling. I also tried

to instill what they would need for success in an increasingly complex society. I was most successful with those students who had engaged, concerned, caring adults in their lives.

Over the years I observed students develop what I termed a "microwave mentality." They wanted it hot, they wanted it fast, and they wanted to put as little effort into getting it as possible. They did not get a gourmet meal with that attitude.

Those involved in education, and that's all of us, should reexamine our past assumptions and patterns for delivering education. That reexamination should challenge the nine month school year; should explore less rigidly structured grade levels; should better integrate curriculum across traditional subjects; should make sure that students learn critical thinking skills; should more actively involve the students' adult support system; and should deal with poverty and hunger so that students are capable of learning.

Education doesn't have to remain static just be-

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cause of “tradition” or “because we have always done it that way.” We must change things in our education delivery because our world is changing.

Lawmakers have a responsibility to participate in that reexamination. They have the responsibility to see that the schools are adequately funded and staffed with

“Over the years I observed students develop what I termed a ‘microwave mentality.’ They wanted it hot, they wanted it fast, and they wanted to put as little effort into getting it as possible.”

people adequately compensated for their teaching and their own continuing education. They must have modern facilities, current materials, and supportive technology. They need to make sure that the one institution upon which our democratic civilization depends does not fail to meet the needs of a changing world.

Chateaubriand, a French philosopher once said, “Change, the law of life!” I know that schools have changed over the past, but they have not changed as fast as our world has. It is time we did something about it.

—Jay Cole Simser

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the November 4 meeting no later than Tuesday, November 1. Reply to Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com or 288-2500.



Thanks to Scott Johnson for his introduction of our October speaker, Ben Stone, of the Iowa Civil Liberties Union.



Note your calendar for Friday, December 16. FFBC member Mark Babcock will perform “Traditions of Santa Lucia/A Salisbury Holiday” at Salisbury House. The program will feature organ music and a vocal ensemble at 7:30 p.m.

ICLU’S Ben Stone Calls Sex Offender Law Ineffective

By Bruce McCabe

Defending the rights of those spurned by society is not an easy job. Especially when those people are sex offenders. Ben Stone, Executive Director of the Iowa Civil Liberties Union, took on that task at the October meeting and criticized the Sex Offender Registry law and how it is applied to restricting where those on the Sex Offender Registry may live.

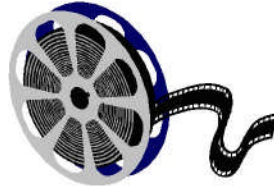
“This law is not only a law enforcement nightmare, but it also breaks up families, separating parents from their children, causing homelessness and – unless changes are made – will likely cost the taxpayers millions,” said Stone. He added that the residency restrictions are ineffective because they do not focus on the offenders who are a threat to small children and do not prevent predators from traveling to areas where children could be abducted.

In continuing remarks, Stone added that *“the 2,000 foot rule* (in regard to daycare centers and schools) *applies equally to all kinds of people who don’t fit the public perception of the typical sex offender.”* He offered examples where a 19-year-old had sex with a 15-year-old, as well as people who pleaded guilty to exposing themselves at a party. He also said that *“most significantly, the law has no time limit – middle-aged fathers with wives and children, who have had no criminal convictions for decades, are being forced to leave their family and likely become homeless.”*

Anyone wanting further information or to join may visit the Iowa Civil Liberties Union website at: <http://www.iowaclu.org>.

—Bruce McCabe

A History of Violence



Starring Viggo Mortensen, Maria Bello, Ed Harris,
William Hurt, Ashton Holmes, Heidi Hayes

Directed by
David Cronenberg
1 Hour 38 Minutes

I have never been a big fan of David Cronenberg movies. Although the movie, “The Fly” (1986) was an interesting remake of the original, albeit a bit goopy, “Naked Lunch” (1991) and “Crash” (1997) were just too weird and/or demented for me. But Mr. Cronenberg hits a home-run with “A History of Violence.” The film opens at a somewhat desolate and eerily quiet motel. An opening too ordinary and dull that from the title of the movie you know something must have gone on inside. Ultimately you follow a character inside the motel and you see the violence that had preceded the opening. It leads to the killing of an innocent child that is reminiscent of the opening introduction of the Henry Fonda character in “Once Upon a Time in the West.” The bad are clearly established early.

Next we visit Millbrook, a quiet small town, and meet the Stall family. Tom Stall (Viggo Mortensen), the father, runs a small diner, the type with good home cookin’. His son, Jack (Ashton Holmes), is a bright pacifist who is often the victim of the class bully. His daughter, Sarah (Heidi Hayes), is a cute little girl who dreams of shadow monsters and is reassured by the family that monsters don’t exist in real life. The mom, Edie (Maria Bello), is shown entertaining her husband with a little bit of kinky, role-playing fantasy sex. A generally happy setting is thus established, but soon these two worlds collide, and violence begets more violence. Violence creeps into the Stall family bit-by-bit, one member at a time, until it becomes a part of their lives and even their sexuality.

At this point the film becomes a modern version of the Western where a man is trying to escape his past,

but the past keeps coming back to haunt him, to seek him out. Finally he has to confront the problem head-on.

The evolution of the story is riveting. It keeps you on the edge of your seat wondering what will happen next. Finally the showdown is in a wonderfully gothic house with William Hurt playing this cool-talking Godfather figure. You know visiting this place will not be pleasant.

Ultimately, the film concludes with a touching scene of family acceptance.

This is a must-see movie, one you won’t forget for a long time. It is an example of masterful storytelling.

—Gary Kaufman

Gay and Gray Events

Please mark your calendars for the upcoming workshop sponsored by **Gay and Gray**.

The workshop is designed to address issues facing those in the Gay and Gray category.

Please come to the LGBT Center, 3839 Merle Hay Road, Suite 227. The workshop will last approximately 1 ½ hours.

Financial Issues Workshop led by Rick Davis on Tuesday, November 8th at 6:30 p.m.

Bring your notebook for this informative session. Light refreshments will be provided.

Mark your calendars for Sunday afternoon, December 11th for a Gay and Gray holiday reception to be held at the LBGT Center.

StageWest Theater Company
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Angels in America
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and 26-30

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama
Winner of the Tony Award for Best Play
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"A vast miraculous play...provocative, witty and deeply upsetting...a searching and radical rethinking of American political drama..." —Frank Rich, New York Times

"Something rare, dangerous and harrowing...a roman candle hurled into a drawing room..."—Nicholas de Jongh, London Evening Standard

"Establishes Kushner as a poet and moral visionary in love with the theater yet awake in the world." —Don Shewey, Village Voice

Tickets:

Available in person at the Civic Center Ticket Office, through Ticketmaster at 243-1888 or online at www.civiccenter.org

Price:

\$11/Wednesdays; \$16 Thursdays/Sundays; \$18 Fridays/Saturdays. Half-price rush tickets available 30 minutes before the show. FFBC Members: \$2 discount per ticket (not good on half-price tickets). StageWest season subscriptions will be available during the run. StageWest Information: 309-0251 or visit us at www.StageWestIowa.com

Family Pride Coalition Halloween Party

Saturday, October 22
3:00 - 6:00 PM

Timberline Campground
3165 Ashworth Road, Waukee



Join other lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and allied individuals and families for a campfire, hay-rack rides, and marshmallows! Costumes welcomed and encouraged!

Price: \$5/person (children 3 and under are free)

Please bring drinks for your family (alcohol-free) and snacks to share. Marshmallows will be provided.

RSVP to Laura Fefchak by October 19:

lfefchak@msn.com

The Family Pride Coalition is a group of LGBTQA individuals and families offering support and social opportunities, while advocating for the full inclusion of LGBT families in our communities.



FFBC Scholarship Awards

Award Year	Number of Scholars	Scholarship Total
1997	1	\$ 3,000.00
1998	2	3,000.00
1999	3	3,000.00
2000	4	8,000.00
2001	4	3,000.00
2002	3	2,500.00
2003	5	7,500.00
2004	4	6,000.00
2005	11	13,000.00
Total	37	\$ 49,000.00

FFBC

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News & Views*

Des Moines, Iowa

NOVEMBER 2005

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From the Editor

A CAPITOL IDEA



Most of you have, at some point, visited Iowa's beautiful Capitol. According to the many tourists who try to visit all the state capitols, it is one of the most impressive state capitols in the United States. They tell me that it can only be eclipsed by the Capitol in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. I have never been to Harrisburg, so I cannot corroborate their opinions. One tourist I recently took through kept raving about our Capitol but continued insisting that Harrisburg's was better. That was until I took him into the Law Library. When he walked inside that overwhelming room, he sucked in his breath and said that Iowa surpassed Harrisburg!

Our Capitol is undergoing a thorough restoration, and I recently received information provided by Mark Johnson of the Department of Administrative Services regarding the time line for the work.

Currently, the old Supreme Court chamber and some committee rooms on the first floor are being restored, and the second and third floor restrooms are being renovated. This work is slated to be finished by December 1. After the legislative session is over next spring, the restoration caused by last Christmas Eve's water damage is slated to be completed (depending on how well the damaged plaster dries). That expensive incident needn't have happened, but one cannot cry over spilt milk (or water, in this case). We can only hope that such an occurrence does not happen again.

Between 2007 and 2009, the rotunda is slated to be restored, and the hole in the first floor that was opened up in 1915 will go back to its original thick glass with iron webbing. Also, the unsightly tile that now occupies the first floor will be replaced with tiles that resemble the original nineteenth century design. At this point, however, no funds have been appropriated for work beyond 2006.

Personally, I would like to see a bipartisan Capitol Restoration Commission, appointed by the Governor, to oversee the restoration and continuing renovation of our Capitol. The commission would review proposed recommendations and rule which are appropriate or inappropriate. For too many years, bad decisions by people who thought they knew best have caused great damage to this historic structure (see the previous-mentioned first floor tiles).

If you haven't been to the Capitol for awhile, I urge you to come for a visit. The guided tours are free, and the building is open Monday through Saturday but closed on Sundays and holidays.

—Steve Person

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