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First Friday News & Views

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It's An Ill Wind

by Jonathan Wilson

Since his first inauguration in January 2001, George W. Bush has occupied the Oval Office. In that time myriad important issues, both foreign and domestic, have come to his desk for decision. It seemed that he was rarely even at that desk until 9/11 of that year. He'd been specifically warned, in writing, that Osama Bin Laden planned to crash airplanes into selected targets within the US, but he blew off that warning, explaining later that the warning was merely historical context and not a real warning or immediate threat. He vowed to track down Bin Laden and bring him and his confederates to justice. So far he's completely blown that undertaking. Bin Laden remains at large and one and only one purported 9/11 collaborator has been tried for his non-role in the attacks. When informed of an all out attack on our homeland, again Bush blew it, spending vital minutes continuing to read "My Pet Goat" to a class of elementary kids.

With the same stupidity as an attack on Mexico would have been in response to Pearl Harbor, he decided to launch an unprovoked attack on Iraq based on faulty or manipulated intelligence, but certainly based on erroneous information about a threat from Saddam's nonexistent weapons of mass destruction and his non-involvement with Al Qaida. Never mind that 15 of the 9/11 hijackers were Al Qaida members from undemocratic Saudi Arabia and *none* were from Iraq.

In the realm of foreign policy decisions, the Iraq war has to rank as one of the worst blunders in our history and, in making it, he blew a decision of epoch proportions. And then came the prosecution of the war itself, and he blew that as well, destroying critical infrastructure, disbanding the Iraqi army, and slaughtering countless innocent civilians. Likewise the post-war planning. He has blown the revised rationale of "bringing democracy" to Iraq that is apparently, to all but President Bush and a few of his henchmen, engulfed in civil war. He has blown any claim to compassion by refusing to attend the funeral of even one American casualty from the Iraq war. Beyond blowing the Iraq war, he's blown the war on terror by exposing soft targets around the world to greater threat and setting American soldiers up as sitting ducks in a foreign land.

That was followed in the national security arena by blowing the cover of a CIA

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CALENDAR

▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, May 5 @ Hoyt Sherman Place.

The speaker will be Chuck Wolfe of the Victory Fund.

▼ R.S.V.P. by Tuesday, May 2 to Jonathan. Wilson @lawiowa.com or 288-2500 by phone.

agent, lying that he didn't know who in his administration might have done it, and claiming that the leaker might never be known. And so he might wish since he was the culprit, and he was busy covering up his complicity.

On the domestic front, after supposedly revamping our post-9/11 emergency preparedness, the winds of

“President Bush’s track record in the Oval Office, across the board, is abysmal. It makes me nostalgic for the day when the only thing being blown in the Oval Office was the President himself.”

Katrina blew in on the Gulf Coast, and he was specifically warned of its coming and the likelihood that protective levies would fail. He blew the response from evacuation to rebuilding, in part because he'd blown the imperative to appoint someone competent to head FEMA. That mistake he tried to repeat in appointing a new Supreme Court Justice. He withdrew the nomination when even his Republican collaborators in the Congress wouldn't confirm her competence for the job.

More on the domestic front: he has blown any attempt to rein in even one dollar of Congressional spending by his failure to veto a single spending bill during his term in office, all while funding a war “off-budget” and giving tax cuts to his cronies, the very rich. On his watch the budget surplus has changed to unprecedented deficits, the national debt ceiling has been repeatedly raised, and our negative trade balance has burgeoned. More than half our IOUs are held by foreign countries. That particular domestic failing blows an ill-wind for our national security and the future security of our children and grandchildren. He punctuated his nonchalance about our security with the Dubai ports deal, cozying up to the undemocratic United Arab Emirates, the homeland of two 9/11 hijackers.



He's also blown his oath to uphold the Constitution and laws of the United States by

countenancing torture of persons in US custody in violation of the Geneva Conventions, denying US citizens the right to counsel and the right to habeas corpus, and illegally authorizing warrantless eavesdropping on US citizens.

President Bush's track record in the Oval Office, across the board, is abysmal. It makes me nostalgic for the day when the only thing being blown in the Oval Office was the President himself.

—Jonathan Wilson

May Speaker Profile

Chuck Wolfe is the president and CEO of the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund and Leadership Institute*, the nation's leading organization that identifies, trains, and supports openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender candidates; campaign staff; and officials. The organization is nonpartisan and works at the federal, state, and local levels. He is responsible for the organization's strategic planning and has put in place an aggressive growth plan which includes building a presence in 13 “Horizon States” that lack any openly gay or lesbian public officials. Mr. Wolfe's long-term involvement with the Victory Fund and Leadership Institute includes four years of service on its Board of Directors.



Chuck Wolfe

Mr. Wolfe has an extensive background in politics, issue advocacy, and organizational development. He previously served as executive vice-president and chief operating officer of the American Legacy Foundation which was created as a result of the 46-state settlement with the tobacco industry. Mr. Wolfe was the Foundation's first employee and initiated programs such as the renowned TRUTH campaign. He has emerged as a leading authority in the public health movement to reduce the devastating effects of tobacco use. Numerous media out-

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lets, including **60 Minutes**, have featured his efforts; the National Tobacco Control Conference, the National Governor's Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the American Cancer Society have showcased his expertise. Several state governments and national campaigns have sought his counsel.

Mr. Wolfe entered the public and non-profit sector as an appointee to the late Florida Governor Lawton Chiles. In addition to serving on the governor's 1994 re-

election campaign as operations manager, he served the governor for seven years in such capacities as director of external affairs, director of tobacco control, and executive director of the Miami Financial Oversight Board. During his tenure, among numerous other achievements, Mr. Wolfe developed and implemented programs that aided the relief efforts of Hurricane Andrew, the City of Miami's financial emergency program, and the Florida Tobacco Pilot Program.

An accomplished speaker, Mr. Wolfe enjoys presenting the principles of sound strategy and integrated management. He has delivered these messages through workshops, domestic and international conferences, and legislative hearings.

Mr. Wolfe, an Eagle Scout, has a long history of leadership within the Boy Scouts of America, including a two-year term on the National Executive Board. For over ten years he has been active and outspoken in the effort to rid scouting of its discriminatory policies towards gays and lesbians.

Mr. Wolfe is a 1985 graduate of Stetson University in Florida and completed the Negotiating Skills Seminar at the J.F.K. School of Government of Harvard University in 1997. A native of Florida, he moved to Washington, D.C., in 1999, and is an active member of the Foundry United Methodist Church. ▼

* FFBC President Jonathan Wilson previously served as Executive Director of the Victory Fund.

A Horse of A Different Color

by Jay Thompson

I came across a horse of a different color
A hoof of another hue
I took him by the bridle to become my groom

I met a strapped back covered in black
A steed mounted for the next attack
A shadow-soldier of unknown gloom

Oh, before my eyes I could see
A carousel of outcasts revolving around me
The argyled, the damasked

A color and style for every taste and task
A trotting tapestry
Stitching civil wounds unsewn

Beyond hill, mound, dell, and glade
An escapade in every shade
A prismatic parade, high-stepping, a coming home

I came across a horse of a different color
The sight raised me beyond the blue
I took him by the bridle to become my groom

—Jay Thompson

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP to Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com no later than May 2 for the May 5 meeting. He can also be reached by phone at 288-2500. The speaker will be Chuck Wolfe of the Victory Fund.

Thanks to Brad Holland for his introduction of our April speaker, Des Moines Police Chief Bill McCarthy.

If you would like to submit an article for publication in the FFBC newsletter, please send it to Jonathan at the above address or to Steve Person at qqper-son@xrlink.com.

McCarthy Pitches Homeland Security in the Heartland

by Bruce Carr



Our guest speaker in April was the Chief of the Des Moines Police Department, Bill McCarthy. Chief McCarthy has proposed the creation—and funding—of an anti-terrorism unit based in his department but available for service and as a resource throughout 16 central-Iowa counties. His mission with us in April was to encourage community support for the project.

Using the PowerPoint presentation he had developed for making his presentation to the Des Moines City Council last October, McCarthy outlined the basics of this unit, which he said would be comprised of ten officers and cost about \$755,000 per year to operate—not a huge sum, given that the Police Department’s annual budget is close to \$51 million. Initial start-up costs would add about \$630,000.

McCarthy noted that this unit would provide a service not replicated elsewhere—locally, regionally, or nationally—and that his department is the only service agency in the area with a base size large enough to bring together and organize all the pertinent information, personnel, hardware, and software. For example, only an agency big enough to afford a canine unit can be considered because peroxide-based bombs are only detectable by dogs.

The unit’s operations will be based in the standards and teaching resources of the National Incident Management System—NIMS. The Federal Emergency Management Agency established NIMS to guide responders from different jurisdictions and disciplines in working together better to respond to natural disasters and emergencies, including acts of terrorism. NIMS benefits include a unified approach to incident management; standard command and management structures; and emphasis on preparedness, mutual aid, and resource management.

McCarthy’s initial request to the City Council totaled \$1,385,412, of which the council agreed to fund \$1 million. They encouraged him to find the rest from other governments of central Iowa—in other words, the suburbs. “It won’t be an easy task,” said McCarthy, but he’s confident of success before too long. “We have to do it,” he concluded simply.

—Bruce Carr

The First Friday Breakfast Club

&

The Gay and Lesbian Leadership Institute

invite you to an evening with

Chuck Wolfe

Chuck is the President and CEO of the Victory Fund, an organization that identifies, trains, and supports openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender candidates for public office.

Date: May 4, 2006

Location: The Fitch Gallery
304-15th St. Des Moines

Time: 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM

This evening is being sponsored as a fundraising event for FFBC’s college scholarship program and the Institute’s programs to ensure that LGBT Americans are not excluded from the electoral process.

All contributions are tax deductible.

If you are unable to attend please
send your contribution to:

First Friday Scholarship Fund
2500 Financial Center
Des Moines, Iowa 50309
Attn: Jonathan Wilson



TransAmerica

Starring Felicity Huffman,
Keven Zegers, Fionnula
Flanagan, Graham Greene,
Elizabeth Pena, Burt Young,
Carrie Preston,
Amanda Addams.

Directed by Duncan Taylor
1Hr 43 Min



The big moment for Bree is only one week away. When asked by her physician, she reveals that she “hates her penis – does not even like to look at it.” She has been working as a waitress in a Mexican restaurant, doing a little telemarketing, has completed face transformation surgery, and has undergone both hormone and psychological therapy. She is ready to eliminate Stanley, her male name, from her life and become Bree through sexual realignment surgery. But just as her psychologist is ready to sign off on the surgery, Bree receives a phone call from “her alleged son” being held in a correctional facility in New York City. Her psychologist thinks Bree must tie up all loose ends, and thus begins a journey of a father soon to become a mother and her son.

Her son, Toby, has a past. He had been earning money off the streets as a male hooker, but the offense for which he was being held was for shoplifting a frog. The \$1 bail ruins Bree’s desire to claim that she could not possibly pay it. But wanting to distance herself from Toby, she poses as a lady “from the church of the alleged father.”

Then the fun begins as they travel together on a road trip from New York to LA. But like Bree, the journey is not direct. They travel Kentucky to discover Toby’s past, to Texas to discover the world of transsexuals, to Phoenix to discover Bree’s past, and finally to LA for its conclusion.

Toby has, indeed, valid reasons to hate his father who at one point attacks Toby. Bree realizes that Toby’s environment with his father is not tolerable, and they continue to learn more about each other as they travel together with their relationship changing at every discovery. Toby wants dearly to find and live with his real father, Stanley, whom he knows only by a photo. Toby knows his father must be part Native American and is fascinated with Native American culture.

One of the fun side journeys on this road of discovery is a stop in Texas where they meet a group of transsexuals enjoying themselves. “Felish is showing us photos of her new Vagina!” one person proclaims. “I am not gender challenged, I am gender gifted!” proclaims another. Bree is extremely uncomfortable in this environment, yet Toby thinks they are nice.

Graham Greene plays Carl Manygoats, a Native American who picks up the stranded pair in the middle of the desert. Carl and Bree strike up a friendship. Carl shares some Mescal with Bree saying, “It will put hair on your chest.” “Thanks. Hope not!” replies Bree. Toby relates in a private moment to Carl, “There are things about her she is not telling you.” Carl says admiringly, “Every woman has a right to a little mystery.”

Bree’s mother has never accepted losing her son, her father bites his tongue, and her sister is just wierded out. “I still see Stanley in there. It is like you put yourself in a strainer and got rid of all the boy pulp.”

This film is a wonderful journey into the issues confronting a transsexual. It makes you think of your own prejudices and preconceptions of what transsexuality must be like. But it is also an intimate film of a father and son discovering each other and growing closer together. I highly recommend this film.

The lead is played by Felicity Huffman, who was nominated for Best Actress for this phenomenal portrayal. Toby is a very handsome young man, played by Kevin Zenger, who started his movie career as Little Mickey in **Life with Mickey** in 1993. To its credit, the film does not shy away from full-frontal male nudity, but it does so in a natural manner, in a “discovery-of-secrets” way rather than emphasizing sexual nudity.

—Gary Kaufman

FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views*

Des Moines, Iowa

MAY 2006

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From the Editor

A Palm Sunday Without the Palms

Sunday, April 9, was a busy day in downtown Des Moines. The Iowa Cubs drew a good crowd at Principal Park, and the final matinee of the long-running **Lion King** was being performed at the Civic Center. But it was across the street from the Civic Center at Nollen Plaza where one of the most empowering events I've ever seen was taking place.

Six thousand people filled the plaza—most of them Latino—to protest the United States Congress's election year posturing on immigration reform. At long last a group that has been considered second class by themselves and the population at large stood up in cities across America and said they weren't going to take this kind of treatment any longer.

The event at Nollen Plaza was peaceful and positive. The crowd mostly wore white and waved thousands of American flags. They chanted, "USA! USA! USA!" over and over. Some displayed banners, and my favorite one proclaimed, "There are no illegal human beings." The entire event was inspiring.

Speaker after speaker emphasized that these people are not out to ruin America or attack it. One speaker even read the names of the September 11 hijackers and noted that not a one of them had a name of Spanish origin—a point well made. The speeches were in Spanish and English. While I was there, only one politician had the guts to speak to the crowd, and that was State Representative and gubernatorial candidate Ed Fallon. He spoke entirely in Spanish and made an impressive appearance.

I may be wrong, but I sensed from the demonstration an awakening spirit among Americans of all kinds. People are finally beginning to become fed up with the lies and dissembling of so many politicians who pander to fear and try to divide us rather than unite. Those politicians who will go to whatever lengths necessary to get themselves returned to office have been put on notice that the people are watching and taking note.

In the 1960s and 70s, the people took to the streets to demand an end to a bloody and unnecessary war. The immigration demonstrations are bringing the same kind of message but with a positive spin. I hope all those folks in the crowd at Nollen Plaza and elsewhere who are eligible to vote will register and do their part in reshaping our country from the politics of lies and distortion to one of hope and equality for all.

—Steve Person