



First Friday News & Views

January 2015
Volume 20
Issue 1

The Monthly Newsletter
of the First Friday
Breakfast Club, Inc.

An Open Letter to Larry By Jonathan Wilson

Following a recent article I wrote on gay marriage, I got a respectful letter from "Larry" who said he opposes gay marriage but foresees its legalization in all 50 states. Then he said, "My curiosity kills me on this subject. So I'll just ask the question a lot of people want answered: since the dawn of the civil rights movement, why do you suppose it took all these years for this particular movement to get enough footing to finally push it forward?"

COVER:
An Open Letter to Larry
by Jonathan Wilson

Inside This Month

December's Speaker,
Bishop Richard Edmund
Pates by Bruce Carr

Briefs and Shorts

McCoy, Your Going
Straight to Hell by
Matt McCoy

Coming Out &
Bringing Friends In
by Gary Moore

The McCoy Report by
Sen. Matt McCoy

The Passage of Time by
Steve Person
Calendar

▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,
Friday, January 2, 2015, at Hoyt
Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland,
Des Moines, IA

▼ RSVP by December 30 to
JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com,
or phone 515-288-2500

Dear Larry,

There's a straight forward answer to your question, but to understand the answer you will need a basic understanding of family and family relationships.

The gay civil rights movement has gained such traction and speed because, beginning in the late 70s and into the 80's, more and more people -- younger and younger -- have come out of the closet. Before that, families with a gay family member believed they were the only ones with this "problem." But once gay children of God began coming out, they brought with them allies bound to them by blood. Every "out" gay person has a mom, dad, brother, sister, uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents. You do the math.

In the 60's, when a black person called home to tell about an act of discrimination they'd suffered, whoever answered the phone was just as black, too familiar with the discrimination, and just as powerless to do much about it. Advances required enlightened members of the majority to get on board and the '64 Civil Rights Act could get passed, and we've been slowly (too slowly) making progress in achieving its equality goals on the basis of race.

When an out gay citizen calls home to tell about discrimination, almost whoever answers the phone, they are not gay, not familiar with or ok with such discrimination, they are bound by blood to the gay person, and they are NOT powerless to do anything about it. Mother bears are notorious. Same with human mothers -- and fathers (I am one). And there you have it.

Those blood-tie dynamics change the equation, and fast (as we're witnessing). I can recall just a few years ago the Catholic Church condemned homosexuality, period, and expected members to do the same. The US Bishops then issued a formal letter to the church saying it was ok for parents to love a gay child. Ok to love a gay child -- the church understood about mother bears. And with "permission" from the church to love a gay child, those parents were given license to love them **and be supportive of them in their quest for civil equality**. That's just one example.

Continued on p. 2

Those who cling to a First Century understanding of human sexuality (that believed that homosexual conduct was merely an example of a straight person misbehaving), must, to be consistent, oppose same sex marriage. However, there ARE gay children of God (I am one) – the Biblical writers’ understanding of human sexuality was as erroneous as their belief that the earth is flat or the center of the universe.

The greatest love possible for humans is the love of a parent for a child (on this one, Jesus was simply mistaken when he said the greatest love is to give up one’s life for a friend). If you don’t believe me from your own experience, believe the Bible – when God wanted Abraham to show his ultimate love for God, he didn’t ask him to lay down his life; he asked for him to sacrifice the life of his son!!

When you fully appreciate that kind of love and those dynamics, you will understand why the gay civil rights movement has gained such firm and rapid traction. Mother bears are notorious. Human mothers too. And they like weddings.

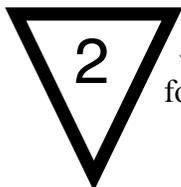
FFBC Article- Days Gone By.....

Early GLBT Organization in Des Moines and Iowa
By Allen Vander Linden

In 1977 I stepped out of my first legal marriage and began checking out that big scary gay world. It was scary but also amazingly exciting to begin meeting people with whom I could be totally honest, people who understood me and some with whom I found mutual attraction.

By the summer of 1978 I was feeling good about developing a gay social group and ready to be more involved for the good of the community as I had been in my previous life. The timing was perfect when my friend, Richard, invited me to a Gay Coalition of Iowa (GCI) meeting. I learned that the group had begun that previous fall out of the Metropolitan Community Church when Anita Bryant (pop music star and the face of the Florida Orange Juice Industry) came to Des Moines the pervious fall with her anti-homosexual “Save Our Children Campaign.” I recalled an out of state person throwing a pie in the face of Bryant as she was being interviewed on TV. My recollection of that first GCI meeting is of a small group of officers and a few visitors working to identify clearly the purpose for the organization.

I didn’t attend a *Continued on page 3*



You Read It Here First

By Jonathan Wilson

Terry Branstad was re-elected Iowa Governor, along with Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds. He will become the longest serving governor of any state in the entire history of the United States, on December 14, 2015.

I think Governor Branstad is having some health problems. I don’t know; that’s just what I think. What I also think is that he plans to serve until at least December 15, 2015, God-willing. Thereafter, with his unprecedented tenure firmly in place, he will step down. That will enable Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds to become our first female governor and enable her to run for governor as an incumbent. That’s the part of the Branstad legacy I will find most distasteful.

There you have it; mark my words.

Briefs & Shorts

Be sure to RSVP for the January 2 meeting no later than December 30. Contact Jonathan at 288-2500 or email JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com. Our scheduled speaker will be Islamic Imam Ako Abdul-Samad (Iowa State Representative).

Thanks to Garret Roche for his introduction of our December speaker, Bishop Richard Pates.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to Scott Kuknyo for helping coordinate the book exchange.



Consider a tax deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details.

SAVE THE DATE: February 6, 2015. The FFBC Red Party fundraiser at Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th and Woodland, Des Moines. Those who volunteer to help with set up and break down get free admission. Contact Byron Huff.

Openly Gay Iowa State Senator Reveals Stories and Letters in New Book

Marriage equality is the new civil rights movement in America. While some view this as a powerful political weapon, others experience it as love, commitment, and the quest for equality. Iowa State Senator Matt McCoy has been a leader for years in this struggle for equality. His new book, **McCoy, You're Going Straight to Hell**, reveals personal stories and opinions e-mailed to him from both those supporting same sex marriage as well as those bitterly opposing it.

The e-mails and letters are artifacts of a critical movement, since they bring to life stories of couples affected by the intolerance of laws that prevent them from legally expressing their love and commitment through marriage. Yet the correspondence also tells the stories of individuals who feel threatened by its legalization. Together, these stories put a face on the issue of marriage equality.

The book disrupts the status quo, keeping the momentum in the battle for equality while simultaneously addressing opposing views. Those struggling with their sexual orientation will be reminded they are not alone. The battle for equal rights, for marriage equality, is not a done deal.

Vigilant preservation of strides forward must be made or they can be destroyed.

Matt McCoy is an Iowa State Senator and Iowa's highest-ranking openly gay elected official. He has served in the Iowa Legislature for twenty-two years with key leadership roles in the Senate. Recognition and numerous awards have been given to McCoy for his commitment to courageous public service and social justice issues. As a spokesperson for marriage equality, he has taken the issue across the country. McCoy serves on various governmental, non-profit, and civic boards. He is the founder of Resource Development Consultants. McCoy is a graduate of Briar Cliff University. He and his son Jack live in Des Moines, Iowa.

Co-author Jim Ferguson has served as a school administrator in Iowa, Texas and Michigan. Ferguson earned his doctorate at The University of Iowa. He and his wife Jill live in Clive, Iowa.

McCoy, You're Going Straight to Hell is available in softcover (ISBN 978-1-62137-626-2) and eBook (ISBN 978-1-62137-627-9) from Virtualbookworm.com, Amazon.com, and Barnesandnoble.com. This book can also be ordered from most bookstores around the United States and United Kingdom. For more information on the author or the book, please go to mccoyyouregointohell.com.

FFBC Article- Days Gone By...(cont'd from page 2) GCI meeting for the next two months but was thinking a lot and discussing with friends how an organization could be helpful for gays and lesbians. I came back with a proposal: to develop five committees, each with a different purpose so that people with different interests could become involved. The Social Committee was the first to develop, providing regular potlucks, game and card parties, and special activities like horseback riding and camping. The Support Committee sponsored Friday night "rap groups" where participants processed fears of others finding out and rejection by those who had come out. The Education Committee provided programs of interest at monthly meetings. The Political Committee was formed to motivate political activism in the early years of the movement. The Information Committee developed the monthly newsletter: the GCI Reporter. Also a very significant program was the information line. An ad was placed in the Des Moines Register's Personal section saying "Gay Information Line" with a phone number. A call to the number would ring a member's home. That person would have transferred it to the home of a different member each night and weekend. The calls were from across the state and were amazing. Some callers just wanted to know where the gay bars were or about other services, but many needed to talk. They were closeted, stuck in a small town, in a heterosexual marriage, and many other desperate situations. There were many stories of people being suicidal. I talked to a couple of people personally who said the call saved their life.

The Gay Affiliates of Iowa was made up of six or seven gay/lesbian organizations from cities/towns across Iowa. Representatives met quarterly for coordination, to share ideas and for social activities. Through this group, two rented RVs were filled and driven to Washington DC for the first Gary Rights March in the fall of 1979. It was for me, and I'm sure also for others going, an absolutely memorable and emotional experience.

As I look back, 35 years now, at those years in the late 70s into the 80s, I greatly appreciate everyone involved in the first gay organization in Iowa as well as how the GCI helped me face and accept my gayness. The experience provided me the foundation for continuing in LGBT leadership through the years. It also contributed to great strides forward in achieving civil equality and to my second legal marriage to a wonderful man.



EXPANDING ECONOMY, GROWING MIDDLE CLASS ARE FOCUS FOR 2015

I am preparing for the 2015 legislative session, which runs January 12 through early May.

After the 2014 election, Iowa will continue to have a divided state government. I will be part of the Democrat-controlled Iowa Senate, which will work with the Republican-controlled House of Representatives and Republican Governor Terry Branstad.

As we have done in years past, we will continue to work in a bipartisan way to make Iowa a better place to live, work and raise a family. Our state is seeing growth, but there is much more we can do to create lasting economic recovery that will benefit all Iowans.

I will continue to fight for Iowa families and small businesses, particularly through my work on bipartisan Senate committees. Legislative committees are where much of the important work gets done in the Senate.

For the 86th General Assembly in 2015 and 2016, I will continue to serve as an Assistant Majority Leader and chair of the Transportation & Infrastructure Budget. I will also be vice-chair of the Commerce Committee and a member of the Appropriations, State Government, Transportation, and Ways & Means committees.

Every day during the session, I'll search for ways to strengthen Iowa's economy and help more families reach a better future. Regardless of party, I am always ready to work with everyone interested in creating jobs and growing Iowa's middle class. Some of the ways we can do that include:

- Giving Iowa companies the first crack at state contracts.
- Keeping college affordable by freezing tuition at our state universities for a third year.
- Ensuring Iowans are paid for the work they've done by cracking down on wage theft.
- Giving workers the skills needed for 21st century jobs by expanding training.

Every election marks a new beginning. I'll do my best to get Iowa off to a good start. If you have ideas or concerns to share with me as I prepare for the upcoming session, please e-mail me at matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov or call me at 515-681-9327.

Additional information

This is a legislative update from Senator Matt McCoy, representing west part of Des Moines, portions of West Des Moines and Cumming in northwest Warren County. For newsletters, photos and further information, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/mccoy.

To contact Senator McCoy during the week, call the Senate Switchboard at 515-281-3371. Otherwise he can be reached at home at 515-274-0561. E-mail him at matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov.



Photo by Gary Moore

A Bishop and a Tight Rope Walker

By Bruce Carr

Our speaker on Friday morning, December 5, was the Most Reverend Richard Edmund Pates, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Des Moines. He was not the first Catholic prelate to speak to us (his predecessor, the Most Reverend Joseph Charron, had addressed us in December, 1998, but the first since the Iowa Supreme Court issued its *Varnum* decision on marriage equality in April of 2009.

Bishop Pates began by thanking Jonathan Wilson for his persistence in inviting him to talk to us, and remarked that he regarded this meeting as “a pastoral visit.” His topics were two: the Church’s positions and activities around Sexuality and Marriage and around International Justice and Peace.

He was most passionate in underlining the Church’s teaching of No Discrimination: all persons are entirely welcome in the Catholic Church,

without regard to any distinctions of race, class, gender, or family status or identification. He cited with approval *Varnum*’s expression of the Constitutional requirement of Equal Protection Under the Law. He described in some detail Pope Francis’s call for Synods to discuss marriage in the context of contemporary society; in particular he praised the Pope’s insistence on the openness of the dialogue, on gathering statements from *any and all* -- not just Church members -- who wish to express themselves on [non-marital] cohabitation, and same-sex unions, and divorce and re-marriage. And he was heartened by Pope Francis’s recent, informal comment -- when he was asked about the Vatican’s alleged “gay lobby” -- that while a lobby might be an issue, he doesn’t have any problem with the inclination to homosexuality itself: “Who am I to judge them if they’re seeking the Lord in good faith?” the Holy Father said.

On International Justice and Peace, the Bishop told us of his visit last March to Iran, for a four-day session between three American bishops and four prominent Muslim scholars and ayatollahs. The meetings, hosted by the Supreme Council of Seminary Teachers of Qom, began from the common belief of Muslims and Catholics in the existence of one God who created humans and that therefore every person is to be revered. The Muslim and Catholic leaders agreed that the use of nuclear weapons is immoral because innocent lives would inevitably be lost. Pates noted that the trip was in keeping with the emphasis by Pope Francis on dialogue being “the key to discovering truth and avoiding misunderstanding.” And, the Bishop urged us, think what good could be accomplished if the money spent on nuclear arms could be devoted to a “Marshall Plan” for the continent of Africa!

In conclusion, Bishop Pates wished us all Merry Christmas, and said he felt it a distinct honor to have been invited to meet us.

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The youngest of three sons, Richard Pates was born Saint Paul, Minnesota. He attended Nazareth Hall Seminary and St. Paul Seminary, where he earned Bachelor of Arts degrees in Philosophy and Latin in 1965. He completed his graduate studies in Rome, where he resided at the Pontifical North American College and received a Licentiate of Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1968. He returned to the Twin Cities, where he held various positions in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis: he served as rector of St. John Vianney Seminary in 1981-1987, Vicar for Seminaries and pastor of the Church of Saint Kevin and the Church of the Resurrection in Minneapolis in 1987, where he continued as pastor until 1998. On December 22, 2000, Pates was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis: as auxiliary bishop, he served as vicar general, Vicar for Clergy, Vicar for Youth and Young Adults, and Vicar for Evangelization. Pates was named the ninth Bishop of Des Moines by Pope Benedict XVI on April 10, 2008; he is the third consecutive Twin Cities' auxiliary bishop to be named ordinary of the Des Moines Diocese (his two immediate predecessors, Joseph Charron and William Henry Bullock, had previously served the St. Paul and Minneapolis Archdiocese). Bishop Pates can be contacted at the Diocese of Des Moines, 601 Grand Ave (515/243-7653 and www.dmdiocese.org).

FFBC

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News & Views

Des Moines, Iowa

January 2015

First Friday
Breakfast Club

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MADE ON A  MAC

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

By Steve Person

As the New Year approaches, it gives one pause to stop and reflect. I remember reading a book back in 1976 entitled **Passages** by Gail Sheehy. I am not one who appreciates pop psychology, but this particular book struck a chord. In it, Sheehy divides the adult life experience by decades.

In one's twenties, she asserted, "...we have to work out our path in life, whatever ways of being or doing give us a sense of aliveness and hope. We are likely to go one of two ways: do what we 'should' in terms of family and peer expectations; or pursue adventure and 'find ourselves.'"

The thirties, on the other hand, usually find people becoming more settled in both career and home life. "For both sexes, the conclusion is arrived at that life is a lot more serious and difficult than they understood it to be in their twenties. The ages between 37 and 42 are peak years of anxiety for most people."

In one's forties, Sheehy states that people have "a sense of stagnation or disequilibrium...entering midlife." The motto of this stage of life, Sheehy suggests, might be, "No more bullshit."

Much of what is in the book is obviously dated. Circumstances have changed dramatically since the mid-1970s, but her generalities about the passages in our lives still hold true.

I once heard on Public Radio that the most dangerous decade for men is their sixties. It seems to be the "Life or Death" decade. The radio commentator said that if a man survives his sixties, his chances of living to a ripe old age are greatly increased. As I look at the obituaries in the daily paper, that assertion is true. The number of men who die in their late fifties to mid-sixties is astonishing.

In 1976, I was twenty-eight years old, and the passages in Sheehy's book were nothing more than speculation in my mind. Now that I am sixty-six, however, I see how the aging process affects our lives in every way. In social situations nowadays, the talk inevitable turns to Medicare or Medicare supplements, which person has had which body part removed and/or replaced, or which unfortunate blighter [*British slang for a fellow, often held in low esteem. Ed.*] passed away suddenly and unexpectedly—and at the "young age" of seventy-five!

I have a friend who says that sixty is the new forty. He couldn't be more wrong. I told him that sixty-six is the new sixty-seven. These old eyes don't work like they did when I was twenty years younger. Night driving on the highway is a chore that I'd rather not do any more. Arthritis has not set in to a great extent but enough to let me know that it just might be waiting around the corner in the next few years.

I have a great appreciation for all that has come my way in this life, and I do look forward to 2015, so HAPPY NEW YEAR!