



First Friday News & Views

May 2015

Volume 20

Issue 5

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

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▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,
Friday, May 1, 2015, at Hoyt
Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland,
Des Moines, IA

▼ RSVP by April 29 to
JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com,
or phone 515-288-2500

A Teaching and Learning Moment

By Jonathan Wilson

A gay friend of mine has a mother who is still in the workforce. She's a devout Catholic but loves her son and long ago accepted him for who he is and how God made him. She has worked for many years in a rural Iowa clinic, along with several other women of about her age who have known one another for a long time.

The clinic has a coffee room where employees take coffee breaks and eat their lunches together. They talk about myriad topics of mutual interest, ranging from the weather, gardening, community activities, aches and pains, complaints about their husbands, accomplishments of children, to current affairs. Not surprisingly, the topic of the gay civil rights movement came up from time to time.

When it did come up, the women -- unaware that my friend is gay -- took turns expressing disapproval for the movement and gay people in general. My friend's mother, being Iowa nice, listened and held her tongue. Over time, she found herself torn between her love for her son and her desire not to make waves among her acquaintances in the workplace.

As news stories proliferated, and additional advances were made in the gay movement toward equality, the topic came up more often in that coffee room. In my interactions with his mother I could tell that the pressure was mounting; it was rather like watching a pressure cooker heating up on a stove. It felt like I was the chattering petcock that periodically relieved the pressure, however temporarily.

Finally, the day came when the topic of gays and civil equality came up once again. The women clucked as usual their disapproval. At one point one woman made some particularly disparaging generalization about gay people. My friend's mother cleared her voice and said firmly, and loud enough for everyone to hear, "Edna, you know my son Allen; is what you just said true about him, because he's gay?"

Silence fell over the coffee room. Everyone there had known one another for a long time. They all knew of my gay friend and many of his considerable academic and career achievements. They didn't know he is gay. Dead silence.

It seemed longer, but it happened very quickly -- a matter of seconds. But in those few seconds, three important things took place. First the offending woman felt tremendous remorse, wished she could die (being Iowa nice also), muttered something about not knowing, and said, "I'm sorry." Second, every other woman in the room thanked God that she had not been the one who had spoken last, since it could have been any one *Continued on p. 2*

of them; by happenstance it had been poor “Edna.” And third, never again would any of those women in rural, small town Iowa, assume that everyone in their coffee klatch or circle of acquaintances buys into the negative, false stereotypes about gay children of God. Now each of them “knew” one of those gay people. Now each of them had a fixed point against which to measure and test any negative things they might hear or think in the future.

The experience may not have changed the minds of all or any of those women, but it will forever change their behavior. Bigotry is a choice. Those women will speak and hear such negative things only guardedly and mostly one-on-one, if at all.

It was a teaching and learning moment all around. My friend’s mother learned that she need not hold her tongue anymore, and won’t, and the other women learned that they never want to be “Edna.”

KINGSMAN: The Secret Service

Review by Gary Kaufman

A movie that has, by this newsletter’s publication date, probably left town and “soon available on DVD and Blue Ray” is **Kingsman: The Secret Service**, which I highly recommend. It takes the genre of a gentlemen’s James Bond movie and a zombie movie, mixes them all up and then takes it up at least four cranks creating a brilliant, well-written action movie that is a total whirlwind joy!

We are introduced to Colin Firth as our gentleman agent who, along with Michael Caine and others, runs and operates a secret service that is so secret that not even the FBI or the KGB know it exists. The two are mourning the loss of one of their best agents and are looking for a recruit to replace him. Harry Hart (Colin Firth) visits Eggsy, the son of the slain agent. While they are sitting quietly in an English pub, they are rudely accosted by some local hooligans. “Manners maketh man,” says Harry as he slams shut the three locks on the doorway to the pub, “do you know what that means? Then let me teach you a lesson . . . are we going to stand around here all day . . . or shall we fight!” He then quickly, efficiently, and brutally disables all six thugs and returns to his table to resume his conversation with the lad. “Sorry about that. Had to let off a little steam.” And this is, of course, not the only time he

has to let off a little steam. The scene in which he single-handedly, quickly, and efficiently dispatches a hundred Bible thumping, faggot-and-nigger-hating Christians who go on a killing

Briefs & Shorts

Be sure to RSVP for the May 1 meeting no later than April 29. Contact Jonathan at 288-2500 or email him at JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com. Our scheduled speaker will be Drake Professor Jennifer Harvey.

Thanks to Brian Taylor Carlson for his introduction of our April speakers, Bill LaHay and Paul Koeniguer, Co-Directors of the Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests (SNAP).

Plan to attend the reception at the World Food Prize venue from 6-9:00 p.m. on April 24. No charge. Reservations required. Contact Beau Fodor 515-546-6230 or beaufodor@yahoo.com.



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.

KINGSMAN, Cont'd

rampage in their church in the country (which proclaims “AMERICA IS DOOMED!” on its marquee) is alone, and by itself, worth the price of the movie!

As the movie itself notes, “a spy movie is only as good as its villain.” In this movie we have a good one! Samuel L. Jackson is an ecological maniacal megalomaniac, Richland Valentine, who “can’t stand the sight of blood!” It is as good as it gets! He has wit, a brilliant mind, and yet is so totally over-the-top crazy. His scheme is that, in order to save the Earth, it’s obvious that “we have to get rid of mankind,” and he is on the verge of doing it. How is he disseminating the necessary devices to carry out his maniacal scheme throughout the world? By offering free phone and internet service “forever!” The people are going crazy for it!

As for the new recruit, Eggsy, who we last left at that English pub where Harry was teaching those chaps some “manners,” is now “about to embark upon the most dangerous job interview in the world.” He is undergoing a process of elimination training to fill the one vacant Kingsman position. I would have dropped out early!

The action sequences are brilliantly edited, with both slow-motion, fast-motion, and about any kind of motion you can think of. To watch this film is definitely to partake in an adventure. An adventure I heartily recommend you take!

The following is a continuation of a series of reflections by FFBC members.

My Saturday Night in Arrested Development
by Michael L. Thompson

On Saturday night, March 21, my husband Allen and I attended the very excellent performance by the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus entitled, "I Am Harvey Milk." The DMGMC never fails to deliver a solid performance, but the Harvey Milk concert over delivered! I was enjoying the words and music by Andrew Lipa, tapping my feet, and then the chorus performed a song called "Friday Night In The Castro." "Friday Night" is a song set in 1978 that describes how the gay men lived all week for Friday nights in the Castro district. When the music started up, a horde of 1970s disco dancers came down from the balconies and other places and danced wildly with funky 70's choreography to a 70's disco music beat. The number was peppy, fun, and I was really into it. But before long, I found myself suddenly engulfed by a deep sense of longing. I was yearning for a world I had totally missed and would never know—a world portrayed and embellished by that song, similar to the dance scenes in "Queer As Folk" at the Babylon. Even if somewhat overstated, it was a glimpse back into a time that would have been special to me when I was young, virile, and willing. It was a time and place I would have loved to enjoy firsthand.

In the late 70s I was in my early thirties with a wife and baby, gay, and closeted. We lived in Kalispell, Montana, where I was a landscape architect with the U.S. Forest Service. In 1977 I had an opportunity to attend a landscape architecture conference in San Francisco. My wife suggested that I fly down there a couple of days before the conference so that I could experience the sights and culture of San Francisco. My pulse accelerated and anxiety hit me at the thought of having a chance to take a peek at gay culture in the Castro. Regrettably, I did not follow her suggestion of arriving a few days early in San Francisco. I feared I would be exposed to a world that might forever change me and jeopardize my marriage. I couldn't risk losing my son. At the conference I struck up a friendship with two nice Mormon guys. On a free evening in which no activities were scheduled, we drove around the North Beach area of town and walked along the streets where the girlie strip clubs were. We were home by 9PM.

In 1979 I changed professions and became a community banker in the small Southwest Iowa town of Clarinda. We lived there 24 years. Both my sons grew up and left for college and careers. Our marriage hung on until our divorce in 2002.

In 2003 my position necessitated a move to Des Moines. Kids grown and me divorced, I now had a chance to be actively gay. I was ready to play the field, but how? Hitting the bars at age 58 seemed awkward. I met Allen in church—so much for the bars. In 2004 when I realized Allen and I were a couple, I came out to my sons and my ex-wife. My sons were shocked to learn their dad is gay, but were happy for me to begin living my life as an open, honest, and proud gay man. My ex had a different reaction, but she eventually accepted who I am and we are friends today. Allen and I married in 2009 with our children standing up with us.

It's been many years since Harvey Milk was alive and changing the way gays are perceived. I missed a lot of action on Friday nights in the Castro or wherever it would have been. I passed up my big chance to experience a slice of gay life in the 70's, remaining in the closet until societal changes and my own maturity allowed me to feel I could live openly as a gay man.

On the bonus side, I didn't die of AIDs like so many before me. I was a father to my sons, a community leader, and enjoyed a rewarding career. And I met a man who loved me enough to marry me; a man with whom I vicariously share his past adventures after he came out in the 70's (at least the parts he TELLS me about). So, life for me has worked out great. I can't lament for very long my wasted opportunity in 1977. But that song the Chorus sang called "Friday Night in the Castro" really spoke to me and, for a few moments on that Saturday night, March 21, I was there!

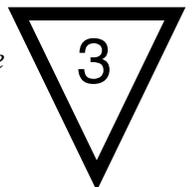
Ponder This

You attract the right things for you when you have a clear sense of who you are.

Work for a cause and not for applause.

The best day of your life is the one on which you decide your life is your own. No apologies or excuses.

If there were no ambiguity in the law, there'd be no need for lawyers. If there were no ambiguity in the Bible, there'd be no need for theologians. If there were no ambiguity in life, there'd be no need for a brain.





HELPING IOWANS WITH DISABILITIES LIVE INDEPENDENTLY

The U.S. Congress passed a bill in December called the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE Act). The ABLE Act allows people with disabilities to establish tax-free savings trusts where money can be deposited to pay for future disability-related expenses that help them maintain their health, independence and quality of life.

The trust can be used for such expenses as modifications to a home to enhance independent living, specialized health and dental care, education and transportation. These trusts are even more attractive because people with disabilities can save up to \$100,000 in their account without losing eligibility for other services, including Social Security benefits. To be eligible, the disabling condition must have occurred prior to age 26.

Under current federal gift tax limitations, as much as \$14,000 can be deposited annually. Donors will be able to deduct deposits from income tax calculations, and any gains are protected from income taxes. Each state must create its own program before its residents can establish ABLE savings accounts.

The state Senate is working to be sure that Iowa is ready to implement the program as soon as federal rules are finalized. Iowa's program will be modeled after the [College Savings Iowa 529 program](#) and administered by the State Treasurer. You can track progress of the bill, [SSB 1210](#), which was approved by the Senate Human Resources Committee this week, as it moves through the Legislative process at www.legis.iowa.gov.

Learn more about the ABLE Act and the benefits of an ABLE account from the National Disabilities Institute at www.realeconomicimpact.org/News.aspx?id=460.

TAKING STEPS TO STRENGTHEN MIDDLE CLASS

Iowa is doing the right thing to strengthen our middle class after the devastation of the national recession.

One of the reasons Iowa has weathered the economic downturn better than other states is that we've kept our fiscal house in order. Each year, we balance the state budget and set aside money for a rainy day. According to 24/7 Wall St., [Iowa is one of the best-run states](#) in the nation, with low debt, a strong credit rating and a well-managed budget.

That's important because it allows us to invest in initiatives to strengthen our middle class, create jobs and grow our economy. And the latest financial projections by Iowa's non-partisan Revenue Estimating Conference confirm that Iowa can afford new investments.

We must do all we can to continue strengthening our middle class. The percentage of middle-class households shrunk between 2000 and 2013 in all 50 states, Iowa included. In 2013, 51 percent of Iowa household were middle class, down from 54.1 percent in 2000, and the median income for Iowa households has dropped, according to [new research from Pew](#).

What can we do to continue our bipartisan efforts to expand Iowa's middle class in all 99 counties?

A good start would be renewing Iowa's traditional, bipartisan support for public schools, freezing tuition at our public universities for a third year in a row, and investing more in community college opportunities for Iowans preparing for 21st Century jobs.

Additional information

This is a legislative update from Senator Matt McCoy, representing the west part of Des Moines, portions of West Des Moines and northwest Warren County.

For newsletters, photos and further information, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/mccoy or www.matt-mccoy.com. Follow Senator McCoy on Facebook at www.facebook.com/senatormccoy.

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.



Senator McCoy is an Assistant Senate Majority Leader, chair of the Transportation & Infrastructure Budget Subcommittee, and vice-chair of the Commerce Committee. He also serves on the Appropriations, State Government, Transportation and Ways & Means committees.

Pastoral Abuse and Permanent Harm

By Bruce Carr



Our guest speakers at the April 3 meeting of the First Friday Breakfast Club were Paul Koeniguer (left) and Bill LaHay, two members of the Des Moines chapter of SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests).

The speakers' stories were powerful but difficult to hear, and they were obviously difficult for the men to tell; both teared-up during their presentations. Koeniguer, the father of several children, related how his daughter had been sexually abused by an older relative between the ages of four and 14, and that she did not realize how the abuse had affected her until she was in her mid-20s. "It is such a serious crime -- the effects on her have been catastrophic," he said. "I mean, she's still struggling with it -- including homelessness and other tragedies -- and she's in her 40s."

Bill LaHay reported his own sexual abuse by a Roman Catholic priest while he was a youngster, and noted that few 18-year-olds understand the consequences of the abuse they suffered as a child. "The things that really show the damages don't start happening until you see repetitive patterns in your job or professional life, in relationships or marriage issues, or anything like that," LaHay said -- describing even his own checkered job-history. "So it takes a while for some of the damages to actually surface in a way that's serious enough for a person to recognize that this may be more than just normal life-difficulties they're experiencing."

Both men urged the passage of legislation in Iowa that would allow survivors more time to file a lawsuit against their alleged abusers. Today, someone who was sexually abused as a child must file a lawsuit against their alleged abuser after they turn 18 -- and before they turn 19. "Anything that offers a person -- a survivor, a victim -- more time to come to terms with that is a good thing," LaHay said. Under the proposed bill, victims of child sexual abuse would have nine more years to file a lawsuit seeking damages -- right up until the victim reaches the age of 29. The bill would also give law enforcement a much longer period of time to build a criminal case against someone suspected of sexually abusing minors.

In the course of his discussion, LaHay also cited some pretty appalling statistics: one out of six males (and one out of four females) experiences abuse before reaching adulthood; only 2% of abusers are strangers to the children, about 5% clergy -- and 70% to 80% family members. Homosexuals are no more prevalent in the population of abusers than in the general population. He also offered, from his own experience, an interesting contrast between compulsive pedophiles and those who are simply calculated opportunists. You can hear, or hear again, their remarks on the FFBC website: <http://www.ffbc-iowa.org>.

SNAP, founded by Barbara Blaine in Chicago in 1989, is a self-help organization of men and women who were sexually abused by spiritual and other elders (priests, ministers, teachers, and relatives), and who find healing and empowerment by joining other survivors. Its Web site is <http://www.snapnetwork.org>. Paul Koeniguer can be reached at paul.a.koeniguer@ampf.com, and Bill LaHay at blahay@msn.com.

And This

If you put off doing something for somebody because you can't do something for everybody, you'll end up doing nothing for anybody.

Be stubborn about your goals, and flexible about your methods, remembering always that the ends do not justify the means.

Work for a cause and not for applause.



FFBC

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News & Views

Des Moines, Iowa

May, 2015

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Breakfast Club

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MY M.O. (MONTHLY OBSERVATIONS)

An Oldie but Goodie, A Book Review by Steve Person

I recently came across an old paperback copy of Elizabeth Longford's 1965 biography, **Victoria: Born to Succeed**. Just to let you know how old this book is, the cover price was \$1.50! Elizabeth Longford wrote many histories and royal biographies, some of which I read a number of years ago. Longford led a long—96 years—life and, in addition to her own works, became the mother of another supremely talented writer, Antonia Fraser.

I have read many biographies of Queen Victoria: **Becoming Queen** by Kate Williams (2008); **The Life and Times of Victoria** by Dorothy Marshall (1972—reprinted in 1992); **Victoria and Albert: A Family Life at Osborne House** by HRH The Duchess of York (now Sarah Ferguson, The Duchess of York, 1991); and **Victoria: An Intimate Biography** by Stanley Weintraub (1987). That book I considered to be THE definitive biography of Queen Victoria until I picked up Longford's excellent and sometimes witty biography of probably the most misunderstood Royal of the nineteenth century.

I have been fortunate to visit numerous of Queen Victoria's residences and governmental edifices over the many years and multiple trips I have made to England. Among them are Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, the House of Lords in Parliament, and the Victoria and Albert Mausoleum at Frogmore near Windsor. Those experiences made for a broader understanding of Longford's extensive biography.

Becoming Queen at the tender age of eighteen in 1837, the young Victoria needed and fortunately received the guiding hand of the much older Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne. He was the first of her 10 Prime Ministers (Gladstone served twice, otherwise she would've had 11).

When she married Prince Albert in 1840, she was fortunate to have enter her life a man who could deal with her obstinate ways and yet love and care for her in every sense. His untimely death from typhoid in 1861 plunged the middle-aged queen into a deep depression for many years. The only person who drew her out was the rough and tumble Scotsman, John Brown. Her relationship with this servant led to myriad rumors of their "secret marriage," and his presence caused her numerous children (nine in all) to despair at her intransigence in keeping him in her employ. Not until he foiled one of the many attempts to assassinate her did the critics come to realize what an asset this man was. He died in 1883.

Like the current Queen, Victoria had a Golden Jubilee and a Diamond Jubilee. So far, she is the longest serving monarch in Britain's long history of royalty. She reigned for nearly 64 years, succumbing in the first two weeks of the twentieth century in 1901. Elizabeth II, now the oldest monarch to reign in her country's history, may well live to break her great great grandmother's record on the throne.

I'm not sure where one can find a copy of Longford's biography of Victoria unless it shows up at a used bookstore or the Planned Parenthood book sale.