



First Friday News & Views

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

To His Credit

By Jonathan Wilson

To his credit, on July 1 Republican Iowa Congressman David Young showed up to speak to the First Friday Breakfast Club, an association of gay and bisexual men and the largest private breakfast club in the state of Iowa. More than eighty were in attendance, including the mayor of Des Moines, and giving him their rapt attention. There are not a lot of places where a political candidate can go at 7:00 a.m. and find an attentive audience.

Young, a first term Congressman, is 48 years old, about the average age of the FFBC audience, and has not ever been married, a fact that he also shares with the majority of FFBC members. Like most in the room, he was born and reared in Iowa. So, from the git-go, the speaker had much in common with the members of FFBC.

Those and other perceived commonalities prompted several FFBC members to predict that the Congressman would not show up. Wishing him no ill, some figured his mother might die, a relative might get sick, or he might suffer a fall and break a leg. Others, more charitably, predicted he'd decide he needed to be in Washington DC for a House vote of critical importance to his constituents (despite the House being in recess for the July 4th holiday).

Happily, none of those things befell him or purportedly befell him and, to his credit, he showed up and on time. Not unlike Des Moines Arch-diocese Bishop Pates, who also had spoken to the breakfast club, it took courage to speak to what would have to be perceived as a hostile group. And like Bishop Pates, it is to Young's credit that he did so.

That's about as far as the available credit goes. The format of our meetings is to dispose of preliminary announcements, introduce the speaker, hear some prepared remarks, and then open things up for questions and answers. That format is explained in advance to the speakers and they're told that our meetings are generally concluded by around 8:00. Young was actually introduced earlier than most speakers and proceeded to drone on and on with a stump speech about how Congress works, talked about how hard he works for constituents in the 3rd District, and made much of his singular initiative to decline his congressional pay until a budget was adopted as required by law. By design or not, he was shortening the typical time available for questions. The only thing that proved able to shift direction was a member who raised his hand to interrupt the monologue with the first question.

The questions that followed were respectful, but pointed. The decision was made to let the meeting run over time until there were no more questions; the meeting went on until 8:30. The questions were wide-ranging and, often as not, not directly related to anything "gay." All reflected the characteristically liberal leaning of the audience, and a few fireworks seemed appropriate to the July 4th weekend. No one asked THE question that was on everyone's mind, "Are you a closeted gay man?" That was pretty respectful for a room full of men with their gaydar activated and screaming an alarm.

Repeatedly Young came across as flat footed, despite knowing his audience in advance. In the aftermath of the Orlando massacre, questions about assault weapons and gun control were particularly current and poignant. Young parroted some worn out platitudes about the importance of protecting Second Amendment Rights. Few, if

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▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am, Friday, August 5, 2016, at Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines, IA

▼ RSVP by August 3 to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com, or phone 515-288-2500

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any, in the room were buying that.

Young was shown a flyer sent out by his campaign that said members of Congress shouldn't get paid if they don't do their job. Asked if he'd cleared that flyer with Senator Grassley in advance, he lamely replied that Grassley doesn't live in the 3rd District. Asked if he supports the Pentagon's decision (announced the day before) to respect trans members of the military, he said he'd defer to the generals.

Young is still young; I didn't come out publicly until I was 50. So, there's time, if he isn't too mean and doesn't do too much damage to his LGBT constituents in the meantime.

Young gets credit for showing up, but that's about all.

Musings

By Bill Brown

Charlie Rose is wearing a vivid, pink tie this morning. My 71st birthday just passed and I find that I long for my experience in the 1970s, dancing in NYC with the gay tribe of men in the wee hours at the "Anvil" Club (before the "plague" arrived) in a celebratory, disco dance of love with souls of all ages and races. It was a thrill in the urban community that went beyond the protests against 'the war' on campus that came before.

Today we have come so far, as I enjoy my gay social opportunities with my peers here in town.

But there are men among us whose minds are poisoned and they act-out against society with such tragic, violent behavior.

I miss my disco days. I miss Donna Summer disco '77 in the city. I miss all those who gave up their lives in the war, and those killed by HIV/AIDS who were so filled with youthful joy, hope, and could actually visualize an American life with peace in community, family, health and happiness.

Will we get it together? Will we choose a change of mindset and open our hearts to all humanity with all its true colors.

and in elevating gay relationships to the point that they can now get legally married and enjoy legal protection from discrimination.

Cal and Will show Kathryn the joy of their husband-husband-son family relationship. The play concludes with an incredibly warm and touching moment that had this author in tears of joy! Nancy Zubrod did a spellbinding performance as the angry Kathryn Gerrard, and the rest of the cast were great! I hope you caught it. It was wonderful!

Briefs & Shorts

Be sure to RSVP by August 3 for the August 5, 2016, meeting by calling 515-288-2500, or on line at: JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com. Our speaker on August 5 will be film maker, author, and performance artist Shadley Grei. You will not want to miss this meeting!

Thanks to Bill Jackson for the introduction of our July speaker, Republican Iowa Congressman David Young.

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.

Also consider joining with 29 others in donating \$100 so that we can match the most recent scholarship fund contribution of David Hurd. If 30 of us contribute \$100 apiece, we can match his contribution and award a full scholarship next year in his memory. Send your \$100 check to Jonathan Wilson or bring it to the next meeting with Hurd mentioned in the MEMO line.

MOTHERS AND SONS, cont'd from p 5.

The play also demonstrates the angst of Cal's husband, Will, who has to feel a need to compete with the former lover, a ghost, someone he has never met. The play discusses how things have changed over time in both combatting AIDS

CONGRESSMAN DAVID YOUNG, THIRD DISTRICT OF IOWA

By Steve Person

Congressman David Young addressed the First Friday Breakfast Club on July 1 with a Q and A session that followed. Regardless of what individuals may think of the Republican Congressman, the man deserves credit for agreeing to come to a meeting that could have been an unpleasant situation for him and his staff. Fortunately, civility prevailed for most of the Q and A period.

Iowa's third district consists of sixteen counties that hold a population of 700,000. Congressman Young referred to his constituency as "The Sweet Sixteen," a blend of urban and rural counties—with Polk County as the largest in population in the state and Adams County with the lowest population. Young said he visits every county every month. "I believe everybody has a right to be heard," he asserted.

The bulk of Young's address stressed his belief in the importance of the First Amendment to the Constitution and the committees and subcommittees that he serves on in the Congress. He is a member of the Appropriations Committee—"Iowa always had a voice on that committee"—and subcommittees of Agriculture, Homeland Security, and Housing and Urban Affairs.

Congressman Young stressed the three main issues that he perceives to be of greatest importance: economic security; national security; and Constitutional rights.

During the Q and A session, spirited questions centered mostly on the Second Amendment regarding gun control. Young said he wants to keep guns out of the hands of terrorists and believes that common sense solutions can be made regarding gun safety. He did admit to taking campaign contributions from the NRA. Other questions arose about gay and transgender issues. He did say that there is confusion on the latter topic but also stated that he never follows 100% of his party's line. He also said he would be glad to look at the Employment Nondiscrimination Act (ENDA) that Congress repeatedly fails to enact.

One member asked about his support or lack thereof for Donald Trump. Young appeared to ride the fence stating that he would support the nominee but that he would not be attending the Republican Convention in Cleveland because he needed to get things done in his district.

When asked what he thought of the Congressman's appearance at the breakfast club, one attendee referred to his remarks as "skillfully evasive." I would have to agree.

P o m d e r T h i s

Abs are great, but have you tried donuts?

Sarcasm and attitude are SO much cheaper than therapy and bail.

At a certain age, "getting lucky" means walking into a room and remembering what you came in for.

Measure twice, cut once, curse, buy more, cut again.

A clear conscience results from bad memory.

The universe is comprised of: protons, neutrons, electrons, and morons.

Never trust an atom; they make up everything.

Remember Orlando every time you talk to anyone about: the need to adopt ENDA (Employment Nondiscrimination Act); the need to include sexual orientation and gender identity in hate crimes legislation; the need to deny exceptions for religion-based discrimination in the public arena; the need to preserve the equal right of gay citizens to legal marriage; the need to give trans individuals free access to their appropriate public bathrooms; the need to allow gay citizens to donate blood; the need to grant gay citizens the right to adopt or be foster parents; the need to remove prohibitions against surrogate parenting; the need to use US foreign policy to pressure other countries to rescind anti-gay laws. **Remember Orlando.**



FFBC member Matt McCoy serves in the Iowa Senate, representing District 21. You can stay in touch with him throughout the up-coming session. If you have ideas or concerns you'd like to share, call him at the Statehouse (515-281-3371) or at home (515-274-0561). E-mail him at matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov.

At www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/mccoy, you can sign up for his newsletter, connect with him on social media, find out about his upcoming forums and see his latest photos.

District 21 encompasses 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.

Fathers' Day 2016

By John Schmacker

I was a 20 year old college student when my father passed away. That was at a time long ago when, like many twenty-somethings, I didn't much appreciate him. I was affected by his loss, of course, but it hadn't been an intimate relationship and it didn't leave me with any memories of receiving affection or affirmation from him.

All these many years later, I think about him every day. If he had lived a few more years, perhaps I would have outgrown the sullen resentments of my teens and discovered gratitude soon enough to give him some. But I am left with imagining that happening, and I'm sad about that.

Now that my life span has surpassed his by more than two decades, I understand him better than I ever did when he was here. He may have been an inattentive father, but he was a good man. He held down a full-time job with the US Postal Service, managed our organic acreage, in which I toiled, built things in his basement woodworking shop, played poker most Saturday afternoons with his cronies, did much of the cooking, was a leader in his church and several other organizations, loved my mom, relaxed with his harmonica, and made the most amazing home brew. He was much more than I gave him credit for at the time.

One of his almost daily demands was that I "put things back where you found them." Anybody who has raised a son knows the frustration of not finding a tool or paint brush stored where it was supposed to be. These days, I find myself saying to myself, usually more than once a day, "put that back where it belongs, Johnny." I've discovered what a good thing that is to do.

I also find that he has become much smarter since he's been gone. I've constructed that myself, of course. I sometimes attribute words of wisdom to him that were really my own or overheard by me. Such gems as: "If you don't have time to do something right the first time, you sure as heck don't have time to do it over again," or "Things are always easier to get in to than they are to get out of." He never actually said those two gems verbatim, but I did learn them from him nevertheless.

So I think what all this means is that we never really lose our fathers. They stay with us throughout our lives, regardless of what kind of dads they were. If you still have a father, treat him as a gift. He's part of you.

I still have his harmonica, though I've never learned to play it. Maybe someday.

Weird is the New Normal

By Shadley Grei

Some people have suggested that I have a splintered mind. Others more bluntly tell me that my life lacks focus. There are several buzz words currently making the rounds that describe how my brain works: multi-hyphenate, scanner personality type, polymath – all of which mean I have several, diversified interests that I try to put together into a cohesive package when answering the question “What do you do?”

The most direct answer is to say that I’m a storyteller. Things get complicated when I’m asked to elaborate because the FULL answer is “Well, I’m currently developing projects for film, television, theater, music, publishing, fashion, gaming, and technology. I’m a writer-producer-director-actor-singer-baker with a strong passion for new business, psychology, urban development, human sexuality, architecture, personal growth and, uh, the occult.”

The truth is, I’ve had a weird, erratic life that hasn’t seen a lot of stability. I accept that. For instance, there was a three year stretch where I moved 17 times, including three different states. I’ve freelanced in over 100 different jobs in NYC, Los Angeles and Iowa in industries including entertainment, publishing, finance, healthcare, insurance, real estate, non-profit, and, yes, porn. My resume is probably my single greatest achievement in creative writing and no one knows.

All of this rambling is really just an invitation for you to apologize less for your weirdness. As gay men, many of us started to be “corrected” from a very young age so that we would fit into some archaic definition of “normal.” And

this struggle to fit in has taught us that it’s wrong to stand out, so we hide the truths and interests and curiosities that would complicate the way we describe ourselves. But, in doing so, we’re really only trading the gay closet for the weird closet – and that’s a closet in everyone’s house, regardless of who you sleep with. You’re not fully out until you’re fully honest.

Besides, when we share our weirdness, we give someone else the ability to share theirs, which makes everyone feel less alone. And that’s the point of it all, isn’t it?

Shadley Grei will be our guest speaker on Friday, August 5th. Currently living and working in Los Angeles, he is back in town for a special presentation at the Civic Center’s Stoner Theater entitled *WELCOME TO THE GREI AREA* on August 6th and 7th. The show combines his two most recent stage works, both of which earned “Best of” recognition at the Hollywood Fringe Festival. *Marshall’s Law* is a short play about two former best friends, Abby and Zach, who get locked in a basement where they are forced to confront their damaged relationship in the aftermath of an accident that killed Zach’s boyfriend – who happens to be Abby’s ex-husband. The second piece, *The Father, The Son & The Holy Sh!t*, is a one-man show exploring Shadley’s true story of getting to know his father for the first time at age 34.

Shadley has offered FFBC members what he jokingly refers to as “the queer as a three dollar bill discount.” If you’d like to see the show, visit www.shadleygrei.com for more details and by using the code “cheers” at check out, you will receive \$3 off the ticket price.

MOTHERS AND SONS

Theater Review by Gary Kaufman

Mothers and Sons, Co-directed by Todd Buchacker and Michael Tallman, portrays a mother who has lost her only child, her son, to AIDS many years ago and who has also recently lost her husband. She unexpectedly drops by the apartment of her son’s former lover who has since acquired a husband and a child. Kathryn, the mother, is angry at the world -- at life. The confrontation allows the play to revisit the angst that gays had when they were dying right and left and no one knew why -- and no one was doing anything about it. Kathryn had lost a son, but her son’s lover, Cal, had not only lost him but dozens of friends within an incredibly short time frame. *Continued on p. 2, Col. 2*

FFBC

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Breakfast Club

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A Unique Memoir From Two Famous People

By Steve Person

Back in 1980, the school librarian where I was teaching recommended that I read Barbara Goldsmith's best selling biography of Gloria Vanderbilt entitled **Little Gloria: Happy at Last**. The book was extremely well written and presented the sensational trial that pitted Gloria's mother, Gloria Morgan Vanderbilt, against Gloria's aunt, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. The court ordered that Little Gloria be in the custody of her aunt with periodic visitations by her mother.

Fast-forward forty-five years to the memoir, **The Rainbow Comes and Goes: A Mother and Son on Life, Love, and Loss** by Anderson Cooper and Gloria Vanderbilt. The book is a juxtaposition of questions and answers between Anderson and Gloria. Through the use of emails between mother and son in Gloria Vanderbilt's ninety-first year of life, touching, emotional, heart-rending, and sad memories emerge from a son who still struggles with the fact that his dearly loved father died when the boy was only ten years old and the mother who went through huge fortunes more than once and eventually gained them back through her own initiative and grit.

The book is really more about Gloria than Anderson, but then she has many more decades to recount than he does. It is divided into six sections and works chronologically up to the present (2015). The first section, naturally, deals with Gloria's early life of being trundled around Europe in the 1930s and the eventual custody case that stunned the nation when it was revealed that Little Gloria's mother—Gloria Morgan Vanderbilt—was involved in lesbian affairs. Section five, the most painful to read, recounts the suicide of Anderson's older brother who fell fourteen floors from the balcony of his mother's bedroom while she helplessly pleaded with him not to do it.

Gloria's four marriages account for much of the book with her first, at age seventeen, being one of the biggest mistakes of her life. Subsequent marriages resulted in half-siblings for Anderson and his brother Carter Cooper. Their father, originally from a large Mississippi family, worked in the Theatre, and died suddenly when Anderson was just ten years old. Both Anderson and his mother write posthumous letters to him in an effort to gain understanding of death, its impact on life, and their own coping mechanisms.

Anderson's coming out to his mother when he was just out of college relives how he wishes he had stated it differently to her. He tells her he THINKS he is gay when in reality he wishes he had said he KNOWS he is gay.

Toward the end of the book, Gloria shares with Anderson a quotation she came across from the Scottish writer, Ian Maclaren: "Be kind," he wrote, "for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle." How true!