



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

First Friday News & Views

December 2016

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WTF: In Search of Silver Linings

By Jonathan Wilson

To say that the most recent election outcomes were not what progressive people would have hoped for would not just be putting it mildly. To approach an adequate reaction from an enlightened perspective, expletives would be required.

The outcomes up and down the ballot have left Democrats to do some serious soul searching. Those outcomes have left searching for silver linings those who believe in government that works. Those who believe that the tax burden should be more equitable. Those who believe that government regulation of commercial activities is critical to protection of our citizens. Those who believe that practical, compassionate solutions are needed for undocumented residents. Those who believe in respecting our commitments around the world and keeping our promises. Those who believe that in diversity there is greater strength. Those who believe that women are to be respected and similarly rewarded for hard work. Those who believe in separation of church and state. Those who believe in sensible gun control. Those who believe that Planned Parenthood is indispensable to the elimination of unsafe, back alley abortions.

There are some silver linings. First, for the time being, at both the national level and here in Iowa, the Republican Party, such as it is, is in control of both the legislative and executive branches of government. Two things about that: they won't have divided government to blame when failed policies don't deliver promised results (think Kansas and Governor Brownback); and there is still a third branch of government. In Iowa, all justices were overwhelmingly approved for retention, including the author of the *Varnum* decision that granted marriage equality, and the Iowa Legislature can't reverse that ruling. At the national level we can expect a more conservative balance of 5-4 justices, but that was the balance that already gave us marriage equality nation-wide, so that decision is unlikely to be impacted. At both levels, immediate change on a range of subjects is unlikely thanks to that third branch of government if for no other reason than the fact that litigation all the way to those Supreme Courts takes LOTS of time.

Second, our "rigged system" has put into the White House a clueless apprentice. As documented by countless Republicans (and, for that matter, anyone who was paying attention in fifth grade civics class) the guy is not fit for the presidency -- simply not up to the task. Just the daily written briefings, if

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▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,
Friday, December 2, 2016, at Hoyt
Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland,
Des Moines, IA

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

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he read them, would represent more reading in a week or so than he's done previously in his whole life unless reading financial statements and balance sheets counts. He has two chief problems: he doesn't know how things get done, and he doesn't like taking advice from those who do. At least George W. Bush knew he wasn't the smart one and was willing to confine himself to being a front man and otherwise follow the advice of his betters.

Therein lies a third silver lining and a call to arms. This nation survived eight years of a George Bush presidency. It isn't the better for it, but it survived. Assuming survival, in just two years the nation gets another shot at the legislatures, both national and state. We need to stop grieving right away over the shocking electoral reversal in the most recent election. It is what it is. We need to pray for the two year longevity of four United States Supreme Court justices, and we need to begin organizing immediately so that we can get a different outcome in the mid-term elections. That's what has to happen, and it can happen before the novice in the Oval Office does too much damage. *[Ed. As of this writing the President-elect has said that gay marriage is settled, he's okay with it, and he does not intend to revisit that issue. Time will tell.]*

Note from an Entitled Gay Millennial

By Jordan Duesenberg

As a millennial I'm constantly told that I'm spoiled. That I'm a privileged, lazy and an overly-entitled adult-child. I'm not going to argue with the adult-child portion of this (seriously, help me). Anytime gross over-generalizations are thrown around, I usually get irritated. But then I pause to look at these stereotypes of a gay millennial.

When I came out in 2012, I could already get married in Iowa if I so chose, and I was able to do so all over the US shortly after. I never had to worry about getting fired from my job due to my sexual orientation, or turned away from housing. I always had the option of going to a doctor and getting prescribed a pill that is 99% effective in preventing HIV, and all I had to do was make an appointment. I could keep going and going with examples, but with all of this said, I guess you can say I'm privileged.

You could probably argue that I'm lazy too, because I never fought for any of the rights I listed above. I

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Briefs & Shorts

Be sure to RSVP by November 30 for the December 2, 2016, meeting by calling 515-288-2500, or on line at: JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com. Our speaker on December 2 will be Mel Duncan, co-founder of the international Nonviolent Peaceforce headquartered in Belgium and St. Paul, Minnesota. You may want to invite some of your friends to attend!!

Thanks to Allen Vander Linden for introducing our November speaker, Dr. Maria Filippone.

WE did it!!! Just over 30 of us have given at least \$100 apiece in order to match the last scholarship fund gift of David Hurd before his suicide death. He was a terrific friend of our community and of the FFBC.



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. Four FFBC members have already taken that step. Two by including the FFBC in their Wills, one by seeding a \$10,000 contribution to the Greater Des Moines Community Foundation to benefit FFBC, and one by naming the FFBC as a beneficiary under an annuity. You can do this too. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details.

Bringing Hope to the Hopeless

By Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday, November 4, 2016, was Dr. Maria Filippone, who presented us with an extremely sobering set of facts and perceptions about the devastation – the “catastrophe” many call it – that is the Palestinian territory of Gaza, between Israel and Egypt at the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Dr. Filippone had traveled to Gaza last January as a member of a medical delegation studying and treating the physical and emotional health challenges of women and children who are trying to survive there.

The population of Gaza is fast approaching two million, she noted, in a territory less than twice the size of the District of Columbia; because of population growth and of the restrictions (economic, political, and military) placed on the territory by Israel. Gaza is expected to be uninhabitable in less than five years. (Most of Friday’s audience understood that to mean that the land is *already* uninhabitable....)

Some things I learned from hearing Dr. Filippone’s “alternative viewpoint” (as she termed it) on the political history of Palestine:

- The Arabic peoples of the middle east have been colonized successively by Europeans through much of the 19th and 20th centuries, including both French and British colonizers – *and* Americans who joined in making the formation of the State of Israel a reality in 1948. (Judaism is a religion, but Zionism is a nationalist movement.)
- The Arabic term of reference to the establishment of Israel in the territory of Palestine is *al-nakba*, “The Catastrophe” – which certainly also describes the current condition of Gaza.

You can access a complete audio transcript of Filippone’s talk at the First Friday Breakfast Club Web site <ffbc-iowa.org>, to hear details of what she had to say about the horrors of life in Gaza.

Dr. Maria Filippone is on Facebook, where she has blogged about Gaza.

P o m d e r T h i s

Be afraid not to try.

It’s not that I am so smart; it’s just that I stay with a problem longer. A. Einstein

When it rains, look for rainbows; when it’s dark, look for stars.

Wisdom is measured by the number of times we’ve been to the cemetery.

Never regret anything that made you smile. Mark Twain

Chin up Your Majesty or the crown slips.

Holding onto anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. Buddha

Our speed is not so important; forward is forward.

Duesenberg, Cont’d from Page 2

suppose you could even argue that I do feel entitled, because I think I deserve all of those rights. But here’s the thing, with Trump’s presidency now a reality, now is the time to prove everyone wrong.

Like every gay American (or arguably, any sensible American), I’m rightfully pissed off about the election. I don’t have to explain to any of you why I’m upset. My generation overwhelmingly voted against Trump, and we’re terrified. Within the last week, there have been stories all over about protests. These protests are made up of all sorts of demographics, but largely they’re made up of millennials. Millennials are finally getting off their phones and off their computers and are making their actual voices heard. The ironic thing is, we’re being told that we’re acting like entitled crybabies. If we don’t do anything we’re lazy; if we do, we’re entitled. It’s a lose-lose situation.

Ultimately, the biggest losing scenario in all of this is not doing anything at all. From LGBT activist groups such as the Gay Liberation Front to ACT UP to Queer Nation, we have the history and resources to help us. Now we just need guidance from previous generations to help us with our fight to ensure that the next generation of LGBT youth and individuals can continue their lives with all the rights and privileges I’ve so enjoyed since the day I came out in 2012.

Post Election Hangover

By Senator Matt McCoy

If you woke up Wednesday morning, November 9, 2016, and your head was aching and the world seemed blurry as you tried to focus on the morning news, you were not alone. Democrats suffered a massive blow both nationally and in Iowa as defeats were announced and the political carnage was totaled up.

I wrote early this summer that our country was struggling with fear and that the consequences of this emotion would not be known for some time to come.

Following is a text of my comments from earlier this summer:

“Our nation is divided. People are seeing the country they know and love change in ways that make them uncomfortable. Recent gun violence and attacks on the police are causing anxiety. With increasing stress, it becomes easier to target Americans for polarizing arguments from both the right of center and left of center in our political parties.

People want to know where their leaders are planning to take America. They want to know their leaders are working to keep them safe. They want leaders to communicate clearly and confidently about an uncertain future. People want to know what is being asked of them individually as citizens, and how they can accomplish those goals.

There are no simple solutions to the problems America faces now and in the years to come. I learned that leadership is about doing the right thing—despite the consequences—and doing it at a rate people can tolerate.”

I believe that the electorate proved these earlier statements were accurate. Our nation is divided. Roughly 25 percent of Americans voted for Trump and 25 percent of Americans voted for Clinton and 47 percent of Americans were too lazy, apathetic, or otherwise disenfranchised and did not vote. This means that roughly 25 percent of Americans made the most important decision about who would lead our nation the next four years.

Iowa voted for Trump and his coat tails swept Republicans into the Iowa Senate. Republicans were able to pick up 6 seats in the Iowa Senate. Most of the Iowa Senate races were decided by relatively slim margins. Following is a list of bills that Iowa Republicans filed in the Iowa House but were stopped by a Democratic led Iowa

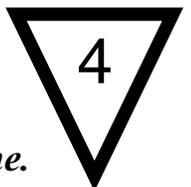
Senate, including possible legislation that may become law in 2017:

- Allow school vouchers, which would allow parents to take state funds out of the K-12 public system and use it to educate their children at home or at private or parochial schools.
- Allow individual religious exemptions to deny public accommodations to individuals that practice a lifestyle that is incompatible with their spiritual or faith beliefs.
- Deny funding for Planned Parenthood.
- Privatize public pension IPERS. (Iowa Public Employees Retirement System)
- Dismantle collective bargaining rights for public employee unions and crumble private sector unions in Iowa.
- Deny gay couples the right to foster parent or adopt children
- Deny women access to abortion.
- Allow so-called “stand your ground” legislation to become law. This allows individuals who feel threatened to shoot it out rather than walk away from a fight.
- Allow any individual the right to purchase and carry weapons without permit or specialized training.
- Tax cuts for large corporations
- State income tax cuts for the wealthy

Under the new Republican-controlled Iowa Legislature, I expect many of these initiatives to become law. Elections have consequences and to the victors go the spoils. Some new legislation, most importantly tax cuts, could have lasting impacts for this state for a decade or more. While I know that this legislation will become law in Iowa, I feel certain that Iowans will be hurt in the process. I will use my voice to oppose such legislation. I will fight efforts to roll back human rights and restrict the reproductive freedom of women.

My question to Iowans is: what are you going to do to take a stand? What organizations will you join, volunteer for, or donate funds to in order to resist the coming assault on your freedom? We have to do more than protest. We must get involved, work to support enlightened candidates for office, and join causes that support our positions.

In two years we will have mid-term elections. Typically Democrats don't vote at high rates in mid-terms. How can we change this? What are you willing to do to change this?



After all, if it is to be, it is up to me.

My Coming-Out Journey

Friedhelm Brinkhaus

I don't believe coming out as a gay man in Germany was very different from coming out in the US. In western countries, and maybe in most countries, two facts conspire to delay and make the coming out process difficult: the lack of gay role models and preponderance of straight role models, and the values in family and society dominated by conservative, puritanical "Christian" principles.

I grew up post-war in a small town in north-central Germany in a Catholic family. My parents were conservative and life in my early days centered around church and school. Although Germany has become much more secular since, "Christian" conservative values are still the foundation of the political decision-making process. Despite the fact that Germany has passed a law allowing registered civil unions, conservative parties have blocked efforts to pass a gay marriage law and, thus, equal rights for gay people.

I am still amazed about how long it took me to discover my sexual orientation. There was no real awakening of my own sense of sexual preference until I was 31 years old. I was not in the proverbial closet because I simply did not know. I went to a boys-only Catholic boarding school during my junior and high school years (called Gymnasium in Germany). It is possible, in fact likely, that being around boys of similar age all the time satisfied some of my curiosity and need for male companionship. During the last years in school I remember a few instances of sexual exploration, but those were tentative and of little consequence. Although one particular experience, which I remember vividly, left me uneasy and thoughtful. After all, we had little privacy in the communal setting of a boarding school. There were no private bed rooms and time and activities were structured and mostly supervised. Many may wonder about this, but my experience in a boarding school was generally positive (the school was excellent) and it set me on the course for my professional development later.

After graduation I was drafted (the cold war was still very cold) and spent 15 months in the military in the city of Hamburg in northern Germany. I did fine

in that environment since I am relatively adaptable, but I always felt out of place and at odds with the military hierarchy and culture. I had my first girl friend at that time. As probably is the case for many gay men, she pursued me rather than I her, and the relationship developed naturally since she had become initially part of my circle of close friends during the last year of high school. I only can best describe our sexual relationship as awkward and my lack of drive ultimately led her to find other opportunities. However, for my time in the military she was my escape from the rigid culture, and I left Hamburg every weekend.

Then on to university. I was so looking forward to it and dedicated myself fully to my studies and the pleasures of being a student. I spent my academic years in two mid-sized university cities, Muenster and Freiburg. In particular Freiburg in southern Germany is beautifully located in the foothills of the Black Forest. Both are cities with very high quality of life. At the very beginning of my first semester I met Ralf. We became very quick friends and it turned out he would be my steady companion for the entire duration of my student career, including my years in doctoral studies. Ralf's friends became my friends, and we developed a wonderful circle of friends, drinking beer, travelling, and partying. We were inseparable, moved together to Freiburg, studied together for each exam. Ralf was and is straight. Again, this close relationship seemed to satisfy my need for male companionship, and the idea of being gay did not even remotely cross my mind. I can only describe it as my head being in the clouds and not taking the time for self-examination. I was attracted to Ralf, as I know today, but did not define it as such then.

After a relatively short fling with another girl, in Freiburg, I met my second girlfriend in the dorm where Ralf and I were living. I am certain I was never in love, but it seemed natural and logical and we both were involved in social projects. We moved with two friends into a large flat and experienced the ups and downs of close quarter living – a decidedly mixed experience when strong personalities are involved. During this time, change and serious self-examination were approaching for me. Three developments coalesced:
the very painful break-up

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Some Things Don't Change Much...Thankfully

John Tompkins

Former FFBC member and continued supporter

Going through some old photos prior to a family reunion, I found one that I thought might be of interest to FFBC as it was taken in . . . 1955 . . . in the same room where monthly FFBC meetings are held.

A little history regarding the photo. My beloved maternal grandmother, who passed away in 1995 at the age of 106, had given piano lessons in her home and the homes of students for many years. I believe she started in the 1920s and continued until the late 1970s when she was about 90 years of age. She had a Chickering Baby Grand that was built in 1917 and which passed to me before her death. It now sits in my living room in Phoenix having been shipped from Des Moines when I moved to Phoenix in 2011.

Each year in May, she presented her students in a recital program. She had up to 50 or more students for a period of several years. Both my grandmother and her daughter (my mother) were long time members of the Des Moines Women's Club which had offices and conducted meetings at Hoyt Sherman Place. I assume, for that reason, it was possible for my grandmother to use the facility at a reasonable price or, perhaps, nothing at all. Students played memorized pieces on the very nice Steinway Grand that is still in the gallery area today. As one of her students, I played in my first recital at age 6 in 1955. The photo shows me seated at the piano probably following the recital. I played in each recital from 1955 to

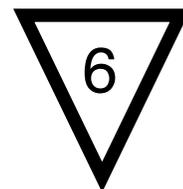


1965, my junior year in high school. While I had attended a few events in the auditorium over the years, I doubt that I was in the art gallery until in the late 1990s when FFBC settled on that location as a meeting venue. When I walked into the area, I was astounded by the fact that it looked almost exactly the same as it had in the mid-1950s. Unfortunately, the photo concentrates on the piano with me seated at it, so you will have to trust my memory of what the room looked like those many years ago. Aside from more modern lighting (I

remembered globe style lights hanging by chains from the ceiling) and likely repainting, much looked like it had stopped in time. That 1955 recital was held on a Saturday evening, which must have been on the warm side, because I remember the doors on the south side being partially opened to allow the evening breeze

to enter. I am sure the area was not air conditioned at that time, so breezes were precious. Not to mention, both the students, and the parents for that matter, were dressed more formally than would be the case now and, as I recall, some of that apparel could be very warm.

Hoyt Sherman Place continues to be a marvelous venue for many occasions and I think it to be a wonderful location for FFBC meetings. In honor of my grandmother and mother, I had two seats in the auditorium inscribed in their memory when the auditorium was last refurbished. I hope you enjoy the "blast from the past" photo as much as I have. And I think it is nice that some things don't change that much over time!



Brinkhaus, Cont'd from Page 5

with my girl friend, my imminent move to the United States thanks to a scholarship from the German Government, and my first satisfying and life-changing sexual experience with a man.

Klaus was an out gay man roughly my age and very different in his personal development. I was obviously more than ready to be responsive to his advances. I knew he was gay since he was so open about it, and I was ready for a new chapter in my life. I was dealing with my deeply hurt girl friend, and I had to ponder a number of questions about myself, my relationships with friends and family, and what my new-found identity would mean for my life and my future. I was not ready to come out to my family, but long talks with my best female friends and my own reasoning led me quickly to the unequivocal conclusion that I would not lead a life in any closet, and that I would be true to my discovered identity, whatever the consequences. I didn't expect it to be easy, and it wasn't, but I am still proud and happy that I quickly came to these conclusions.

Before I moved to the US I told all my friends, including Ralf. While living in the US, I started telling my siblings during visits in Germany. I never told my parents. That was a decision that actually came rather easily. I never thought that, as a gay man I was living outside society, nor did I have the need to get my homosexuality validated by my parents. For all practical purposes, I had not changed by discovering that I am gay, and I was fine putting

the welfare and happiness of my parents first. My parents, advanced in age, would have had their world disrupted. I was the same person, and living in the US and telling them during a short visit, I would not have been present to help them process this information.

Coming-out is a very personal journey and different for every man. Processing the inner anxiety and learning to find and accept your own place in society, in my opinion, is as much or more important than dealing with societal and cultural pressures and a value system that does not accommodate non-conforming love.

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FLASH BACK: The following article appeared in the First Friday Breakfast Club Newsletter in November 1996.

How-To Guide for Coming Out By Jonathan Wilson

In the continuing effort to be of service to our members and prospective members, the following guide is offered for those who want to come out in whatever context; the principles are the same regardless.

First, decide the person(s) to whom you want to come out.

Second, imagine what would be the worst thing that could happen as a result of coming out to them. Be reasonable now, but spend some time imagining the very worst that could reasonably happen.

Third, after formulating a picture of the worst that could reasonably happen, evaluate whether you could handle that. Decide whether, under all of the circumstances and considering your fortitude, you would be able to cope with that, whether it be psychological, interpersonal, financial, or some combination of those. Do not go to the next step before you have satisfied yourself that you can handle the worst that could reasonably be expected to happen. (Hint: you are, at that point, free!!!)

Fourth, go back and re-evaluate whether you still feel a need to come out to the person(s). If you do, then decide on the best way and do it.

FFBC

First Friday
News & Views

Des Moines, Iowa

December, 2016

First Friday
Breakfast Club

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Newsletter

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MADE ON A  MAC

FAIRIES AND AK47's

By Steve Person

Yes, Virginia, there is a Tinker Bell—really! Working at the tour desk at the Iowa State Capitol is somewhat like teaching in public school: we have to take whatever comes through the door. Mostly that is good, but sometimes people can be downright scary. I relate two differing incidents for you here.

When I was a child, the first movie I remember seeing was Disney's 1954 version of **Peter Pan**. I guess I was attracted to boys and fairies even then. A few Saturdays ago at the Capitol, the real Tinker Bell visited. Her name is Margaret Kerry, and she was in central Iowa to visit her granddaughter in Waukee and to make three public appearances. She is a little old lady now of 87. In 1953, Kerry "got a call from her agent telling her to get over to Disney because they were auditioning for a three-inch high fairy that didn't talk." A trained dancer and actress, Kerry worked up a dance routine. The Disney people were impressed and asked her to return the next Tuesday and to bring her bathing suit. For the next nine months or so, she acted on a soundstage creating the movements of Tinker Bell so the illustrators could draw them. This, of course, was when animation was an art form and not a computer skill.

She is a delightful woman, and even today you can see the sparkle in her eyes that so captivated the Disney artist who transformed her into the impish little pixie called Tinker Bell. Kerry has a memoir entitled, **TINKER BELL TALKS! TALES OF A PIXIE-DUSTED LIFE**.

A week or so after Margaret Kerry's visit, an older man and his wife came to the tour desk. She was rather nondescript, but I will forever remember what this ogre was wearing. Knowing that I had to treat him in a welcoming manner--even though what he wore totally disgusted me and the other guides present—I sent him and his wife on their way with a self-guided tour sheet.

This man in khaki shorts and black socks and shoes, wore a tan tee shirt with a darker tan American flag displayed across the front. Superimposed over the flag was an image of an AK47 assault rifle. Printed underneath the image were the words, "Black Guns Matter." It was a sickening sight especially after the horror of the massacre in Orlando in June and the terrible murders all across this country of innocent people who have fallen victim to military-style weapons. Little did I know then of the police killings that would stain our community a few weeks later. I have trouble understanding such behavior, yet I know it exists. The election of Donald Trump as the next President speaks volumes of the hatred and bigotry that permeates this country even now. Obviously the only education these folks relate to comes from the NRA and the Republican Party. We will self-destruct sooner rather than later, I fear.

