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A Haggard Miracle

by Jonathan Wilson

After three weeks of intense counseling, the not-so-Reverend Ted Haggard would have folks believe he’s 100% heterosexual. If such success is to be believed, his counselors have something they need to take on the road. I think Ted’ll be an excellent show pony so long as they keep him on a short leash and away from temptation. They dare not turn their backs on him.

When interviewed, even the head of Exodus International, a group that touts the idea that homosexuality can be “cured,” doubted Ted’s conversion. No matter that the knowledgeable, even those who want to believe, doubt the account. We need to keep in mind the audience Haggard is playing to. These are people who profess to believe the earth is about 6000 years old; Methuselah lived 900 years; Jonah lived seven days in the belly of a whale, and survived; and Jesus was born of a virgin and went on to walk on water, turn water into wine, raise the dead, cure leprosy, and restore sight to the blind. In the ranks of the gullible, these folks are the crème de la crème. For them, Haggard’s conversion from gay to straight in record time would be no more than a minor miracle. And when you’ve made a career of selling to that audience, as Haggard and his counselors have done, the reported success with Haggard is not all that remarkable and should not be surprising to anyone.

I know the drill from personal experience. When I was first out publicly I regularly attended conservative local churches. I thought my high profile as a gay man, raised in the Christian tradition, might send a worthwhile message and even spark some meaningful dialogue. I stopped doing it when a woman in one church started stalking me as a good prospect for marriage. Cards. Letters — long letters. Phone calls. Drive-bys. As she explained it, she believed in miracles and had that in mind for me — for us. No matter that I’d been married for a quarter of a century trying to make it work with a more attractive woman than she, along with prayer, counseling, two children, family, friends, church, and society to motivate me.

You do have to wonder what those counselors had to say to Haggard. What could they have possibly said that has eluded countless counselors struggling to help closeted gay men over the decades? What could have been so promptly compelling? It had to be Richter-Scale-earth shaking to be so quickly and completely life changing. They owe it to the world to make full disclosure. Did Ted resist at all and, if so, how long and how hard? For such a pious person who had struggled with this dark side for as long as he could remember, the remedy they offered, whatever it was, should make very short work of mere mortal closet cases.

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CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, March 2 at Hoyt Sherman Place.
- Our guest speaker will be Myke Selha of the LGBT Community Center of Central Iowa.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by Tuesday, February 27 to Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com or 288-2500 by phone.

Dreamgirls

Starring
Jamie Foxx,
Beyonce Knowles,
Eddie Murphy,
Danny Glover,
Jennifer Hudson,
Anika Noni Rose,
Keith Robinson &
John Lithgow.



Directed by Bill Condon

2Hr 5 Min

7he film **Dreamgirls** has filled out the story of the Broadway musical very well. New songs have been added. And a star has been born. Jennifer Hudson, who plays Effie, shines in the film by not only demonstrating her incredible vocal skills but a wide acting range as well. She did this so well in her first role in a motion picture that she won both the Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild Award for best supporting actress. She may well have won an Oscar by the time this review is published.

But she is not the only shining star of the film. Eddie Murphy does an incredible stint as James “Thunder” Early, a womanizing R & B singer (Rough and Black, he calls it). Mr. Murphy sings his own part and also demonstrates an acting range for which he is not generally known. His performance has also won him an Oscar nomination for best supporting actor.

The film opens with the Steppe Sisters stepping onto the stage of a talent competition in Detroit. Effie arrived late so that the Dreamettes missed their opportunity to compete. However, Jimmy Early, whose girlfriend backup singer just ran out on him because he was married, needs new backup singers. He woos one of the Dreamettes telling her it is her lucky day. They do luck out, get on the stage to compete, and the Dreamettes bring down the house. But Jimmy bribes the judges to ensure that the Dreamettes lose and will be in need of a job. Sure enough, the Dreamettes sign on to back up Jimmy Early on tour. They have Effie’s brother in tow (a cute-as-a-button Keith Robinson) as a composer, and Curtis Taylor, Jr. (Jamie Foxx) as their manager.

Curtis always dreamed of managing black artists on a black label in a time when record companies used white artists to present sanitized versions of black artists’ songs and, through payola to DJs, ensure that it was the white artists’ records that would be played. After having this happen to Jimmy Early’s tune, “Cadillac Car,” Curtis decides that two can play that game as he sells all the used cars in his used car business for his own payola for Jimmy Early’s next song appropriately enough entitled “Steppin’ to the Bad Side.” The careers of Jimmy Early and the Dreamettes take off along with the launching of Curtis’s Rainbow Records label which bills itself as the “Sound of Tomorrow.”

But there is a price to pay for stepping into the big time for the artists because they lose control of their product and are subjected to the control of their managers. Jimmy does not take off as the crossover artist Curtis had hoped, and soon the Dreams are born. Because Curtis wants a certain look, Effie is forced to step aside as the front person for the trio in deference to Deena Jones (Beyonce Knowles). Effie is by far the more gifted singer, but Deena has the look that can make them stars.

The film and play are based loosely on the career of the Supremes, and there are many sad times shared, as well as joyous ones. New songs have been written to fill out the piece and all three of them have been Oscar nominated for best song. The staging and choreography are great; acting is superb; and the emotions seem real. If you enjoy musicals, it is a must see.

I would also highly recommend the soundtrack of the film; it is a knockout!

—Gary Kaufman

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Notably, Haggard and his counselors made no mention of what progress they’d made on his admitted dishonesty, let alone his acknowledged infidelity. What we’re left with is a lying but duly certified straight man who supposedly won’t fool around with other men. Not really much of a miracle. Certainly not much on which to rebuild a marriage of any kind. For my money I’d prefer a well-adjusted, self-respecting, honest, and faithful gay man any day.

—Jonathan Wilson



Des Moines' Aviation Director Addresses February Meeting

by Bruce Carr



Our February guest speaker was the Aviation Director of Des Moines International Airport, Mr. Craig Smith, A.A.E. [Accredited Airport Executive]. Smith, who has been the airport's director since October 2005 and was deputy director before that (since 1997), served 22 years in the United States Air Force and then worked at the Atlantic City (NJ) airport before coming to Des Moines.

Smith's interesting presentation highlighted the Des Moines airport's 75th anniversary celebration this year, as well as several recent material improvements made at the airport for the benefit of passengers and other patrons. There has been an expansion of the "Capitol Marketplace" gift shop that was completed last September. There's also a new restaurant on the airside concourse which opened in the middle of December to provide travelers with a casual dining atmosphere and locally made microbrews. Even more useful to Central Iowa residents may be the new cell phone waiting area, described in the 2007 Winter edition of "Touching Ground," the airport's quarterly newsletter. As mentioned on the airport's Web site, www.dsmairport.com: "The cell phone waiting area allows someone who is picking passengers up to park free for a short period while they wait for the flight to arrive. The lot has 20 spaces and is for ATTENDED VEHICLES ONLY - any vehicle parked unattended is subject to towing. Signs will be posted in the lot with a phone number to call to get updated flight status. If a flight is delayed substantially, we ask that you leave the lot and return closer to the new arrival time reserving spaces for people waiting short-term to pick-up their respective passenger."

The airport's Web site is also useful for checking the status of flights into and out of Des Moines. Just click "Flight On Time" to see today's arrivals or departures. Smith also pointed out the airport's overall rising patronage, approaching (but—he noted—still falling just short of) the "magic number" of 2 million passengers. He also discussed the upcoming Mas-

ter Plan that incorporates a new runway and expanded collaboration with the Des Moines Public Schools in the aeronautical academy across Fleur Drive. On the matter of comparative fares at competitive airports (specifically Omaha and Kansas City) Smith drew an extended comparison of true costs, factoring in the federal vehicle mileage rate of 48.5 cents—making round-trip driving costs exceed \$115 for Omaha and near \$170 for Kansas City. Lower fares and a wider range of non-stop flights are just two of the happy outcomes if he can convince more people to avoid the driving hassle and fly from Des Moines International Airport.

—Bruce Carr

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law stayed on the books in Tennessee until 1968. In that year the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Epperson v. Arkansas* that such laws were unconstitutional, based on the First Amendment, because their primary purpose was to advance a particular religious perspective. Obviously, change comes slowly.

There is no doubt that procedural niceties and eventual judicial intervention play a significant role in the continuing struggle for GLBT individuals and their quest for civil equality. There will be setbacks, and there may even be progress in terms of occasional judicial wins. In the long run, however, we will prevail in the court of public opinion by virtue of irrefutable facts and compelling arguments, and not thanks to legal procedures and maneuvering in the courtroom.

—Steve Person

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the March 2 meeting by Tuesday, February 27. E-mail Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com or by phone at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Myke Selha of the LGBT Community Center of Central Iowa.



Thanks to Mike Perry for introducing our February speaker, Craig Smith, Aviation Director of the Des Moines International Airport.



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News & Views*

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MARCH 2007

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From the Editor

The Age of Rocks

“An idea is a greater monument than a cathedral.”

When I heard that a few evenings ago while watching television, I admit that it took me somewhat aback. I have visited many of the world’s great cathedrals—Westminster Abbey in London; Notre Dame in Paris; Saint Peter’s in Rome; Saint Mary’s in Sydney, Australia; and many others. Each is a testament to Man’s ability to create, overcome, and worship.

While that statement really had nothing to do with cathedrals, my mind nonetheless flashed back to those holy places of Christendom, and the authors, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, may or may not have intended such a reaction. But they did strive for a reaction, and I’m positive that was their intent, regardless of their audiences’ experiences to interpret such reactions.

The sentence was uttered by Spencer Tracy in the courtroom of the 1960 film version of **Inherit the Wind**. The film, and the play it is based on, should be required viewing for any prospective politician and all law students. Based upon the “Scopes Monkey Trial” of 1925, the film reverberates as strongly today as when it first appeared. The authors fictionalized the characters and the location, but there was no mistaking that Tracy’s Henry Drummond was meant to be Clarence Darrow, and Frederic March’s Matthew Harrison Brady was none other than William Jennings Bryan. The case tested the law prohibiting the teaching of anything but the Biblical creation story.

While the machinations of the courtroom scenes would likely not be tolerated today, legal atmosphere the message still comes through. The title and the message come from the **book of Proverbs**: “He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind.” The 24-year-old biology teacher, Bertram T. Cates (John T. Scopes in reality), dared to put forth Darwin’s theory that challenged the popularly accepted Biblical account of Creation.

Drummond (Darrow) skillfully picks apart each of Brady’s (Bryan’s) statements in court about the Biblical interpretation of the beginning of Creation. At one point, Drummond actually calls Brady to the stand to testify. Drummond has in his hand a rock, and he asks Brady how old he thinks the rock is. Brady’s retorts, “I am more interested in the ‘Rock of Ages’ than in the age of rocks.” It is with such fundamentalist drivel that Brady, helped by a jury whose provinciality can only be described as more than “back woods,” wins the case.

In reality, the verdict was overturned two years later by the Tennessee Supreme Court—not because of a divergent view of Creation—but because of a procedural mistake in the original trial. Amazingly, the

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