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NIBBLING OUR WAY TO LOST

by Jonathan Wilson

The Biblical parable is told about a flock of one hundred sheep. One of the not-so-bright critters gets lost and the “good shepherd” leaves the remaining 99 and goes in search of the lost one until it is found and returned to the safety of the fold. All well and good. Most folks take from that an important message about the worth of the individual and the dedication of a “good shepherd.” Both are valid messages. The individual is valuable, and a dedicated leader will not ignore the plight of the individual.

I also take from the parable another lesson. You see, the lost sheep almost certainly didn’t just run off in whatever direction and get lost. No, the lost sheep nibbled its way – wherever. It nibbled and took a step, nibbled a bit more and took another step, and so forth – not paying attention to where it was or where it was headed, and certainly not keeping track of the rest of the flock. Had there been a loud noise of warning just before it was lost and it was too late, that would have gotten the sheep’s attention and there’d have been an immediate course correction. Lacking such an attention-getting warning, the sheep kept on nibbling and stepping on its way to being lost.

So what, you say? The fact is that the same is true in human affairs, particularly as relates to our liberties. Little by little, they get nibbled away. Post-9/11 we, in the name of enhanced security, got the Patriot Act. So named for political purposes, not because of its adherence to the principles for which our patriots fought and died. With the 9/11 catalyst we got Guantanamo Bay detentions, admitted torture of those in US custody, renditions to other torture-prone countries, “black sites” for unaccountable detentions all over the world, and unprosecuted war crimes admittedly committed by our government leaders at the highest level. More recently, with “Gitmo” still unclosed, we have gotten indefinite detentions, without specific charges, without due process of law, without trial, and without proof by *any* accountable standard – not even the mere balance of probabilities standard, let alone the criminal standard of beyond a reasonable doubt.

Thank goodness there’s a judge in Spain who is investigating the admitted war crimes with an eye toward prosecution, and George W. Bush has been circumspect about foreign travel since leaving the White House out of fear of arrest. Not that he was all that interested in foreign travel before he took office and, even confined to this country, he is still “incarcerated” in relative comfort and with considerable latitude.

Most recently we got the latest defense authorization bill out of Congress. It – get this -- permits the government to imprison without trial anyone who has “substantially supported al Qaeda, the Taliban, or associated forces that are engaged in hostilities against the United States.” That includes American citizens arrested anywhere in the world, including within the United States. That includes me and everyone else among our known readership. And – get this – the act allows the President of the United States to define “supporters” of terrorism as he/she sees fit and to imprison whomever he/she chooses.

There is small comfort – in fact, no comfort at all – to be taken from the signing statement of President Obama claiming that *his* administration would not allow the military to detain Americans indefinitely. This provision of the defense authorization bill, that *this* president doesn’t intend to use, is a flagrant violation of the 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th, and 14th Amendments to the US Consti-

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE

John Berry by Bruce Carr	2
Ensuring All Iowans Get the Coverage They Deserve by Sen. Matt McCoy	2
My Week With Marilyn Review by Gary Kaufman	3
Briefs & Shorts	3
Time for Work or Politics by Tony Hansen	4
Red Party Raises \$30K by Mike Smith	5
From the Pastor’s Pen by Rev. Jonathan Page	5
My M.O. by Steve Person	6

CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, March 2, 2012, at Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines, IA.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by February 29 to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or 288-2500 by phone.

Nibbling (cont.)

tution, just for starters. Our founding fathers – our original patriots – must surely be rolling over in their graves.

Winston Churchill may have said it best in a speech at Westminster College:

“[W]e must never cease to proclaim in fearless tones the great principles of freedom and the rights of man which are the joint inheritance of the English-speaking world and which through Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, the Habeas Corpus, trial by jury, and the English common law find their most famous expression in the American Declaration of Independence.

This article is intended as such a proclamation. We have nibbled our way to this point; we are lost; the very foundations of our democratic system have suffered this final erosion; and it will require leadership unprecedented since the founding of our nation in order to return us to the fold of a free people.

John Berry

By Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, February 3, was John Berry who, as Director of the White House Office of Personnel Management (OPM), is the highest ranking openly gay official in the Obama Administration. He was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on April 3, 2009; the ceremonial swearing-in on April 23 was attended by First Lady Michelle Obama. He lives in Washington and has a partner of over a decade, Curtis Yee.



Berry had everyone's intense attention, particularly as he recounted his memories of the late John Kameny, the pioneering gay rights activist. As Berry wrote in his **Washington Blade** tribute last October: “Kameny honored me personally by attending my swearing-in as head of the OPM, and showed his ability to forgive by accepting my official apology on behalf of the government for the sad and discredited termination of his federal employment by the U.S. Civil Service Commission. We presented and he

accepted OPM's highest honor, the Theodore Roosevelt Award, given to those who are courageous in defense of our nation's Merit Principles. Dr. Kameny also made clear how tickled he was that John Macy, the anti-gay head of the Civil Service Commission who fired him, was eventually succeeded by a gay man. He knew, as I know, how direct the line is be-

tween his battles and my opportunities. Frank Kameny opened the door: I and countless others are honored and humbled to pass through.”

Berry also spoke of a conversation he'd had with Supreme Court Justice Arthur Kennedy: “Oh! You're the Snow Guy! [a nickname Berry got because he's the one who used to issue work reports for federal employees during inclement weather],” said Kennedy, as Berry thanked the Justice for writing the Court's 2003 majority decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*, which invalidated criminal prosecution of homosexual sodomy. One of our members spoke with Berry briefly afterward and related how he had experienced his own workplace discrimination in a federal job after he was outed at work; the OPM director surprised him by saying, “Thank you for your service and for being able to survive that.”

John Berry, a native of northwest Washington, earned a bachelor's degree in government and politics from the University of Maryland, summa cum laude, in 1980 and a master's degree in public administration from Syracuse University in 1981. From 1985 to 1994, he worked as legislative director for U.S. Representative Steny Hoyer. He held posts in the U.S. Treasury Department, the Smithsonian Institution, and the U.S. Department of the Interior until 2000, and worked as director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Smithsonian National Zoological Park [the National Zoo, where John the Lion is named after him] until 2009, when he was nominated by President Barack Obama as OPM director. There he is responsible for managing the human resources of the federal government. The OPM web site says that “John is working closely with partners both inside and outside of government to fulfill President Obama's charge to ‘make government cool again by developing flexible, results-oriented HR policies and working to change how Americans view their public servants.’ His goal: to build a workforce of dynamic innovators who put serving the American people at the heart of everything they do.”

Ensuring All Iowans Get the Coverage They Deserve

By Senator Matt McCoy

Hundreds of at-risk Iowans have been denied coverage for their medical needs because of the failure of a high-risk insurance pool program. The program has failed to enroll hundreds of HIV-positive residents of Iowa who could be entitled to more extensive coverage due to a new federally funded program. I have begun work in the Senate to address this issue and to try to help those who deserve coverage from the program.

The high-risk program was created by the federal health reform law and is meant to help Americans with pre-existing health conditions, such as HIV. The problem in Iowa is that the state continues to prohibit third parties, such as other federal programs like the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, from paying for patients' conditions and care. This prevents uninsured patients from receiving additional funding in the form of coverage that could pay for hospitalizations and doctor visits.

I want to address this issue and create access to funding for all Iowans who fit this high-risk category. The group responsible

(Continued on page 3)

My Week with Marilyn

Review By Gary Kaufman

Anyone born after 1962 probably has difficulty understanding the Marilyn Monroe phenomenon. About that time they would say that Marilyn Monroe is the first person that people remembered where they were when they first heard that she was dead. The second, sadly, was shortly thereafter with the assassination of President Kennedy. Marilyn was an icon of sweetness, innocence, and sex. For me the iconic moment is best embodied in **Some Like It Hot**, Billy Wilder's Marilyn Monroe movie, in which Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis are hiding from mobsters because they witnessed the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. The two are using female disguises in an all-girls band featuring Sugar, Marilyn Monroe. They are in a sleeper car and Marilyn is crawling into her bunk where privacy relies completely on a small curtain. As she is going up the ladder into her upper bunk she spots Daphnie (Jack Lemmon), she smiles, puts her hand in the air to wave, and says, "Goodnight Honey!" Again sweetness, innocence, and sex.

My Week With Marilyn is based on the diary of Colin Clark (Eddie Redmayne), a 23-year-old man on his first job. The writing is absolutely incredible. And "a star is born" as Michelle Williams plays the iconic Marilyn so right-on (including the singing) that she has already won the Golden Globes award for Best Actress and has been nominated for an Academy Award. The film opens with Colin Clark in a small neighborhood theater watching Marilyn Monroe appear on the screen singing "When Love Goes Wrong (Nothing Goes Right)" and "Heatwave." Colin comes from a well-to-do British family; his grandfather is a Royal historian in one of the Queen's castles. His family wishes Colin would grow up, but Colin is determined that he "wants to make it on his own" and be in the film production industry. He perseveres and gets appointed as the third Director to Sir Laurence Olivier (Kenneth Branagh), in which Sir Laurence has cast himself opposite Marilyn Monroe in the hope that it would rejuvenate him. His wife, Vivien Leigh (Julie Ormond) fears Sir Laurence will be rejuvenated too much and will have an affair with Marilyn. To brilliant reviews on the English stage, Vivien had played the part that Marilyn is playing, but had been reminded all too harshly by Sir Laurence that she was "too old" for the part, and he gave the movie role to Marilyn. Of course, what it really does is make Sir Laurence look old as he is tries to portray the "young prince," and he hardly looks it when paired with the youthful and vibrant Marilyn.

My Week with Marilyn shows the many aspects of her personality, her personal insecurity even though she was probably the most popularly known woman in the world, her sensitivity about the public perception of her work, how she could really work a room, and others. Really a fabulous cast. I highly recommend it.

Absent justice and contrition, peace is but vengeance delayed.

Political parties die at last of swallowing their own lies. John Arbuthnot (1667-1735)

Ensuring All Iowans... (cont.)

for the program in Iowa has resisted covering hundreds of eligible patients because of cost concerns. Yet other states have insured as many as they can and have used federal dollars to cover the costs. Iowa should do the same instead of intentionally denying assistance to a targeted group of high-risk patients with HIV.

An investigation by the **Des Moines Register** has brought to my attention that the program that keeps denying this coverage needs to become more transparent and efficient. We should continue to investigate where this federal funding is going and who is and is not receiving the assistance they need. I want to help all deserving Iowans who are at high-risk and are entitled to help in managing the cost of their healthcare.

Additional information

This is a legislative column by FFBC member Senator Matt McCoy, representing western and southern portions of Des Moines, portions of West Des Moines and parts of Norwalk. For newsletters, photos and further information, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/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.

Life is terminal; our journey is a dead-end; shun mere chances to die; seek ways to die while advancing the ball.

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the March 2 meeting no later than February 29. E-mail JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be lawyer and author Ellen Krug, born Ed Krug.

▼ ▼ ▼
Thanks to Roger Ferris for his introduction at the February meeting of John Berry, Director of White House Office of Personnel Management.

▼ ▼ ▼
Thanks to everyone who helped make The Red Party such a success! We have enough money to award TWELVE \$2500 scholarships this year. Also, thanks to Capital City Pride and Randy Swartz for their donation of \$2500 each for a full scholarship and Robert Lemon for donating two.

▼ ▼ ▼
Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to **Fred Mount** and **Barry McGriff** for coordinating the book exchange.

Time for Work or Politics

By Tony E Hansen

Over the course of the past few years, GOP candidates have been ramping up claims that there are problems with President Obama's leadership. Interestingly, they have also stated that their number one goal is to "stop" Obama. Their focus is upon making Obama a one-term president: not job creation, not deficits, not wars, not civility, and definitely not helping middle class Americans survive the Great Recession. Workers, rights, jobs, research, education, and military, clearly are not in the interests of the GOP.

There has never been any hope for bipartisan efforts because that has been contrary to the GOP focus since Obama was elected (especially since gaining control of the House). Within hours of his election (before even taking office), his policies were declared "failures" with no alternative proposed and no evidence to showcase these purported failures. Just because the talking heads say "Obama" and "failure" in the same sentence, herds of "sheep" go around bleating mindlessly this characterization with an eye on embarrassing Obama rather than addressing serious issues facing the United States. Perhaps the economy could have a chance to recover more quickly with help from those on the right but, instead, they choose to play the role of hecklers and thorns-in-the-side of Obama.

The right-wingers have continuously voted to block government efforts without regard to the needs of the American public. Essentially, they have put politics ahead of doing the work they were elected to do (i.e., governing). This, at a time in American history when people need responsible government, and the government needs to keep the economy from going into tailspins. They want to discuss the validity of birth certificates, failed notions of supply-side economics, or bailouts of companies (forgetting that we subsidize large corporations with far more money year after year). They have brought our financial stability into question without handling deficit spending rather than attempting to solve the issues. They want to argue morality issues despite acting like spoiled adolescents willing to jeopardize global markets through their inaction towards budgets and fiscal matters. Even fellow Democrats have been willing to throw Obama under the bus when he is not as progressive or liberal as they would like.

We hear so much about freedom of religion so long as people are practicing a certain type of Christianity. That is a mockery of religious freedom. As if to believe something different is painfully inconvenient, people like Santorum want to reverse the gains in equality and recognition of rights because it does not fit their contorted view of fundamental Christianity. These people want to protect the unborn but are completely happy with sending kids to die overseas fighting in Islamic countries. Are we fighting terrorists or are we becoming them? These people want to introduce legislation that extends "personhood" to the unborn, but does that also change the "birthday?" Maybe these God-fearing right wingers are content with sending kids who are not even old enough to drink to die in battle because they do not want to clean up the streets at

home.

One has to question whether these people even care to read the bills and laws they are discussing or prefer just to wait for O'Reilly and his ilk to declare baseless talking points. Consider, some of these guys did not believe there was a recession, and they thought that the pessimism of the past couple years was completely unwarranted. As someone who works in the utility industry, I can assure you that there were dramatic reductions in commercial and industrial energy use during the past few years that warranted pessimism.

People are so blinded by rhetoric that they do not see what Obama has accomplished. We forget there were some really pressing issues that needed to be handled and, without intervention, these issues would have sunk the domestic and global economies. Even without the help of Congress, the Obama administration has managed to save entire domestic industries from collapse. Despite the posturing by the GOP in the Senate, we have long awaited health reforms that will surely breed more changes to cut medical costs. Despite the behavior of the GOP, Obama has moved forward with programs to help homeowners and students with education loans. Despite the Congressional impasses, Obama has signed measures that will reduce budget deficits by half over the next few years. Despite the roadblocks set by Congress, he managed to keep our economy from going into a complete depression while he got Bin Laden and helped to topple Gaddafi!

We know that job creation does not happen simply when taxes are low. We have the lowest tax rates in decades despite high unemployment numbers. We know that more money to the top 1% does not "trickle down" to "raise all boats." That 1% benefits when the 99% are able to do things. We do know when more people have discretionary income, the economy can grow because more people can buy more products. Yet, the GOP cares more about protecting the 1% than letting them share the burdens of capitalism.

Over the next few months, we are going to hear more distortions and ridicule from various candidates. Americans have to realize that despite the awful set of circumstances, Obama helped the United States weather a big storm. Hopefully, we can realize a better future when we are able to implement a recovery instead of these temporary emergency bandages. Maybe, with a little help from others in government, we can see a recovery that works for all Americans rather than a select few as proposed by the several GOP candidates.

We need substantial work from Congress rather than this rhetorical garbage that paints falsehoods and ignores reality. Tell Congress to get beyond the pettiness and do what they were elected to do: govern.

For those aware of the local pastor preaching the Gay Is Not Okay sermon, be reminded of the Biblical admonition warning against false prophets. The Bible provides few clues for identifying them so, in that way, they are a lot like closeted gay men. And the Bible doesn't even say that they themselves know they are false prophets. The same is true of some closeted gay men. The whole episode reminds me of the old Negro spiritual that begins, "Everyone whose talkin' 'bout heaven . . . ain't a goin' there, heaven."

A right delayed is a right denied. ~Martin Luther King, Jr.

From the Pastor's Pen

By Rev. Jonathan Page

In the struggle for gay rights we have one big advantage and one big disadvantage. Our advantage is that straight parents keep pumping out gay kids. We are everywhere. Muah ha ha! The big disadvantage is isolation. All too often gay kids have little sense of community or identity, especially in a predominantly rural state like Iowa. This past week I was on vacation visiting friends in New York City. One of my buddies, Paul, has an intriguing idea for using technology to foster both community and identity, one that does not rely on Manhunt or Grindr. He has already started his project and he needs your help.

While I was in graduate school at Yale, the activist and playwright Larry Kramer complained vociferously about the way the Larry Kramer Center at Yale was spending his brother's money. Kramer was angry that the center dwelt endlessly on parsing the constructs of gender and sexuality and poststructuralist analysis of literature and culture. While Kramer was not opposed to these efforts, he lamented that the more practical pursuits of gay history and activism were being neglected by the academy. Since LGBT people were the sons and daughters of straights (usually), they never learned the history or identity of what it meant to be gay. Without an identity bred from a careful reading of history, there was insufficient impetus for change. Kramer complained that younger gays knew nothing of Stonewall or the early AIDS crisis or ACT UP. Being gay was defined narrowly as men who have sex with men, or women with women, instead of a group with a long history of great accomplishments and oppression. Kramer's agitating made an impact on Yale. The next year they hired George Chauncey to teach gay history.

But Kramer's point still holds true. With the advent of the Internet, gays can easily find sex without having to hang out with other gays. It is comparatively easy to go along with ignorance of the past. I remember reading an article that claimed if all the members of Manhunt actually wrote a letter to Congress, the issue of gay rights would be over. The numbers are too great. But where do we tell our story? Where do we find our narrative?

In Iowa people might justifiably complain that gay history is too focused on New York or San Francisco. But of course, there is a long gay history of the Hawkeye state as well. The story simply needs to be told, both pre Stonewall and post. That is where you come in. If there is a critical mass of gay history, and if we can locate the stories, we can make Iowa into a virtual museum of gay history via technology. In this day and age, we do not need big buildings or foundations or even chapters in textbooks. All we need are smartphones, a little gay ingenuity, and you. Some young guy or girl in rural Iowa is struggling with sexuality right now, struggling with what it means to be gay. How powerful would it be to let that teenager know that he or she is not alone? There is a gay history right in his or her

Those who ignore cries for justice do so at their own peril.

hometown. That bit of comfort might make all the difference in the world. Let me know if you want to help.

Jonathan Page is senior pastor of the Ames United Church of Christ, 217 6th Street, Ames, Iowa. Sunday service at 10:45. He can be reached at jon@Amesucc.org.

Red Party Raises Record \$30K for Scholarships

By Mike Smith

The annual Red Party scholarship fundraiser sponsored by First Friday Breakfast Club (FFBC) raised a record in excess of \$30,000 for Iowa students committed to reducing homophobia and increasing LGBT acceptance.

The event, held each February at Hoyt-Sherman Place in Des Moines, generates funds for college-bound Iowa seniors "who have significantly participated in efforts to reduce homophobia and educate their communities about LGBT issues," said Jonathan Wilson, FFBC president. Scholarships are awarded regardless of gender, gender orientation, or gender identity.

"With the record amount raised this year, FFBC will be able to award up to twelve \$2,500 scholarships to deserving high school seniors," Wilson continued. He noted that scholarship applications are being accepted through March 31 and donors may give to the fund year-round. Scholarship recipients will be awarded during FFBC's June meeting. Details can be found at www.ffbciaowa.org.

Wilson said he was very pleased that this year's event, the fifth of its kind, raised more money than in any previous year. "The outpouring of generosity was amazing," he said. "I am so thankful to everyone who supported this effort. It is truly making a difference."

John Berry, Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, and the highest ranking openly gay Obama Administration officials to be confirmed by the US Senate, helped kick off the event. He addressed the FFBC membership prior to the party and encouraged people to support this most important effort.

Over 80 people attended this year's event. Guests enjoyed live music by concert grand pianist Grant Baetz and The Ben Hagen Trio. The silent auction raised more than \$2,000. Supporter Eugenia Kutsch-Stanton won the Best Dressed in Red contest.

About FFBC

FFBC is the largest breakfast club in the state of Iowa. In the last decade, it has awarded over \$117,000 in scholarships. FFBC is an educational, non-profit (501(c)(3)) organization for gay men who gather on the first Friday of every month to provide mutual support, be educated on community affairs, and to further educate community opinion leaders with more positive images of gay men.

God and Good are synonyms; genuine devotion to one is devotion to the other also.

FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views
Des Moines, Iowa*

MARCH 2012

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My M.O. (Monthly Observations)

Lube, Anyone?

By Steve Person

You might get many forwarded emails on your computer, usually from friends. I know I do. They usually end up in the trash on my computer, but occasionally one comes along that piques my interest. Such a one arrived along the other day, and I thought I'd share it. If you've seen it, I apologize for taking up your time. It goes like this:

"Before you read to the end, does anybody know the main ingredient of WD-40?"

"Don't lie, and don't cheat. Who knew? I had a neighbor who had bought a new pickup. I got up very early one Sunday morning and saw that someone had spray painted red all around the sides of the beige truck (for some unknown reason). I went over, woke him up, and told him the bad news. He was very upset and was trying to figure out what to do—probably nothing until Monday morning, since nothing was open. Another neighbor came out and told him to get his WD-40 and clean it off. It removed the unwanted paint beautifully and did not harm his paint job that was on the truck. I was impressed!"

"WD-40—who knew? "Water Displacement #40." The product began from a search for a rust preventative solvent and degreaser to protect missile parts. WD-40 was created in 1953 by three technicians at the San Diego Rocket Chemical Company. Its name comes from the project that was to fine a "water displacement" compound. They were successful with the fortieth formulation, thus WD-40.

"The Convair Company bought it in bulk to protect their Atlas Missile parts. Ken East (one of the original founders) says there is nothing in WD-40 that would hurt you. When you read the "shower door" part, try it. It's the first thing that has ever cleaned that spotty shower door. If yours is plastic, it works just as well as glass. It's a miracle! Then try it on your stove top—voila! It's now shinier than it's ever been. You'll be amazed.

"Here are some other uses: protects silver from tarnishing; removes road tar and grime from cars; cleans and lubricates guitar strings; gives floors that "just-waxed" sheen without making them slippery; keeps flies off cows; restores and cleans chalkboards; removes lipstick stains; loosens stubborn zippers; untangles jewelry chains; removes stains from stainless steel sinks; removes dirt and grime from BBQ grills; keeps ceramic/terra cotta garden pots from oxidizing; removes tomato stains from clothing; keeps glass shower doors free of water spots; camouflages scratches in ceramic and marble floors; keeps scissors working smoothly; lubricates noisy door hinges; removes black scuff marks from the kitchen floor; gives a children's playground gym slide a shine for a super fast slide; restores and cleans padded leather dashboards in vehicles, as well as vinyl bumpers; restores and cleans roof racks on vehicles; lubricates fan belts on washers and dryers and keeps them running smoothly; keeps rust from forming on saws, saw blades, and other tools; removes splattered grease on stoves; keeps bathroom mirrors from fogging; keeps pigeons off the balcony; removes all traces of duct tape; protects the Statue of Liberty from the elements; removes crayon from walls, etc., etc.

"AND, the basic ingredient is FISH OIL!"

I suppose it has many more uses. The mind reels!