



*THE
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF THE
FIRST FRIDAY
BREAKFAST CLUB, INC.*

First Friday News & Views

*FEBRUARY
2013
VOLUME
18
ISSUE
2*

GO AHEAD, MAKE MY DAY

By Jonathan Wilson

The courageous founder of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), Jeanne Manford, died on January 8, 2013, at age 92. She gave real meaning to the expressions: "Katie, bar the door;" and "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead," She was one of my heroes. She was the proud mother of a gay son who was brutally assaulted in 1972. That was three years after the Stonewall Riots that her son had personally witnessed and about the time that the American Psychiatric Association gained the enlightenment necessary to declare that homosexuality is not a mental illness (and homophobia is -- and remains so).

There had been a police presence when her son was assaulted, but no protection for him. The alleged assailant was acquitted because of supposed "incongruities" in the testimony. That did it for that mother; she was madder than hell and resolved not to take it anymore. The following year she marched in a gay pride parade in New York City carrying a sign that read, "**Parents of Gays: Unite in Support for Our Children.**" The crowd response was overwhelming, and PFLAG was born.

Jeanne Manford was more than merely the mother of Morty Manford; she was a symbol of every genuine parent of a gay child. Sure, there are some parents who reject their child over this issue. I can tell you two things about them: they are in the distinct minority, and they are violating the very laws of the Universe. Because parental support is so significant, their denial of support is particularly hurtful. But even their lack or delay of acceptance can make children, particularly as adults, stronger and more resolute. What the rejection does not do is change a gay child to straight. Parents don't make kids gay, and they can't make kids straight. Shakespeare was right when he wrote, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child;" the less eloquent corollary is, "How venomous it is for a parent to reject a gay child."

A favorite story comes from a veterinarian friend of mine in Los Angeles, named Martin Levy, DVM (not his real name, but a real veterinarian and the letters "DVM" --

(Continued on page 2)

Parents don't
make kids gay,
and they can't
make kids
straight.

INSIDE

- Mike Gronstal by Bruce Carr 2
- The Hobbit Movie Review by Gary Kaufman 3
- Briefs & Shorts 3
- Just Add Water by Jonathan Wilson 4
- Expanding Iowa's Middle Class is Top 2013 Priority by Sen. Matt McCoy 4
- From the Pastor's Pen: God, We have a Situation by Rev. Jonathan Page 5
- My M.O. by Steve Person 6

CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, February 1, 2012, at Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines, IA.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by January 30th to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or 288-2500 by phone.

FFBC Annual Red Party Scholarship Fundraiser

Friday, Feb. 1, 2013
6-9pm
Hoyt Sherman Place
15th and Woodland
Des Moines, IA

Please join us for our annual Red Party--a night of music, food, wine and fun. Money raised will provide scholarships for college-bound students who've made significant efforts to reduce homophobia in their schools and communities. For more details and ticket information, click on the Red Party link at www.ffbciowa.org.

Go Ahead, Make My Day (cont.)

meaning Doctor of Veterinary Medicine -- become important to the story). He came out to his widowed Jewish mother. She made no response, but simply got up and went upstairs. After awhile he went looking for her and found her in her bedroom, in her bed. When he inquired about what was going on she replied, with stereotypical Jewish-mother flare, "Martin, I'm going to die and I want to do it in my bed." He reassured her of his love and his commitment to working through the issue together. He pointed out that she'd been guiltig him since he was a small child, and it wasn't going to work this time. She wrote him venomously hateful letters addressed to "Martin Levy, DV8."

But, in time, she came around. The proof? She'd say things like, "Martin, for god's sake, he's a busboy; you can do better." She coped by simply recalibrating her Jewish traditions to the fact of having a gay son and not a straight one. Win, win. Problem solved.

In my experience, when parental acceptance happens, they then are empowered as allies. My father, a retired United Methodist minister when I came out to him, became a regular, supportive contributor on the subject to **The Des Moines Register**, **AccessLine**, and his county newspaper. There is -- there can be -- no better ally. Step between a proverbial mother (or father) bear and a cub and there will be hell to pay. And that's as it should be. It's written in our DNA.

And PFLAG is an organized collaboration of those allies. "Katie, bar the door." "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead." You want Trouble, with a capital T, mess with mom (or dad). Go ahead, make my day. And, thank you Jeanne Manford.

Homophobes are a lot like closeted gay men; you can't tell by just looking at them. J. Wilson

There are no traffic jams on the extra mile. Zig Ziglar

Live with intention. Walk to the edge. Listen hard. Practice wellness. Play with abandon. Laugh. Choose with no regret. Appreciate your friends. Continue to learn. Do what you love. Live as if this is all there is. Mary Anne Radmacher



A lot of people quit looking for work as soon as they find a job. Zig Ziglar

Mike Gronstal

By Bruce Carr



Our guest speaker at the January 4 meeting of the First Friday Breakfast Club was Iowa Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal, who last spoke to us in March 2007. Introduced as in 2007 by his fellow senator (and FFBC member) Matt McCoy, Gronstal was greeted with a standing ovation for his leadership in preventing legislators from the anti-equality side of the aisle from introducing a constitutional amendment that would deny marriage rights to gay couples. Indeed, as he noted later in his talk, this is a non-issue for him henceforth; last November he was resoundingly re-elected by his Council Bluffs constituency despite over \$1 million spent by nationwide opponents of marriage equality trying to unseat him. "We're not gonna have to focus on your issues this session," he told us, "it's done."

Uppermost on Gronstal's legislative agenda this term, he said, is increasing employment opportunities for Iowans. Iowa has no shortage of workers, we have a shortage of skills. We need to focus on -- allocate dollars for -- the training of women and men for meaningful work, for example in the building trades. He hopes to facilitate the creation of up to 500,000 jobs within the next six years, one-half of which would require education past the high school diploma but not necessarily as far as a bachelor's degree. And we are well poised to do just that. "I have a remarkable group of 26 Iowa Democrats in the Senate," he said, "and I think I'm the luckiest majority leader in the U.S."

=====

Mike Gronstal has served in the Iowa Senate since 1985 and was a member of the Iowa House for one term prior to that. He represents Senate District 50, which includes Council Bluffs and Carter Lake on the western border. Besides serving as Senate Majority Leader, he is chair of the Rules & Administration Committee.

Mike is recognized by his colleagues for his dedicated work and knowledge of complex issues in the insurance and utilities business. During his years in the Legislature, Mike has worked to make Iowa the nation's leader in renewable fuels and to bring more biotechnology jobs and businesses to Iowa. He has led the effort to restore funding to Iowa's community colleges and school districts.

Mike is a graduate of Council Bluffs' St. Albert High School and of Antioch College in Ohio. He also attended Loyola University in Chicago. He and his wife, Connie, have two daughters: Kate and Sara. He can be contacted at mike.gronstal@legis.iowa.gov.

Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey

Review By Gary Kaufman

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey is the first part of the latest trilogy coming from director Peter Jackson based on the works of J. R. R. Tolkien. Twice in college I tried reading *The Hobbit* as the introduction to the Lord of the Rings trilogy. Both times I found it boring and gave up on it. So I don't care a hoot whether or not the movie is a faithful reproduction of that literary work. But what is presented on the screen is a wonderful adventure in which our unlikely hero is a Hobbit, played by Martin Freeman. I and my friends made multiple trips to the Merle Hay Cinema, carrying our towels and remembering "Do Not Panic!" when Martin Freeman saved the Earth in **The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy** in 2005. He was a delight as a fish out of water who suddenly is put in a situation in which he must save the Earth. In **The Hobbit** he is cast as Bilbo Baggins, the Hobbit out to help the dwarfs recapture their homeland. At first Bilbo is appalled when he meets the dwarfs. They are invited by Gandolf, the wizard, to meet at Bilbo's, yet Gandolf fails to inform Bilbo of this fact. "I like to have visitors," Bilbo says, "but I like to know them BEFORE they come visit!" But the 13 dwarfs arrive, take over his place, eat all his food, behave in the most uncouth manner imaginable, and invite Bilbo to join their adventure. Bilbo is appalled by their behavior, much prefers his quiet uneventful life, turns them down, and yet, when he awakes the next morning to an impeccably clean house, the dwarfs all gone and things are totally peaceful and quiet, he decides against living his uneventful life and runs off to join the dwarfs in their adventure.

The dwarfs are out to capture their home which is located in the Lonely Mountain. Their former kingdom had incredible wealth and their king had an overwhelming love of gold. But dragons also love and covet gold more than anything else, and one eventually came to the kingdom, destroyed the villages and defeated the dwarfs, killing their king, and forcing them from their homeland. Thorin (Richard Armitage) is the grandson of the defeated king and heir to the kingdom should it ever be recaptured. It is not going to be an easy quest. In route to the Lonely Mountain they encounter giant Mountain Trolls whose main goal is to try to find creatures they can eat and they view the dwarfs as potential food; they get caught between a fight among giant rock folk; they are pursued by orcs whose leader has sworn vengeance ever since he had his hand cut off by Thorin when the orcs attacked and were eventually defeated by the dwarfs; and they are also threatened by a mysterious force of evil known as the Necromancer. That is quite a lot to take on.

But there is also a lot of humor in the film; a depiction of a Shangrila called the Hidden Valley where the fairies live in peace – an idyllic cliff dwelling city in which you could have a gazebo structure surrounded by 7 thousand foot waterfalls. If I had been on the adventure it would have been difficult for me to leave such a beautiful place to take on the

horrors of the outside world.

The Hobbit is ultimately, though, a story of a people who want to take their homeland back and those that are willing to help them. It is about courage, camaraderie and people's ability to take on whatever keeps them from their goal regardless of the likelihood of success. This is as topical as the strife between Palestinians and Israelis today. It is an adventure I certainly am willing to follow, and I believe you will be rewarded if you do so as well.

One technical comment about the film. I saw it on the I-MAX screen and the enormous screen at the Merle Hay Cinema. The film was shot at 48 frames per second and is the first movie with a major release to do so. I did not have the opportunity to see it in 3-D and XD with the 48 frame per second projector that the director developed to improve the experience. Old silent movies were shot at 18 frames per second and when sound came along they went to 24 frames per second and have pretty much stayed there since the 1930s. The action sequences go so quickly that often part of the action blurs, which I presume would be eliminated at the new 48 frames per second format. So if you have the opportunity to see it in the 48 frames per second format I do think it would be a better experience. But there is plenty to experience at the 24 frames per second projection, and you won't be bothered too much when some things go by so quickly that you can't quite see them clearly. Either version is quite an adventure!

Mistakes are wasted on those who do not learn from them.
J. Wilson

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the February 1 meeting no later than January 30th. Email JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Sean Strub, founder of POZ Magazine and filmmaker.

Thanks to Matt McCoy for his introduction of our January speaker, Iowa Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal.

Consider making a tax-deductible contribution to the FFBC Scholarship Fund.

Save the date: February 1 will be the FFBC Annual Red Party to raise funds for the FFBC Scholarship Fund. Already more than \$21,000 has been pledged for this year's scholarships.

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

Just Add Water

By Jonathan Wilson

I lived in Australia for a couple of years. Nice place. And big. It's nearly the size of the continental United States. It's only habitable around the edges. The interior, affectionately referred to as the outback, is hot and desolate. The Australian weather service has recently added bright purple to the weather forecast maps in order to indicate temperatures above 122 degrees Fahrenheit. Now that's hot! Australia has already posted hot temperatures beyond anything in recorded human history. Hobart, Tasmania, an island state immediately south of the Australian continent that bills itself as the Gateway to the Antarctic, has recorded a temperature of 107 degrees Fahrenheit. A Gateway like that the Antarctic doesn't need.

Add water and you could turn Australia into a veritable Garden of Eden. Same is true of hell. Add water and you would not only enable vegetation to survive and even flourish, but you would trigger an evaporation and rain cycle that could materially and even permanently change the climate of the entire continent and areas beyond. Although Australia sits on top of the largest subterranean aquifer known to exist in the world, that vast quantity of water is too calcified to use for irrigation.

It's not that there is any shortage of water in the world. Two-thirds of the earth's surface is covered by the stuff. With the melting of the polar icecaps, more is on the way. Sea water, like over-calcified water, however, cannot be used for irrigation. The answer for those ambitious enough to want irrigation for the bulk of the Australian outback is the development of commercially feasible desalination of sea water. Of that answer, it's not the desalination part that's a problem. It's the commercially feasible part. United States aircraft carriers routinely desalinate sea water for use by those who ride the boats and people in world trouble spots where aircraft carriers are occasionally sent. As with other elements of the US military, cost is not a matter of concern. Heck, you can desalinate salty water in your kitchen with a teapot and condensing tube.

Irrigating the Australian outback is an understandable item for a tree hugger's wish list. More pressing is the phenomenon of global warming and drought. Potable water is increasingly in short supply in population centers around the world. The drainage basin for the Mississippi River has been so drought stricken that barge traffic on the river is being halted.

On the present course, there are going to be wars over water. We'll be spilling blood for water on a par with the blood that has already been spilled in exchange for oil supplies.

It doesn't have to be that way. It is not inevitable or beyond our control. All that is needed is the political resolve to invest in desalination technologies, maybe using the sun -- the ultimate renewable resource. Developing those technologies can be accomplished in the relative short term, could transform the United States as well as Australia and other hot spots in the world, and could completely avoid the otherwise inevitable

water wars from our future.

If you want both national security and peace, we collectively need to turn our attention away from silly issues like who should or shouldn't marry whom and the moral decay of humankind that generations of old people have observed in the next generation for time immemorial. Our collective focus needs to be on matters of substance that will make a real difference in preserving the quality of life on this planet. Commercially feasible desalination of sea water is such an issue, it's doable, and it can be done and make a significant difference in short order.

Expanding Iowa's Middle Class Is Top 2013 Priority

By Sen. Matt McCoy

The 2013 session of the Iowa Legislature gaveled in today, Monday, January 14. I'm looking forward to a great year devoted to initiatives that will benefit every Iowa family.

My top goal is making Iowa's middle class larger and more secure. If we focus on that goal, we will be doing the right thing for all Iowans when it comes to the economy, education and health care. I'll be working on legislation that will help Iowa workers gain new skills, improve our local schools, reduce family health care worries and grow our local small businesses.

These efforts will require working together across party lines. As an Assistant Senate Majority Leader, it'll be part of my job to ensure that happens. The good news is that Iowa's budget surplus ought to make it easier to find agreement.

Unlike many other states, we have money in the bank to invest in growing our economy and expanding opportunity for Iowa families. With great schools at every level, top-notch workers and a tradition of pulling together, Iowa has the chance to really move forward because we've kept our fiscal house in order.

I look forward to keeping my First Friday Breakfast Club friends informed about what's happening in the Legislature again this year—and I welcome your feedback.

If you have a suggestion or a comment, please let me know. My email address is matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov. I can also be reached at 515-681-9327.

Additional information

This is a legislative column by 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.

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

From the Pastor's Pen

God, We Have a Situation

By Rev. Jonathan Page

"Umm, Reverend..." Dawson Taylor, a minister at Cathedral of Hope in Dallas, looked at the head deacon leaning over his shoulder. "Yes?"

"We have a situation in the narthex."

"A situation? We are just about to begin Easter worship." Dawson gestured to the thousand person congregation filling the sanctuary.

"I know," the deacon said, "but I think you had better come this way, Reverend." Dawson could see from the deacon's expression that he did not have much choice. "Okay," he replied. Rising in a liturgical fashion, he calmly made his way past the senior minister, whispering to her as he passed, "There is a situation I have to take care of. I'll be back." The senior minister merely nodded that she had heard, her anxiety rising. This has to happen on Easter Sunday!

Making his way out to the narthex, Dawson caught sight of a drag queen dressed in a white wedding gown with a member of staff standing close beside her. Wow, he thought to himself. "Oh Reverend Taylor! It's good to see you! Happy Easter!" Dawson immediately recognized one of the congregation's more colorful characters, Kevin aka Darla. This time it was definitely Darla.

"Darla, honey, what ARE you doing in that wedding gown? It's Easter Sunday."

"Exactly," Darla said in response. "I woke up this morning with a whole new perspective on life. I'm done with men! Forever! I'm here to marry JESUS! Do I look like a good bride?" Darla swung into her best Marilyn Monroe flirty pose, with her hands on her knees, fake eyelashes fluttering.

"Yes, but white? Really Darla?"

"Oh please, Reverend! A lady is allowed SOME liberty on her wedding day!"

Dawson couldn't help but crack a smile. "Darla, I want to be clear. You are welcome here, as is everyone who comes in a spirit of worship. But, you must promise me not to make a scene. This is a worship space for everyone. If you disturb the service, we will have to escort you out." Darla nodded her assent with her veil flapping above her head.

Forty minutes later, Dawson and the other clergy at Cathedral of Hope were welcoming all to the communion table. Darla was true to her word and participated without incident. That Easter morning Darla and several thousand people shared the bread and the cup of the Eucharist, a symbol of their spiritual

communion with one another and with God.

Listening to Dawson's story last week at a conference in Florida, I kept seeing a drag queen in a wedding dress, in the midst of personal turmoil, sharing communion with a thousand complete strangers. What a great image of what the church can and should be! Curious, I asked Dawson to send me the communion liturgy that they use at Cathedral of Hope. Cathedral of Hope was founded as a Metropolitan Community Church, and to this day approximately 90% of its members identify as a sexual minority. What is striking about their liturgy is how traditionally Christian it is. The clergy begin with the Sursum Corda ("Lift up your hearts!") and continue with the Great Thanksgiving. The congregation sings the Sanctus before hearing the Institution Narrative, the retelling of the Last Supper. There is a prayer of invocation and the elements are distributed by intinction. The words draw on ancient Christian themes like the experience of being lost in the wilderness and the liberation of Israel. There is the promise of new life in communion with Christ, language that is reminiscent of the earliest communion liturgies, the *Didache* and *The Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus. Every Sunday around the communion table, Cathedral of Hope reclaims the Christian tradition on behalf of love and radical welcome.

Cathedral of Hope and its many ministries are a potent reminder that Christianity can transcend words of hatred and work for the good of all. The recent anti-gay tendencies within the church are merely one example of a long list of flaws in Christian history. What is heartwarming to me is that in spite of its troubled history, the true church still manages to break through and inspire people to new life, including a drag queen in wedding dress.

The *Didache*, a 2nd century document of Christian teaching, contains the earliest extant instruction on the Eucharist outside the New Testament. After describing the proper communion procedure, it concludes with a prayer, "Remember, Lord, your Church, to save it from all evil and to make it perfect by your love." Regardless of your religious affiliation, I think it is a prayer that we can all share. It shows that even in the days of early church, there was recognition that it was a human institution and therefore bound to err. But thankfully, the best of the church also endures, and, I believe, in the end love wins.

FFBC member 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.



The so-called death tax is not a tax on the dead; it's more targeted to reduce the number of deadbeats in our society. The less they inherit from their ancestors, the more they will work to be productive members of society. J. Wilson

If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time. Zig Ziglar The Superintendent Bill Anderson corollary: If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there.



FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views
Des Moines, Iowa*

FEBRUARY 2013

**First Friday
Breakfast Club**

**Board of
Directors**

▼ DIRECTORS ▼

▼ CHRIS CORREY
RYAN CRANE
BRAD HOLLAND
BYRON HUFF
SCOTT KLINEFELTER
RICK MILLER
GARY MOORE
MIKE SMITH
ALLEN VANDER LINDEN
RYAN WEIDNER
PHIL WILLIAMS
JONATHAN WILSON

OFFICERS ▼

KENT DONALDSON
Treasurer

BYRON HUFF
Vice President

JONATHAN WILSON
Secretary & President

Newsletter:

STEVE PERSON, *Editor*

TONY DILLON-HANSEN, *Production Editor*

ARTHUR BRUER, *Webmaster*

Website: www.ffbc-iowa.org

PUBLISHER, FFBC BOARD OF DIRECTORS
©2012 FIRST FRIDAY BREAKFAST CLUB, INC.

My M.O. (Monthly Observations)

Intrepid Settlers

By Steve Person

Most of us probably never appreciate the hard work and dedication it took to settle this land we call "Iowa." Working at the Capitol affords me easy access to historic books and documents. One I came across the other day was a 1952 publication entitled **The Story of Iowa, Volume 1**, by William J. Petersen. The section that caught my eye was "Steamboating on the Rivers of Iowa." With the recent news of the low waters on the Mississippi River making barge traffic impossible in areas, I was struck by the fact that lesser rivers in our state supported steamboats. Of these, the Des Moines River was the most important.

The railroads in the 1850s stopped when they reached the Mississippi River because there were no bridges to support them for going any farther west. Steamboats and land transport, therefore, were the major means for delivering goods to the newest free state west of the Mississippi. The first steamboat to ply the "Riviere des Moins" was the **Hero**, an "89-ton craft 116 feet 3 inches long, 16 feet 11 inches in breadth of beam, and had a depth of 4 feet 9 inches." The **Hero**, however, could only manage to go upstream 30 miles because of low water. The Des Moines River in those days was low with a channel obstructed by sandbars.

Petersen continues, "Although the **Hero** probably failed to go very far up the Des Moines the steamboat **Science**...won the distinction of navigating that stream as far as Keosauqua during the autumn of 1837. Her arrival with a cargo of flour, meal, pork, and groceries fairly electrified the inhabitants of that western outpost of the Iowa District...During the next five years steamboats and keelboats alike plied the waters of the lower Des Moines.

"In the spring of 1843 the steamboat **Agatha**...set out...in an effort to carry troops and supplies to the new military post at the Raccoon Fork. The **Agatha** squirmed through the unfinished lock at Plymouth Mills with two keelboats in tow, eased her way through the Bonaparte lock, and churned through a break in the Keosauqua dam. At Fort Sanford she was boarded by Captain James Allen and a small force of men, most of the dragoons having ridden overland to the Raccoon Fork...The **Agatha** finally reached the Raccoon Fork and discharged her troops and supplies...The voyage of the **Agatha** was hailed with delight throughout the country.

"In the years that followed many light-draft steamboats plied the serpentine course of the Des Moines. Some made but a single trip, others were regular packets and churned the muddy river as long as the stage of the water permitted navigation.

"The year 1859 has been described as a 'boss year' in Des Moines River steamboating. Heavy rains fortuitously spaced afforded good steamboating from March to early August. On March 9th the **Clara Hine** arrived at the capital city of Iowa with sixty-four tons of freight. Close in her wake came the **Charles Rodgers** with a cargo of fifty tons. On April 10th the **Flora Temple** appeared. On a single day an excited Des Moines editor proudly counted five steamboats at the levee...That sight was in sharp contrast to conditions in 1857 when the 11-ton **Skipper** was caught by low water at Des Moines and had to stay at that port all summer. The plight of the hopelessly stranded **Skipper** enabled a local editor to boast that 'commerce with the outside world was thriving, not a day passed that a boat was not at the levee.'"