



First Friday News & Views

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

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▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,
Friday, July 1, 2016, at Hoyt
Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland,
Des Moines, IA

▼ RSVP by June 29 to
JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com,
or phone 515-288-2500

“Do You Want the Free House or Don't You?”

By Jonathan Wilson

Headlines were made recently about the McCaughey septuplets graduating from high school and going on to a *free* college education.

The septuplets made headlines previously and more than once. The first time was about 18 years ago when they were born. It was a newsworthy first. No humans in recorded history had been so fruitful in multiplying, in fulfillment of the Biblical admonition. Genesis 1:28.

But there is an interesting back story.

At the time the litter of McCaugheys was born, I represented a local developer, a long-time staunch Republican, who decided that he would take the initiative to line up donations, material suppliers, and subcontractors to build a custom house for this suddenly large family and give it to them free of charge. It was an incredible act of generosity and very much in character for this accomplished developer. He had the wherewithal and connections to put that all together and make it happen.

Not surprisingly, the undertaking generated a considerable amount of legal work that the developer asked me to donate. I said that I would; he was a very good client.

As it happened, I had gone through my very public coming out exercise two or three years earlier as a member of the Des Moines School Board. The septuplets' parents were conservative “Christians” and, apparently, were not exactly crazy about working with that high-profile gay lawyer to accomplish the necessary legal work.

They asked the real estate broker who was involved to approach the developer and deliver the message that they would prefer to work with someone else, which the broker dutifully did.

The developer's response was short and sweet -- very sweet, “Go back and ask them whether or not they want the free house.” They did, and the subject was never broached again. It turns out that the McCaugheys weren't as homophobic as they initially thought they were supposed to be. The Lord works in mysterious ways. Romans 11:33.

Trump's Campaign Rhetoric and Commitment

By Jonathan Wilson

Trump has trumpeted insults toward just about everyone, most notably perhaps his rhetorical query wondering just how stupid is the electorate. Judging from his status as the presumptive presidential candidate for president, the electorate is pretty stupid (or at least about 30% of the Republican Party's share of the electorate is pretty stupid). I think it is just plain stupid to surrender in the political arena to speech that appeals to our worst selves, to our baser instincts, to our ingrained bigotry, and to our indifference about having a huckster prove up with specifics what the hell he's talking about.

It's just a hunch, but I think that most people among his supporters who hear accurate descriptors of Trump, such as bellicose, pompous, pugnacious, jingoistic, garish, imperious, supercilious, narcissistic, pretentious, misogynistic, or pontifical, fail to make the connection partly because they are ignorant of what those descriptors even mean when they hear Trump's detractors use them. Frankly, it's a sad commentary on the failure of our public education system. But it should also not be too surprising; that percentage approximates the percentage of the electorate that thought, after 9/11, American war crimes, a great recession that threatened a complete collapse of the *world* economy, and a couple of misguided wars, George W. Bush was doing a good job.

Trump has also tried to make much of the assertion that he is self-funding his presidential campaign. Drill down a bit, however and, like so much of what Trump has had to say, it just isn't true. For starters, his website has on its homepage a link for donating. Something like 76,000 folks collectively donated more than \$3,000,000 to his campaign in the final quarter of last year, and I've heard not a peep about him returning those contributions.

More to the point, Trump's funding to his campaign has taken the form of in-kind contributions of office rent, use of his airplane, and the like, plus something like \$12,600,000 in actual cash. But, get this, something like \$10,000,000 of that total has been *loaned* to the Trump campaign -- presumably a repayable loan. And repayable how? Repayable from the coffers of the Republican Party fundraising for the presumptive nominee. If he opts for public financing, as some familiar with his poor fundraising record have hinted, the loans would be paid by the *taxpayers*.

Trump's claim of self-funding is smoke and mirrors, much like his unsubstantiated claim that in no more than eight years he will (apparently single-handedly) make America great again. It reminds me of a ham and egg breakfast; the chicken (like Trump) certainly participates, but the pig (unlike Trump) is utterly committed to it. Perhaps Trump is boorish (pun intended) in part to fool folks into thinking that he should be taken seriously and that he has the laudable commitment to his campaign of a pig at breakfast time.

Briefs & Shorts

Be sure to RSVP by June 29 for the July 1, 2016, meeting by calling 515-288-2500, or on line at: JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com. Our speaker on July 1 will be **Republican Iowa Congressman David Young**. You will not want to miss this meeting!! You may want to invite some of your friends to attend!!

Thanks to Byron Huff for the introduction of our June speaker, Joshua Barr, the newly appointed Executive Director of the Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Commission. Thanks also to Tim Schreck and Ryan Crane for their outstanding work in organizing the recognition of this year's crop of FFBC scholarship recipients.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. **Book donations are always welcome.** Thanks to Scott Kuknyo for helping coordinate the book exchange.



Consider a tax deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details.

Save the dates: Our speaker on July 1 will be Iowa Congressman David Young. Our annual social gathering co-sponsored with PROS will be on **July 23** from 7:00 to 10:00 at the home of Allen VanderLinden and Michael Thompson. There is no charge for paid FFBC members.

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



Civil Equality is our Right, Too

By Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, June 3, 2016, was the City of Des Moines' newly appointed Director of Civil and Human Rights, Joshua V. Barr. Barr shared his passionate involvement in human rights and non-discrimination with us and with the 2016 class of FFBC Scholarship awardees and their families: "Inclusion means all persons in our city — all representatives within different groups and different communities and different income levels — are being brought to the table and being included ... I think the future of the Civil and Human Rights Commission is that."

Joshua Barr was selected from among 60 applicants and four finalists for the \$90,000 job to lead Des Moines' Civil & Human Rights Commission and the respective city department, charged with investigating local cases and educating the public on matters related to civil rights violations and discrimination. He started his new job October 12, supervising three employees: an administrative assistant and two human

relations specialists.

Barr's passion for helping the poor and minority groups facing struggles and injustices takes priority in his work. It was the impetus for his move to Colombia, he told us, for two years after completing law school. It also drove him to turn down the initial job offer after a visit to Des Moines early last fall. He was turned off by the rosy image of the city that officials projected. "They only showed me good stuff and I was like, 'I don't need to be here,'" he said. "I wanted to get to the root of poverty issues and race issues." City Manager Scott Sanders convinced him to visit the city again. This time he attended the annual Iowa Summit on Justice and Disparities hosted by the NAACP Des Moines chapter. He met some of the grassroots activists and became acquainted with troubling statistics: Des Moines ranks ninth on 24/7 Wall St.'s list of worst cities for African Americans; its unemployment rate for African Americans is in double digits; and more than 70 percent of all Des Moines Public Schools students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Those are stats that lead to crime and societal problems, Barr said, noting Des Moines' 20 homicides in 2015 -- at least a 15-year high for the city. He said he's crafting a proactive approach to curb discrimination before it escalates into riots, violence and national headlines. "Des Moines has the ability to be a trendsetter," he said.

Joshua V. Barr was born and grew up in South Carolina. He earned his Bachelor of Business Administration in the area of Management from Francis Marion University, outside Florence SC, and his Juris Doctorate at the University of South Carolina School of Law. After graduating with his MBA from Smeal College of Business at Pennsylvania State University, he conducted research on institutional corruption at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Cali, Columbia in South America, where he also spent his weekends in the surrounding mountains training volunteers and teaching English to children with minimal access to education. After two years in Colombia, Barr moved back to South Carolina and worked at an uncle's law firm for a year, handling criminal cases and furthering his interest in social justice issues. Barr became a civil rights attorney for the state of South Carolina in 2013, and that job led to a secondary role as fair housing director for the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission, a position he held until arriving in Des Moines last October. Barr lives close to downtown with his wife, Yenny Lorena Alomia – whom he met in Colombia – and he can be contacted professionally at humanrights@dmgov.org. mccuty01@gmail.com.

P o m d e r T h i s

Q: When you pat a dog on its head he will wag his tail. What will a goose do?

A. Paul Lynde: Make him bark?

Q. It is the most abused and neglected part of your body; what is it?

A. Paul Lynde: Mine may be abused, but it certainly isn't neglected.

Q. Who stays pregnant for a longer period of time, your wife or your elephant?

A. Paul Lynde: Who told you about my elephant?

Q. According to Ann Landers, what are two things you should never do in bed?

A. Paul Lynde: Point and laugh.

A recently married gay couple was having an argument. One said to the other, "You're impossible." The other responded, "No, I'm next to impossible."

Husband: "What do you love most about me, my natural beauty or my great body?"

Spouse: "Your sense of humor."





WATER QUALITY DESERVES DEDICATED FUNDING

During the 2016 session, legislators considered several options for improving Iowa's water quality. The plans floated by the Governor and House Republicans, however, had little or no support in the Senate.

The Branstad-Reynolds Administration proposed taking money from schools to pay for water quality improvements. Our schools have faced several lean years and have made significant cuts to make ends meet. Not surprisingly, taking more money from schools met with opposition from families, educators, local communities and state senators from both sides of the aisle. Our students and schools need the money that's been set aside for them.

Water quality is also a priority that deserves dedicated funding. Our economy and quality of life depend on a healthy environment. That's why we continue to look for a long-term solution to address Iowa's water quality challenges. Next session, I hope we can take a bipartisan approach to the problem, without shortchanging other priorities.

In the meantime, we did approve several initiatives this year that will build on our ongoing water quality improvement efforts, including:

- Cleaning up the last of Iowa's Leaking Underground Storage Tanks ([HF 2464](#)).
- Increasing penalties for illegal dumping ([HF 2385](#)).
- Committing \$16.7 million from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund for water quality and lake restoration efforts ([SF 2324](#)).
- Providing \$3.2 million for soil and water conservation projects through Iowa's popular Resource Enhancement and Protection program ([HF 2454](#)).
- Approving \$18.8 million in the Ag & Natural Resources Budget for water quality and soil conservation projects, research and facilities ([HF 2454](#)).

Additional information

This is a legislative update from Senator Matt McCoy, representing the west part of Des Moines, portions of West Des Moines and northwest Warren County.

For newsletters, photos and further information, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/mccoy or www.matt-mccoy.com. Follow Senator McCoy on Facebook at www.facebook.com/senatormccoy.

To contact Senator McCoy during the week, call the Senate Switchboard at 515-281-3371. Otherwise he can be reached at home at 515-274-0561. E-mail him at matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov.

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



Reflections: FFBC Is Not Only About Great Speakers

By Brad Holland

I grew up in a very small town in north central Iowa and, as a young person, I often remarked that corn wasn't the only thing Iowa exported – in my young, high school mind, I wanted to be 'exported' from Iowa so I could really start living.

My first step in the journey was to enroll at Iowa State University. My roommate was from Chicago. I was drawn to the big city, so I visited Chicago with Ted whenever possible. During my sophomore year, my parent's relocated to St Paul, Minnesota. I was excited because this meant going home for summer break allowed me to explore the Twin Cities. Thanks to that exposure, I quickly decided to transfer to the University of Minnesota and got lost in the immense size of that university. I joined a fraternity and college-life got smaller again. My fraternity brothers were my life.

Despite this big city, I still struggled with coming out. I was working, along with classes and fraternity activities. I feared that likely rejection by family, fraternity, co-workers, and friends would ruin everything I was struggling to build. I suppressed my gay feelings and just kept hiding. I began to have an internal conversation about feeling alone in a crowded room.

After graduation I moved to Chicago for two years. I was still not out and still alone in the crowded rooms of my very busy life. I next moved back to Minneapolis and joined IDS/American Express Financial Advisors (now known as Ameriprise Financial) in their headquarters. Wow, I thought, was this company GAY! They had a gay employee club clear back in 1991! But I was too afraid to join. I buried myself in work and just focused on growing my career. Being truly happy could wait. Flash ahead to my 30th birthday and my decision to give myself the present of coming out. I told the co-worker I feared the most...he led the "Christian" employee club...and success at work required that we be friendly. Surprise. He was much cooler about it than I feared. So, slowly, I began telling more family, friends...

In 1997, I ironically met and fell in love with someone from Iowa. We had grown up just 40 minutes apart in rural Iowa – the person who introduced us said it was serendipity! We moved back to Iowa together and settled in Des Moines. I was still telecommuting with Ameriprise and frequently traveling to both coasts, so making connections here in Des Moines was initially difficult!

Our Des Moines realtor put us together with Byron (Huff), Jim, Todd & Mario and friendships bloomed. I joined FFBC and most frequently sat with Bryon. Spoiler alert, I also found later that I was happy whenever Joe Raetz (my future husband) would sit with us too. I joined the scholarship committee and have stayed with this work for over 10 years and 3 chairpersons (Eric, Allen and now Ryan – thanks for your leadership!). Every year I would marvel at how BRAVE the young scholarship recipients were and reflect on my journey from small town Iowa to the authentic me of today.

In 2012 my life changed when a 15 year relationship came to an end. Again with what can only be serendipity, Joe became 'newly single' also following the sudden death of his partner. What was supposed to be merely two friends trying to shake off loneliness by seeing a movie or hanging out, quickly became an all-out pursuit of Joe by me.

This spring when I began reading 27 FFBC scholarship applications over a 3 day period, I was a newlywed of 6 months! I'm confident that our post "Will & Grace" world has made it a bit easier for young people. And I wonder what my life would have been like if I had come out in high school. Whatever...I'm now one of these brave, *not so young anymore*, Iowans. Connected and no longer alone in a crowded room. Happy. Authentic. Married!

FFBC

First Friday
News & Views

Des Moines, Iowa

July, 2016

First Friday
Breakfast Club

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Newsletter

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A RETURN TO A TIME WELL-REMEMBERED

By Steve Person

Thirteen years ago, I had the privilege of being invited by Richard, Lord Acton, to take tea with him and Baroness Ruth Rendell in the House of Lords in London. The invitation came as quite a surprise. A few days prior to receiving it, I had conducted Lord Acton and his wife, Patricia, through Terrace Hill where my office was when Iowa First Lady Christie Vilsack employed me. Lord Acton was at the governor's mansion to attend one of Mrs. Vilsack's monthly teas. Christie told Lord Acton that I would be in London in a few weeks, but that was that, as far as I was concerned. The next day, when the phone call arrived asking me if I would like to visit the House of Lords, I had no hesitation in accepting. I figured, short of an invitation from the Queen herself, taking tea in the House of Lords would be just fine, thank you.

Lord Acton made two stipulations before I could attend: I had to dress appropriately, and I had to read two books—his **A Brit Among the Hawkeyes** and Ruth Rendell's **The Blood Doctor**. The latter, a novel about a nineteenth century royal physician who specialized in diseases of the blood (notably hemophilia), I read rather quickly. I should have taken more time to read it. It is a complicated novel of a story-within-a-story. I finished re-reading it just a few days ago.

In it, Martin Nanther is the present-day ancestor of Dr. Henry Nanther, his great grandfather. Queen Victoria granted Dr. Nanther a peerage late in her reign, in 1896. His work with blood diseases intrigued Her Majesty even though she never acknowledged the fact that she was responsible for passing on hemophilia to most of the European royal houses.

Martin Nanther decided to write a biography of his famous forbearer. The novel delineates Martin's present-day dilemma of voting his hereditary peerage out of existence in Tony Blair's government reorganization of the House of Lords. Martin feels that the accident of birth does not make him naturally fitted as a member of the Lords, but he also enjoys the privilege and the income it provides.

As the story shifts between Victorian England and the present day, Nanther discovers a great many secrets about his ancestor, including the possibility that the old gentleman may have been gay—an absolute no-no in England at that time. Martin's second wife, Jude, keeps trying to bring pregnancies to term but loses babies within a few months of conception. Needless to say, it is a complicated but rewarding story. Martin, after voting his hereditary peerage out of existence, receives a life peerage from the Prime Minister, and Jude, through miracles of modern medicine, finally carries a pregnancy to term.

Back to tea: While sitting with Lord Acton and Baroness Rendell (the premier mystery writer in Britain, by the way), I asked her if the character of Martin was based on the real-life Lord Acton. She denied it vigorously, but to this day I believe he was. However, I will never know. Lord Acton died of cancer in 2010 at the age of 69, and Ruth Rendell died in 2015, aged 85. All I really know is that I was given the opportunity of a lifetime, and I am thankful for it.

Life's rewards often come to us in disguises.