



FFBC

HAPPY NEW YEAR

2019

First Friday

News & Views

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

January 2019

Volume 24

Issue 1

The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, January 4,
2019
7:00 a.m.



FFBC Meeting Location:
Hoyt Sherman Place,
15th & Woodland,
Des Moines



R.S.V.P.

JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com

or phone (515) 288-2500

or the website
by Wednesday,
January 2.



FFBC Website:
www.ffbciaowa.org



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Science Can't Answer Some Questions We Must Answer for Ourselves

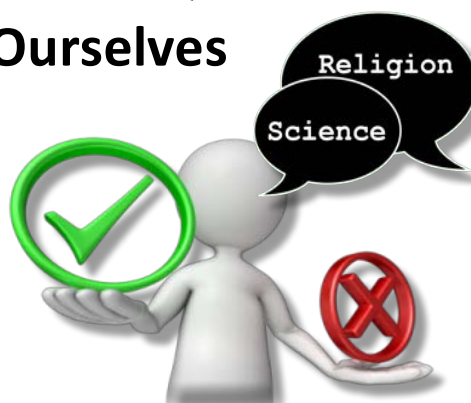
by Jonathan Wilson

Drew Zahn of The Family Leader claims that science is conclusive that a fetus is, in fact, a baby (*Register* December 13, 2018). That is a great example of saying something without saying anything meaningful at all. He said it purportedly to refute an article by Rekha Basu. Rekha's article addressed what the public policy should be regarding a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy and asserted that those wanting to restrict that right prior to the viability of a fetus were making essentially religious arguments and wanting to impose their religious views on others. Rehka is right, and Drew is wrong.

Science can tell us many things. It can somewhat tell us when "life" begins as Drew claims. He says that science tells us that it's the moment of conception. But that talks misleadingly past and begs the myriad, associated legal questions – matters of sound public policy -- that our society must answer.

If life begins at the moment of conception, the woman is not at that moment pregnant. For pregnancy, the fertilized ovum must attach to the uterine wall. That's important because an I.U.D., that prevents a fertilized ovum from attaching, would logically, in Drew's illogical view, constitute abortion because it happens post-conception. The IUD has been used as an effective form of birth control for a very long time. It will come as a surprise to users that, according to Drew, they are causing the abortion of a "baby."

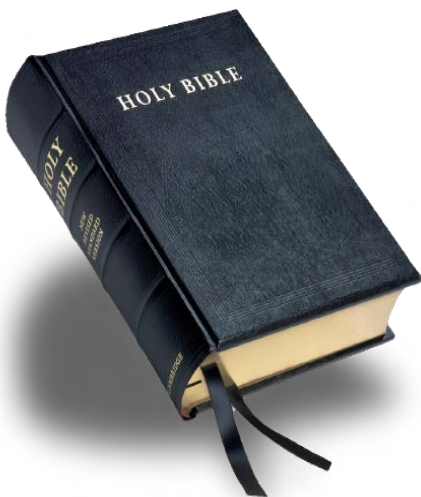
Science can tell us when a woman is pregnant. It can come close to telling us when a female is capable of becoming pregnant. It can tell us whether or not there's a heartbeat near the beginning or the end of life. It can tell us when there are brainwaves or respiration toward the beginning or the end of life. Telling us those things does not tell us when life begins for purposes of the law, doesn't tell us what the legal age of consent should be, and doesn't tell us when someone is legally dead.



And that is why Drew said something without saying anything at all about Rekha's position on what the public policy around a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy should be, and her assertion that the opposing arguments are religious in nature. Science cannot excuse us from the debate over rational public policy that is to be expressed in the law. And science cannot serve as cover for religious dogma. Theocracy is the wolf being disguised in that scientific sheep's clothing.

Drew's religious dogma is itself fraught with legal problems. The scientific fact is that about 30% of human pregnancies end in miscarriage. Pregnancy termination before birth is "built in" to the very nature of things. If God is responsible for every pregnancy, God's hand must be recognized in those miscarriages – far more terminations by multiples than can ever be blamed on Planned Parenthood. Beyond that, if every one of those miscarriages were a "baby," -- a human being -- Iowa law requires a death certificate to be filed with the county recorder and dictates the required timing and manner of disposition of the corps.

If Drew wants to use his science-disguised religious dogma for anything other than political leverage with the ill-informed, he has some heavy legal lifting to do.



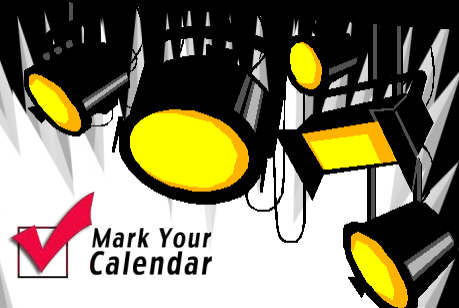
For that matter, he has some heavy religious lifting to do as well. Presumably, his religious views and those of the Family Leader, purport to be Biblically based. The Bible, for those who actually choose to read it, says, "...the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." (emphasis added) Genesis 2:7. Coincidentally, *Roe v. Wade* happens to adopt that Biblical threshold for becoming a legally recognized living being that,

correspondingly, diminishes the mother's rights to terminate a pregnancy.


Drew and others of his world view should read the Bible more and thump it less, and should stop trying to hoodwink folks using spurious claims that science answers legitimate, difficult public policy questions for us without the need for rational debate. He owes Rehka an apology.


In response to the recent court filings by the DOJ for the Southern District of New York clearly implicating Donald Trump as an unindicted felon, Trump tweeted that the filings totally exonerating him from any collaboration with Russia in the 2016 presidential election. This example demonstrates that Trump is so totally divorced from reality that one can easily imagine him shouting, as he is being escorted away in an orange jump suit, "Free at last; free at last; thank God almighty, I am free at last."



 **Mark Your Calendar**

January's Speaker:

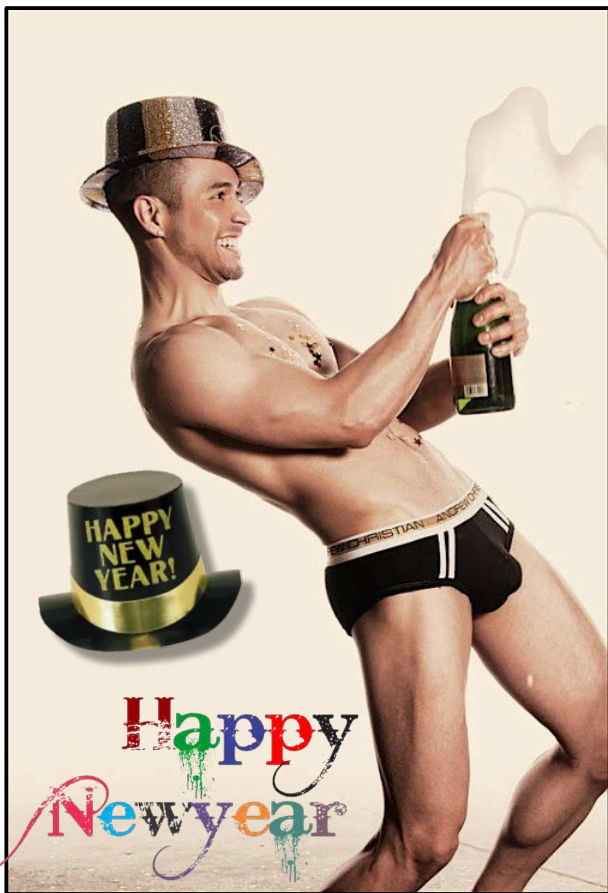
Randy Mayer 



Our speaker in December will be **Randy Mayer**, the marijuana guru of Iowa. You won't want to miss this. You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend!!

Provide the name(s) of any anticipated guest(s) so we can have name tags for them at the registration desk.





Sad but true:

The day will come when erectile dysfunction is of less concern than rectal dysfunction.

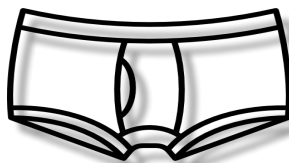
David Young's Defeat

By Jonathan Wilson

Members of Congress receive a lifetime stipend from the taxpayers, but only if they've served in office at least FIVE years. Senators therefore "vest" with a single completed term. Members of the House have to be elected once and re-elected TWICE.

Representative Young will need to rework his retirement finances. Just by unseating him, Axne saved taxpayers lots of money.

Briefs & Shorts:



Thanks to **Jordan Duesenberg** for introducing our December speaker, **Rev. Debbie Griffin**, pastor of Downtown Disciples of Christ Church. Thanks also to **Jordan Duesenberg** for his work on the FFBC website. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter production editor. Thanks to **Ryan Weidner** for his work as our technology guru. *Thanks to all our contributors to the monthly newsletter!*

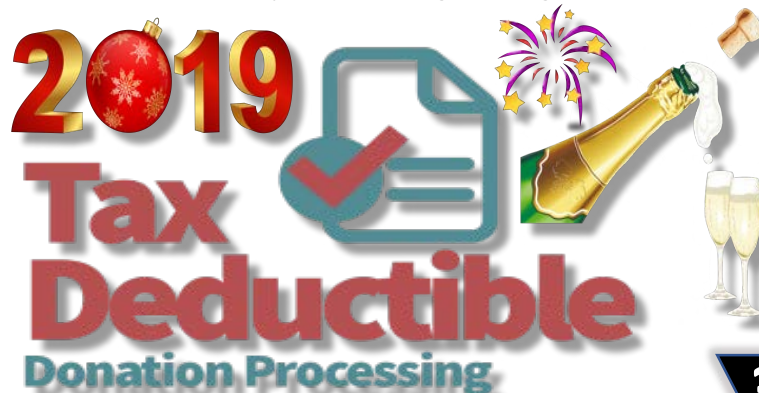
A special thank-you to those FFBC members and friends who have chosen to designate FFBC through the Donor Direct program of United Way. The contributions through United Way are tax deductible. Those who have chosen this means of supporting FFBC have gone to the trouble of completing their United Way campaign worksheet by designating FFBC as the beneficiary of their generosity. FFBC is an eligible recipient of such funding designations.

The next copy deadline for the FFBC newsletter will be **January 14, 2019**. If you have something on your mind, put it on paper and get it to me by the copy deadline. It'll be interesting, good therapy, or both. Caring is sharing.

Don't Miss the **DEADLINE!**

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. We awarded eight scholarships this year. We've awarded more than **\$275,000** in scholarships to deserving Iowa high school students.



My Coming Out Journey

By Kevin Chorniak

In the summer of 1994, the AIDS epidemic was in full swing with no end in sight. Access to the Internet was nonexistent and homosexuality was only discussed in the context of AIDS. Needless to say, it was a frightening time. I was also graduating from college and excited to embark upon a career in the midst of trying to figure out who I was as an individual. I had grown up in a small town in Ohio where diversity meant being white and straight. Although I went to college in Cincinnati, Ohio, a much larger and racially diverse city, it's also very conservative.

Looking back now, I have no doubt these social influences are the main reasons I never met or was friends with guys that were queer and out. I was also not exposed to gay culture, even though I desired it. I clearly remember being attracted to guys more than girls as a teenager. I recall my high school friends ogling over the *Sport Illustrated* swimsuit edition each year and paying little attention myself. They would talk about breast and bra sizes, a foreign language that I had no interest in. In college, I recall suspecting other guys were gay, but I was always too afraid to ask.

On occasion, a girl would catch my eye, but it was the exception, not the norm. This alone caused me a great deal of internal confusion, a struggle I wrestled with for many years. I would think to myself, *"Am I gay in a world that doesn't accept being gay? No, I must not be because she is pretty."* But, in reality, I was hiding my feelings and lying to myself. In most of those cases I was forcing myself to be attracted to women; usually it wasn't fully authentic. It was a very different time to grow up, unbelievably different than it is today. There were few places to get education on sex, and you were left to figure it out on your own primarily based on your social circle.

Shortly after graduating college and beginning a career, I met a young woman and fell in love. Social pressure to be married was intense, and within 18 months, we were married and making a life together. Like all marriages, it was filled with moments of both fun and sadness as well as highs and lows. Every time we hit a low, it caused me to think more and more about my feelings and who I really was. As the years went by, these feelings and my attraction to men grew stronger. But I could never imagine being divorced and hurting her. This was a problem I created because I wasn't honest with myself, and I felt trapped and confused.

During one of our most intense low periods three years ago, after 18 years of marriage and relocating to Des Moines, I made the very difficult decision to be separated. She and I had a brief 30-minute discussion about it, during which she asked if I was gay. She had suspected it for years because of the way I looked at guys (I suppose I wasn't as sly as I thought!). Put on the spot and not prepared to answer the question fully, I said I was bisexual. Saying those words later caused me to think more about it and whether I really was bisexual, gay, or something else. These were not words I had ever thought about; however, it didn't take long to realize I'm a gay man who is proud of who he is.

A few weeks earlier my friend Dan Jansen and I had met at the gym. Ironically enough, he and I had breakfast planned for what ended up being the morning after my separation discussion. I didn't know if Dan was gay but suspected he might be. As we talked at breakfast and discussed our professional and personal lives, I learned Dan is gay. So, as you can imagine, our breakfast conversation quickly became much more interesting than he or I could have foreseen. After talking, and although he didn't know me well, Dan was kind enough to offer me an apartment in his basement, generosity I can never repay. And so, on that September day in 2015, my coming out journey began!!!



[continued on page five]

["My Coming Out Journey" / continued from page four]

Within a week of my moving out, my soon-to-be ex-wife filed for divorce and threatened to call my parents and out me. While I don't think she would have, I wanted them to hear it from me. The following day, after an early morning workout at the gym, I headed to a local coffee shop to begin planning the many life events I was now facing. On the ride, I called my mom and told her I had something I needed her to know. I simply said we were getting divorced and while it wasn't the reason for the divorce, I was also gay and it was time for me to deal with it. I was nervous and much more emotional than I had expected, but wow, what a feeling to say those words out loud. She was incredibly supportive, shocked, but very happy for me, as mom always is. I'm an only child and have a very small family so I didn't have a lot of family members to tell.

Once I reached the coffee shop, however, I sat in the parking lot and called my gay cousin. He's my age and has been out for many years. He was taken aback to say the least and had tons of questions. I can remember him repeatedly saying "Kev....18 years, how'd you manage it?" He was super supportive and excited for me. Afterwards, I called another cousin I've always been close to and, as I'd expected, she was surprised but supportive and happy for me. Later that day and after three very supportive and encouraging calls, I called my dad, a call I'd put off as long as I could. Dad was fairly quiet, but supportive. I can remember him saying "Whatever you want to do, I love you buddy." By the end of that day, I had told all the family members I felt the need to tell, and I knew others would find out soon enough. I felt great, but nervous and uncertain about the future. While I had delivered some really surprising news, everyone was very supportive, which boosted and eventually sustained my confidence.

In the following six to eight weeks, I met my current and amazing partner Danny Bounsavath. We developed an instant connection as soon as we met and had a six-hour first date. It didn't take long for me to learn that Danny is quite social and has many acquaintances, several of whom are co-workers of mine. After returning to the office from vacation over the holidays, I decided to be proactive and begin telling people at the office. By the end of January 2016 I was **OUT!** I had told my boss, several peers, and my direct reports. While I was still nervous and uncertain about the future, it felt amazing. Since I was new to Des Moines, I didn't have local friends to tell. Over the course of the subsequent months I reached out to friends in other cities to let them know.

As I think back on my journey and the process I went through, I'm still shocked and amazed at how it happened, the speed with which it occurred, and how fortunate I was to have so much support and love. I rarely make big decisions fast, but I realize now I was incredibly unhappy in my marriage, wasn't getting any younger and was having more frequent and stronger feelings toward men. Subconsciously, I couldn't do it anymore and it just happened.

I have absolutely no regrets. It's been a terrific learning and growing experience and I've met some amazing and wonderful friends on this journey that I may not have ever met otherwise. I am very blessed. It feels quite refreshing and easy to live life as my true and authentic self, and not to worry about what others think. For many of us, coming out is a process that takes time. In my case, it took 45 years! But I made it OUT and couldn't be happier!!!



"I'm not that good looking...nobody is that good looking. I have seen a lot of movie stars, and maybe four are amazing looking. The rest have a team of gay guys who make it happen."

-- Tina Fey

Mark Your Calendars

Future
FFBC
Speaker
Announced:



February:
Brad Anderson
Executive Director
of AARP of Iowa

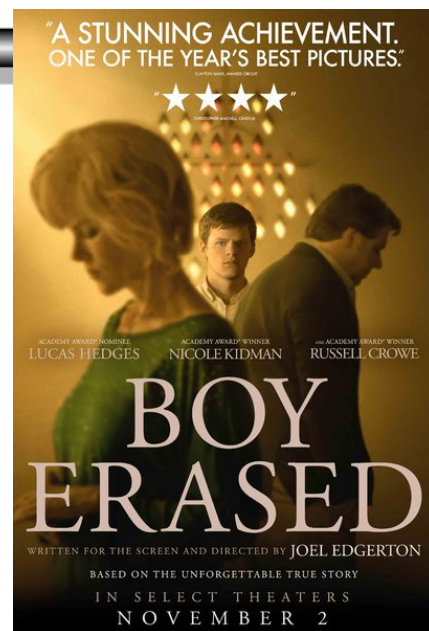


2019



Boy Erased

Movie Review by Mark Turnage



For “out” LGBT people, conversion therapy is a nightmare to envision, especially to those who have survived it. **Boy Erased**, a film adapted from the autobiography of conversion therapy survivor Garrard Conley, details Conley’s experience and what brought him there, seen through his eyes and the eyes of his parents, and others he meets in the same program. Although difficult to watch, **Boy Erased** is a careful balancing act between a gay teenager caught in a crisis of faith and identity, the toxic program and its disturbing agents, and the family that sees conversion therapy as their son’s only hope. Yet while director Joel Edgerton succeeds in conveying conversion therapy’s toll on one family, his film’s focus on his three major characters (the boy and his parents) leaves the supporting narrative’s emotional resonance lacking depth.

As Jared Eamons, the teenage Garrard Conley of this story, actor Lucas Hedges more than holds his own alongside Russell Crowe (Pastor Marshall Eamons) and Nicole Kidman (Nancy Eamons), who both give nuance and empathy to the roles of Jared’s parents, which could have easily been cast as villains or caricatures. We get a clear sense from both that they love their son and are torn about how to help him without compromising their conservative Baptist beliefs. Acceptance isn’t an option, not even for Jared, as illustrated by a sympathetic doctor (the always-enjoyable Cherry Jones) who fails to convince Jared he’s completely normal.

What normalcy Jared has, even closeted, is shattered in college, when he is raped and then outed to his family by a friend with whom he attends church. Hedges’ portrayal of Jared’s personality before and after this incident is noteworthy for his willingness to carry and express this trauma subtly. Jared never confides in anyone about his sexual assault for the entirety of the film; he only hints how no one ever asked if there was more to the story of him being outed. This point, reached and then echoed in the first and third acts, makes this reviewer wonder if this is why **Boy Erased** feels like it “crests” too early. But it speaks volumes about sexual assault and its scars, and it emphasizes the quiet intimacy Jared experiences with another boy he meets later in college, who shows him his sexuality is nothing to fear or be ashamed of.

When Jared arrives at camp, it slowly becomes clear he’s in a psychological prison more than a physical one. This is fostered by the director of the program, Mr. Sykes (Joel Edgerton), who tries to pin their “choice” of sexuality on easy Freudian tropes like family history, drug abuse, or parental hatred. Edgerton paints Sykes as psychologically manipulative and at points even as a con man using faith for funds, but never with too heavy a hand. Sykes isn’t so much a villain as a perpetuator of a broken system, and the end credit’s epilogue underscores that.

One subject **Boy Erased** doesn’t touch on, which becomes more apparent when we meet the other members of the conversion therapy program, is the subject of whiteness and passing, and how it benefits Jared throughout the film. The other male participants of the program are less stereotypically masculine, and suffer for it. In one montage, Sykes pits the male participants of the camp against an overclocked pitching machine, insisting that “real men play sports, and are good at it”—and Jared is the only one to hit the ball with his first swing. Likewise, he’s the only one in the group who has a “masculine” enough stance that Sykes doesn’t berate him. It’s something I wish was explored further.

Boy Erased does offer some closure and compassion amongst the emotional scars, but the characters beyond the nuclear family (and Sykes) aren’t done the same justice. It is, however, an important film to see regarding the practice of conversion therapy, and how it affects its victims.



Recruited by Farley: Important Allies Can be Straight

by Bruce Carr



Our guest speaker on Friday morning, December 7, 2018, was the Reverend Debbie Griffin, pastor of Downtown Disciples, a progressive Christian community and urban ministry, “doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly together” in downtown Des Moines. Debbie’s riveting presentation amounted to a story of her life: how she turned into this gently radical, proactive, zealous worker for social justice preached by Christ and his followers.

Clearly energized by the people of her downtown congregation, Debbie noted that in the spring they will be moving to new quarters in the Skywalk, using the weekday location of La Mie Bakery. Downtown Disciples’ website tells much of the rest of their story:

Join us in the historic East Village (500 East Locust, above Wooley’s). Our new rustic loft includes an elevator and all-gender inclusive bathrooms. Have you been wounded by the church? Are you spiritual, but not religious? Do you find worship to be boring, irrelevant, or exclusive? Us too! So we’ve created a progressive spiritual community of people who use inclusive language for the Divine and humanity. We feature live local singer/songwriters and artists in our worship who help us celebrate the Sacred in the secular.” “We are a community of progressive Christians who genuinely care about one another, the earth, and our neighbors. Although most of us call ourselves followers of Jesus, we respect many faith paths and embrace diversity. We love to learn, so there’s no need to check your brain at the door! Children are always welcome and engaged. Together, we grapple with and embrace the deep questions of life. You can learn more about our progressive community at www.downtowndisciples.org We are LGBTQ+ Affirming and we proclaim #BlackLivesMatter.

Debbie vividly showed us what the Disciples’ Website asserts: “Debbie is passionate about following the subversive Jesus. She feels the Spirit calling the Church to reclaim Christianity as an inclusive community of Disciples. Her dream for Downtown Disciples is also her dream for our global Church: she believes we are called to be a community embodying Jesus’ radical love and following him into challenging, justice-making ministry.”

You can hear, or re-hear, a complete audio recording of Debbie Griffin’s talk and the Q&A following, by going to our Website, ffbcioowa.org, and clicking on the “Speakers” tab.



Photo by Gary Moore

As Debbie Griffin was growing up in her small, north-central Missouri hometown of about 3,500, she never looked forward to going to theology school, let alone founding a church. Institutional Christianity didn’t do much for her as she moved through college, marriage (twice), motherhood, a failed small-business, and divorce (also twice). But then, almost accidentally, she encountered Christian joy and grace in a local African American Baptist congregation – whose minister directed her to the St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City. Founded in the late 1950s by the Methodist Church specifically for the practical training of working pastors, the school emphasizes “the formation of people for innovative, creative ministry through rigorous academic life; the exploration of Scripture, tradition, and ministry practices; and diverse, contextual experience.” Here also she met “Farley,” a sympathetic and supportive fellow student who turned out to be a gay man with a partner – an unheard-of phenomenon in Debbie’s life so far. He helped remind Debbie of her own mother’s semi-radical feminism, leading to her winning several awards at the school for leadership and work in social justice.

Fifteen years later, after earning her Master’s degree, ordination, and service at several Presbyterian and Disciples of Christ congregations in Iowa and Missouri, Debbie began wondering what an unapologetically progressive Christian community in downtown Des Moines could look like. In January 2015 she shared this dream with the Upper Midwest Region of the Disciples of Christ and together, they began to create safe, LGBTQ+ affirming spaces for people to grapple with difficult questions of faith and social justice. Downtown Disciples grew organically from these spaces, nurtured by conversations about books like *Saving Jesus from the Church* and by the gifts and talents of community members.

When she’s not actively ministering to Downtown Disciples or participating in social justice and mercy projects in and across Iowa, Debbie can be found dancing with her husband Mike, walking their two dogs, hiking, biking, and spending time with her four adult children. She mentors at Edmunds Elementary School near her home in Sherman Hill, volunteers at Fleur Heights Nursing Home, Central Iowa Shelter and Services, and numerous other social justice ministries. Debbie Griffin can be reached through Downtown Disciples at

[<downtowndisciples@gmail.com>](mailto:downtowndisciples@gmail.com), telephone 515/244-0054.

The Dangers of Data

by Jordan Duesenberg

Over the last decade, we've grown to depend on certain technological companies and the innovations and advancements that they make at a seemingly rapid pace. It's hard to imagine a time without a Smartphone (produced by either Apple or Google), or a time when you could order whatever you wanted on one website/app and have your product delivered for free in two days, or a time when you couldn't stream whatever song, movie, or TV show you wanted on demand. Honestly, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, Google (what we call FAANG stocks in finance), have made our lives much easier. You could argue that a lot of the last decade (so far) has been defined by these companies and their technologies and services, but in 2018 (more than any other year) I think we began to examine some of the negative consequences of these purveyors of these technologies, especially concerning the data we willingly supply them.

The amount of power these companies wield is frightening if you think about it – and I'm not just talking monetarily. I recently had a wholesaler talk to me in my office about some of the potential innovations we could soon see. In his example, he said that it could be possible to walk into a store in the future, and the music played in the store will be targeted music that you personally enjoy in order to enable you, individually, to spend more money. Which, personally, terrifies me – unknowingly being led to do something that I think is my own decision when, in reality, I was being manipulated into doing something based on information companies know about me.

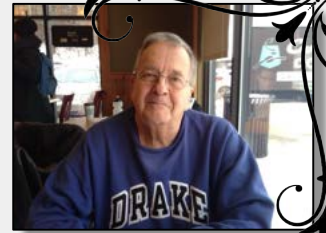
But, then again, it's already basically happened. Look at what happened with the recent Cambridge Analytica debacle with Facebook, where Facebook allowed third parties to use Facebook users' data to develop profiling and algorithms to influence users' beliefs. The data collected included details of users' identities, friend networks, and 'likes.' Then, based on this collected data, personality traits were mapped and then targeted by specific ads. It is then believed that Russia somehow gained access to this information, which enabled Russian agents to create tension amongst American citizens leading up to the 2016 presidential election by posting divisive, inflammatory content that reached over 126 million users on that app alone. I think back to this time and remember the many arguments I had on the app, the anger that would rise in me from certain posts I'd read, and also lashing out at family members who disagreed with me politically. Although I, of course, take ownership for all of my actions, I do understand it is possible that some of my rash actions were a result of social media and being unknowingly coerced into this mindset.

[continued on page nine]



Obituary

Members of the First Friday Breakfast Club have learned that member **David Twombly** (77) has died. He will be remembered as a kind and generous soul that helped bring marriage equality to Iowans in the Varnum vs Brien decision.



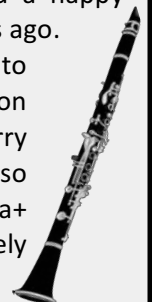
Accolades abound as he is remembered by former band students he encouraged over the years as a master of woodwinds and clarinet player. He was a former member of the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus. But he will forever go down in history as one of the plaintiffs that Lambda Legal chose to be a litigant along with his partner, Larry Hoch.

David and Larry came to the civil rights cause late in life as they did not meet and lead an openly gay life until their fifties. Sheepishly, they admitted to meeting on-line when Larry was teaching in Vermont and David was here in Iowa. Over the course of many months, they realized there was a strong attraction and finally met and soon became inseparable. After Larry relocated to Iowa, they were contacted to become a part of the litigation supporting gay marriage in Iowa, a very select group of people especially vetted by the law firms handling the case. They brought an insight into the marriage debate that younger members could not.

Soon after the Iowa Supreme Court overturned the ban on same-sex marriage, Larry and David were married in Des Moines at First Christian Church where family and friends gathered to bless this holy union and love between two of God's children. They remained a happy couple until Larry's death just four years ago.

Friends and family gathered to give their final respects to David on Thursday, December 13. May he and Larry rest in peace knowing they brought so much dignity and grace to the LGBTQIA+ movement here in Iowa and ultimately across the nation.

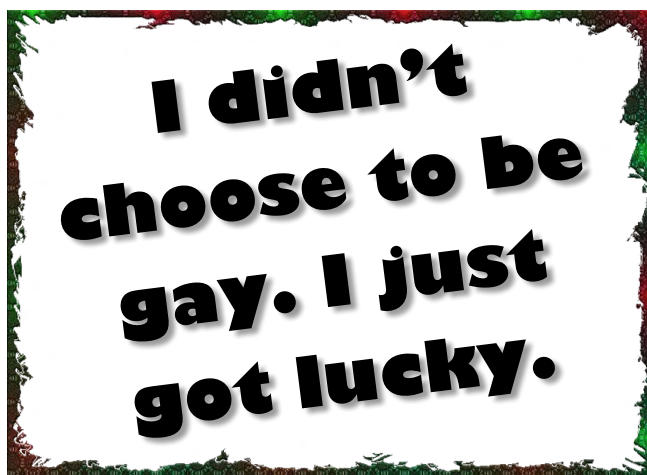
Rick Miller was honored to introduce David and Larry's families during a reception following their wedding vows.



["Dangers of Data" / continued from page eight]

Although this is perhaps an extreme example, it does show that we have already been influenced as a result of our captured data. Going a little deeper, and perhaps a bit more paranoid, what happens if we find that our data is directly being used against us? Take insurance as an example. You apply for life insurance only to be denied or pay outrageous premiums because your data reveals that you had been treated for an STI a couple years ago, or that you have Grindr or Gruff profiles seeking anonymous sex, or bank transactions that show you purchased more than the medically recommended number of drinks in one night. I don't know how logical these examples may be but, hopefully, you get the point I'm trying to make. Even if these are remote possibilities, could that start influencing how we act? It would almost be like living in a surveillance state. Look at China's "social credit" system that they are rolling out on all of their citizens where they rank citizens based on 24/7 monitored behavior largely based on facial recognition surveillance footage and online personal data.

Whether we're being unknowingly sold products, led to think and act a certain way or, as a reaction to all of this, we start purposely acting in a way that minimizes the data being collected, this all begs the question: are we truly autonomous beings going into 2019? We might not be China, where running a red light or watching too much pornography online reduces our social credit rating, but I think it's a fine line. As we move into 2019 and eventually into a new decade, I hope we continue to ask questions about how our data is being used and also, possibly, stop relying on these big tech companies for everything under the sun. I've always joked that the best way to ruin someone's life is to release their Google search history...but now that I think about that, it's not that funny anymore, just a bit concerning.



Scholarship Time

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped stuff the FFBC Scholarship information to be sent off to all the high schools in Iowa! Many hands make light work!



Volunteers Included: Wade Petersen, Ken Hanson, Tim Schreck, Ryan Crane, Rick Miller, Bill Brown, and Gary Moore



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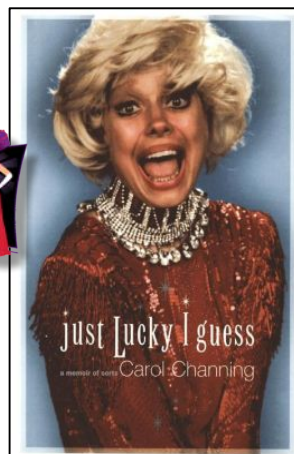


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Breakfast Club, Inc.**

An Odyssey of Two Books: Same Title, Same Author, Same Contents

by Steve Person



November 8, 1966, looms in my memory as one of those dates that I will forever remember. Any of you old enough to remember the now-demolished KRNT Theatre, know that it was one of the largest legitimate theater auditoriums in the United States. It seated more than 4,000 people. In that place and on that date I encountered one of the most legendary performers in one of the most popular Broadway musicals of the twentieth century—*Hello, Dolly!* Carol Channing, the star who brought Dolly Levi to life on the Broadway stage, took the show on the road for its first of many national tours. Her presence sold out theaters all across the country, and the cavernous KRNT Theatre was no exception. I have seen many shows in that venerable old place, but with her *basso profundo* voice, Miss Channing stretched her vocal cords to the very highest row in the back of the hall. I have rarely seen any performer make every audience member feel as if she is playing to you and you alone—a gifted performer, indeed.

Fast forward to 2002 when Carol Channing, now in her mid 70s, published her star-studded chronicle of her life and career. She entitled the book, *Just Lucky I Guess*. She explained the title in the introduction: “The name of my book is *Just Lucky I Guess*, referring to the old joke—‘Client to prostitute: What’s a nice girl like you doing in a place like this? Prostitute: Just Lucky I guess.’”

I immediately bought the book when it came out. I believe books should be read by as many people as possible, and after I read it, I lent it out, knowing that it would find its way back to me. It didn’t. I lost track of it.

This past June, my long-time friend, Ron Lambert, decided to move from one apartment to another. He asked me to help him clean out his storage unit. He had hundreds of books and play scripts secreted in the unit, and among the books I found was an advance uncorrected reader’s proof from Simon and Shuster of *Just Lucky I Guess*. It was in paperback and did not include any of the numerous photographs that the published version had, but I was thrilled to find it. Ron graciously gave it to me. I re-read it with gusto. Channing is a terrific writer! And yes, she wrote it—no ghostwriter. I carried the book with me to the Capitol to read during down times and between tours. It was then that my supervisor asked me what I was reading. She said she had that book at home and had had it for many years. It turned out I had lent her my book back when, but she never read it. So, she returned the book to me, and I am pleased to have it back. It is staying here! Part of the lyrics of the song “Hello, Dolly!” says, “It’s so nice to have you back where you belong!” But now I have two copies. I would be happy to lend out the reader’s proof copy, but the published version stays with me! It’s come full circle.

By the way, this coming April will see the newest national tour of *Hello, Dolly!* at the Civic Center starring Betty Buckley. Buckley earned a Tony Award for her performance in *Cats* many years ago on Broadway. The new tour promises to be great fun.

