

First Friday News & Views

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

November 2019

Volume 24

Issue 11

The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, November 1,
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,
October 30.



FFBC Website:
www.ffbciaowa.org



Flavorful Food Without a Pain Component

by Jonathan Wilson

I don't like spicy food. Period. End of sentence. Drop voice. Drop mic.

Recently, I may have found a clue about why. I made some delicious scrambled eggs with bacon and mushrooms. I added some grated Parmesan cheese, salt, and pepper. Really good.

My partner, who continues to claim that he likes spicy food, got from the refrigerator a bottle of hot sauce that he used to douse those perfectly edible, tasty scrambled eggs. My two children also like spicy food apparently, and they could be expected to do the same thing.

It's discouraging when I see food I've prepared defiled in this way, or when I sit down to a too-spicy meal that my partner or one of my children has prepared.

It's been frustrating when they and friends, essentially-if-not-intentionally, lie to me saying, "Don't worry, this dish isn't spicy; dig in." It's happened in restaurants, their homes, and even in my own home. And time-after-time I find myself eating very little or neutralizing the heat with sour cream or milk. I'm Charley Brown to their Lucy, repeatedly — "Go ahead and kick the ball, I won't pull it away this time as I have done virtually every time before." And I've trusted them, again, and like Charley Brown, paid the price. Eating is not supposed to have a pain component (except for horseradish, which I like however hot it might be, but it doesn't "build" from one bite to the next and, my feelings for horseradish are beside the point).

Anyway, you get what I'm talking about, no matter whose side you're on.

So, after my partner spiced up his plate full of my wonderful scrambled eggs with hot sauce, I took the bottle and smelled its contents. The main ingredient was cayenne pepper.



Disgusting for sure, but also a clue. It smelled EXACTLY like a product called *Thum*. When I was a little boy and my parents lovingly wanted me to stop sucking my thumb for my own good, supposedly, they painted my thumbs with that product. It was awful and spicy hot. And it smelled exactly like that hot sauce that my partner was enjoying poured over those otherwise delicious scrambled eggs.

[continued on page two]

*Spice Up
Your Life*



["Flavorful Food" / continued from page one]

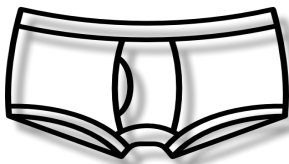
I went on line and, low and behold, the product is still available by that name and for under \$7, and it contains mostly cayenne pepper — the principal ingredient of that hot sauce.

Aha!! It all made sense. I was scarred by the phenomenon of *Thum*. No need for excuses. No need to overcome that history. No need to apologize for it. It just is what it is. Now I have a way to explain my aversion to spicy food and maybe end those conversations in the future. I don't like okra either, also without apology.

My only regret: I just wish I'd painted *Thum* on my children's thumbs when I had the chance, and wish that I'd been there at an impressionable age to do the same for my partner. We'd all be eating together more happily and without pain.



Briefs & Shorts:



Thanks to **David Wilfahrt** for introducing our October speaker, Jerry Foxhoven, the Reynolds-ousted, former Director of the Iowa Department of Human Services. 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 **November 11, 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.

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. Our annual fundraising drive is currently in progress.

Don't Miss the
DEADLINE!

✓ **Mark Your
Calendar**

**November's
Speaker:**

**John
Carstensen**



Our speaker in November will be John Carstensen, Healthcare Provider at Unity Point. 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.

*You are
invited*

**"The further a
society drifts
from the truth,
the more it will
hate those who
speak it."**

George Orwell

A Model of Competence and Integrity

by Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, October 4, 2019, was Jerry Foxhoven, director of the Iowa Department of Human Services (“IDHS”) until June 17, 2019, when he was ordered to resign (fired without explanation) by Governor Kim Reynolds. She had appointed him to the post almost exactly two years earlier, calling him a “well-known and highly respected leader in child protection and family law” and “the compassionate, thoughtful leader we need serving in this important role.” Foxhoven engrossed our attention with his detailed description of the deplorable state of the IDHS he inherited, his attempts to improve the situation, his account of the events that led to his removal, and a little of how it feels to be a whistle-blower. [Note: his comments on that topic could not have been more timely. Ed.]

When he started as Director, Foxhoven said, the Department had a yearly budget in excess of \$6 billion (by far the state’s largest), served in excess of one million clients, and operated on a decades-old computer system. Ever since Republicans took control of the Legislature at the beginning of 2017, funding was regularly cut, the number of employees halved (to 4000-plus) through attrition and despair, and Department morale plummeted. Caseloads, ideally 10-12 per worker, had risen to anywhere from 45 to almost 100. Once he’d brought the computer system into the twenty-first century, Foxhoven began to work on morale by sharing with all the Department – whose employees he repeatedly praised for their dedication and high-quality service -- his admiration for the black artist Tupac Shakur (1971-1996); his email blasts marked the anniversary of Shakur’s death, shared one of his lyrics about love on Valentine’s Day, and used the rapper’s image to try to improve the agency’s culture. He told colleagues he was inspired by lyrics that included: “It’s time for us as a people to start makin’ some changes.”



It was probably a bad idea to cite these incidental e-mails as not the reason for his political dismissal, Foxhoven noted, and that excuse would not have been used if the Governor had had a single person of color on her bloated staff of advisors. But now, having been terminated for no stated reason, job-seeking at 67, and mindful of how the Governor’s office will litigate its ineptitude no matter what the cost to taxpayers, Foxhoven has sued for wrongful termination and is feeling the lonely burn of having blown the whistle. It was some slight relief, after we awarded him the applause he’d earned, to hear in Q&A a former state senator refer, quite incidentally, to the Governor’s “ineptitude, or corruption, or both.”

You can listen to an audio recording of Jerry Foxhoven’s complete remarks by clicking on the Speakers tab at our Web site, <ffbc Iowa.org>.



Photo by Gary Moore



Jerry Foxhoven grew up in Iowa, where he graduated summa cum laude from Morningside College in Sioux City in 1974 and earned his Juris Doctor from Drake University Law School in 1977. He began practicing law in 1977 with a strong emphasis on trial practice in criminal and civil law. He was also extensively involved in juvenile and family law cases until 2000 when he began as administrator for the Iowa Child Advocacy Board. In this role, he was responsible for developing and implementing personnel policies, strategic planning, and public policy advocacy. While in this position, he was also director of two separate child welfare advocacy programs: Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and Iowa Citizen Foster Care Review Board programs. In 2006 he became director of the Joan & Lyle Middleton Center for Children’s Rights, a state and national advocacy center focusing on children’s rights issues. He joined Drake Law School as a clinical professor, where he instructed juvenile law for third-year students in a clinical setting, supervising students in juvenile court proceedings and in the Legislative Practice Program as they drafted bills and lobbied for passage of bills pertaining to issues involving youth. Before he was invited to join the Reynolds administration Foxhoven served as executive director of Clinical Programs and Professor of Law at Drake University’s School of Law.

Foxhoven has served on countless child-protection leadership boards and committees, including serving as Co-Chair of the Children’s Mental Health and Well-Being Workgroup in 2015-16, and Chair of the Iowa Juvenile Home Protection Task Force (appointed by Gov. Terry Branstad), in 2013. He has earned numerous state and national awards for his work on behalf of children and efforts to bolster diversity, including the “Friend of Children” award from The Coalition for Family and Children Services in Iowa in 2016, the “Friend of BLSA” award from the Black Law Student Association at Drake University, and the “Margaret Hess Leadership in Family Empowerment” award from Youth and Shelter Services in 2013. He lives in Clive with his wife, Julie.

Enough With the Continuing Discrimination

by Jonathan Wilson



There was an ad in a recent issue of *Time Magazine* saying that every two seconds there is someone in the U.S. who needs a blood transfusion. Every two seconds. The ad was placed there by the American Red Cross. Serving as the broker between blood donors and recipients is important, life-saving work. Obviously, there is a serious need for blood donors. Why else would the American Red Cross spend resources on placing an ad in *Time Magazine*?



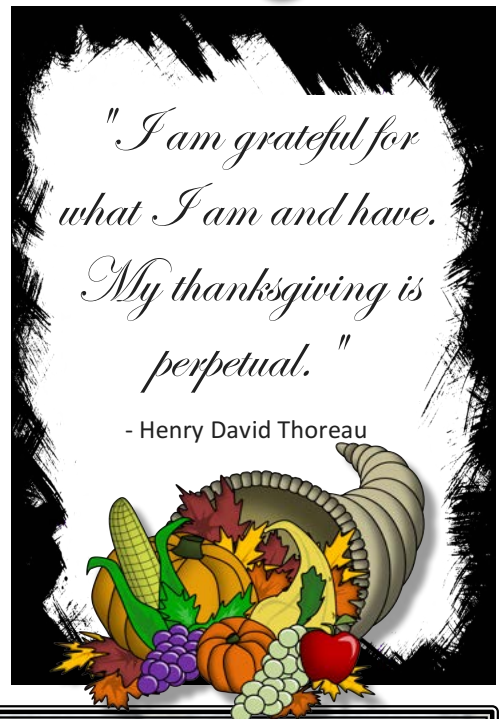
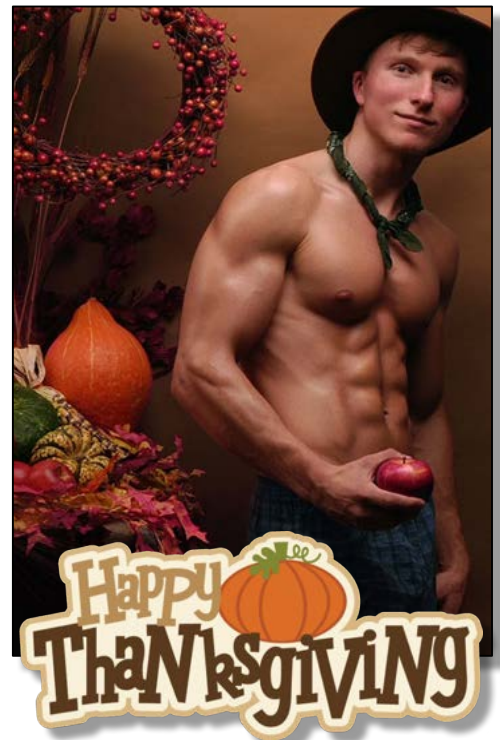
And yet, they won't let me or my partner donate. Back when I was in the closet and "straight," I regularly donated — I earned the coveted gallon donor pin.

It's a punch to the gut every time I see an ad like that, or I get yet another appeal from my employer asking for blood donations.

I knew at least one straight person who made it a point to donate occasionally as a way of getting tested for HIV infection at no cost and without a doctor's appointment. The potential for HIV infection, of course, has nothing to do with sexual orientation. Internationally, the highest rates of HIV infection arise from heterosexual intimacy. That's been true since before the infection epidemic hit in the US, and ever since. Those tests are now routine for all blood donations, and thoroughly reliable. Stereotyping the disease as a "gay" disease has made straight people less careful than they should be in their intimate relationships, and it perpetuates the discrimination still being practiced by the American Red Cross against gay potential blood donors.

Medical advances have changed things, demonstrating once again the truth of James Russell Lowell's observation, "[T]ime makes ancient good uncouth."

Enough already! It's time for the American Red Cross to be an honest broker between blood donors and recipients. That honesty will expand the number of available, willing, fully qualified blood donors. It's time now to end this vestige of senseless discrimination. When it happens, I can set my sights on a second gallon donor achievement.



it is not
happy
people who are
thankful
it is
thankful
people who are
happy



Mark Your Calendars!

FFBC December
Speaker Announced:

**Matt
Unger**

Des Moines Area
Religious Council



Dusty Springfield: No Easy Way Down

By Jordan Duesenberg

Dusty Springfield is without a doubt one of the greatest blue-eyed soul singers (aka white soul musician) of all time. From the late 50s until the late 60s, she was unstoppable and universally loved for her sensual take on American soul music like Motown, despite the fact that she was a British white woman with bleach blonde hair put up in a bouffant accompanied by heavy vamp makeup – essentially a drag queen. Unfortunately, her career would take a number of heavy hits resulting in a lack of the recognition she once had. I first heard Dusty Springfield while watching Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, where Mia (Uma Thurmon) puts on Springfield's "Son of a Preacher Man" before sniffing what she believes to be cocaine but is actually heroin and she ODs. It's an iconic scene and it brought Dusty Springfield into the consciousness of a whole new generation of people. Even more recently, HBO's *The Deuce* (a show about grimy NYC from the 70s-80s and the rise of pornography and sexuality into the mainstream that is highly recommended) featured an emotional scene that played the song "No Easy Way Down," and I knew that I had to profile Dusty Springfield – an outspoken lesbian and queer icon!

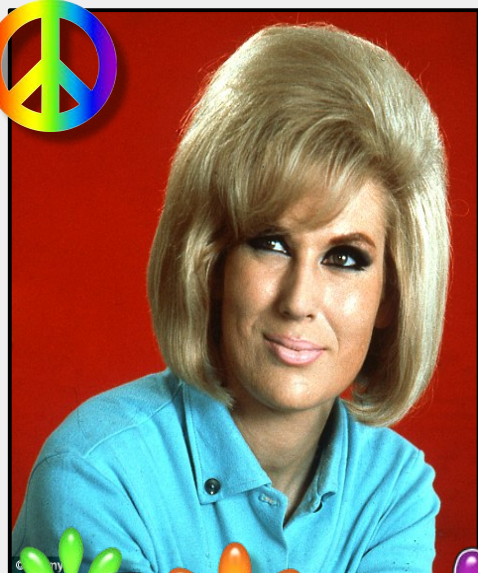
Born Mary Isobel Catherine Bernadette O'Brien in London – Dusty was always considered a tomboy. She earned the nickname "Dusty" as a result of her always playing soccer with the boys. Her upbringing, although middle class, was by no means easy. Her mother was an alcoholic and her father was a critical perfectionist that often let Dusty know about her imperfections. Her main escape was through music – particularly American jazz and soul, with which she would sing along and try to sound like her musical idols from an early age.

Dusty eventually joined a number of bands, but it wasn't until she joined The Springfields (a pop-folk trio) where she adopted the stage name Dusty Springfield as a callback to her childhood nickname, and she would also continue to experiment with fashion, makeup, and hair to become the iconic Dusty Springfield we know and think of today. She would eventually go solo and release a number of successful albums, delivering Motown soul style music to UK listeners. The album that is a real game changer for her is 1969's *Dusty in Memphis* which was Dusty's first true soul album (her other albums had other genres mixed in and often times remakes of popular songs) which also features "Son of a Preacher Man" and "No Easy Way Down." Unfortunately, this album sold poorly upon initial release. Now, however, it is considered one of the greatest albums of all time.



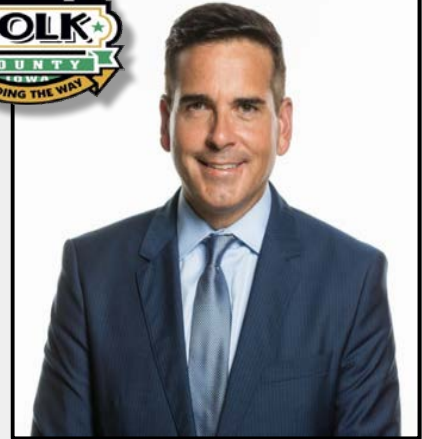
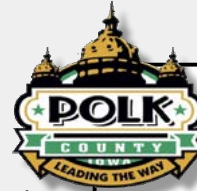
With the initial poor reception of *Dusty in Memphis*, Dusty started to see her career wane. She was also constantly being panned in the tabloids with rumors of being a lesbian (she was living with her partner, singer Norma Tanega at the time) – which resulted in her bluntly admitting to her homosexuality in the press. That resulted in the loss of her star power in the 70s and most of the 80s – which is a shame because her 70s albums are all great. Her 1979 album, *Living Without Your Love*, even features a song called "Closet Man," which is clearly about her love and acceptance of gay men, encouraging a mystery man to come out to her.

With her career in shambles, Dusty spiraled into addictions to alcohol and drugs – spending the majority of the 80s in an alternating state of addiction and recovery. She also made a number of visits to psychiatric hospitals as a result of self-harm and an eventual diagnosis of bipolar disorder. While things were looking bleak for the singer, she received an invitation by the super gay pop group Pet Shop Boys to have Dusty featured on "What Have I Done to Deserve This?" from their sophomore album, *Actually*. The song was a huge hit and put her back into the spotlight for the first time in years. Dusty would then go on to create the album *Reputation* in 1990, produced by Pet Shop Boys, that was also a hit. In 1994, the film *Pulp Fiction* was released and that brought even more fame and prestige to Dusty Springfield by a whole new generation. While things were finally looking up for her, she unfortunately received a breast cancer diagnosis the same year that *Pulp Fiction* was released. She fought the best she could, even releasing an album in 1995, *A Very Fine Love*, before losing her battle to the cancer in 1999. Thankfully her music continues to live on.



Polk County Remains a Leader in Mental Health Advocacy and Services

By Polk County Supervisor Matt McCoy



The Polk County Board of Supervisors were proud to participate in a “ground breaking” at Des Moines University for a first in the country mental health clinic located within a medical school. The clinic will not only provide much needed mental health services to the community but will be among the first to implement NAMI’s provider education program. Iowa ranks 48th in the nation for number of per capita psychiatrists. This partnership with NAMI will further educate primary care physicians – often the first to encounter patients’ mental health problems – on how to recognize, diagnose, and manage mental illness, hence accelerating the process of delivering vital care to those in need. Polk County was proud to support this important work with a \$125,000 grant.

This partnership is only one example of Polk County’s commitment to mental health. In addition to routinely providing funding to community partners, such as DMU and NAMI Iowa, we facilitate mental health initiatives throughout the community and implement policies that promote mental health care within our county departments.



Another example of one such project that supports mental health is our advocacy for and facilitation of an engagement center. We have a strong network of providers that offer a range of mental health and substance abuse services in our community; however, the one piece of the puzzle that is still missing is a “sobering center.” This is a place where police can take individuals who are impaired by excessive drug or alcohol use to sober up and engage in appropriate treatment. The current alternative to this is that the individuals are taken to jail or to the emergency rooms - locations that are not well suited to providing meaningful connections to long-term substance abuse treatment and are cost inefficient. Leaders are actively looking for a location that could house not only a sobering center but a continuum of services to address substance abuse and mental health issues.

As leaders, Polk County continues to focus on the gaps that exist in mental health services in our community, and we are committed to reducing the stigma of mental health illness. We have initiated and supported a mobile crisis unit, jail diversion programming at the Polk County jail, a 23 hour crisis center, crisis intervention training for local law enforcement, and much more. We are dedicated to incorporating mental health advocacy and treatment into the work of all Polk County department and appreciate the work and innovation of our partners, such as Des Moines University, NAMI and others, to continue to address these unmet needs.



“I celebrated Thanksgiving in an old-fashioned way. I invited everyone in my neighborhood to my house, we had an enormous feast, and then I killed them and took their land.”

— Jon Stewart



Judy

A Film Review by Mark Turnage

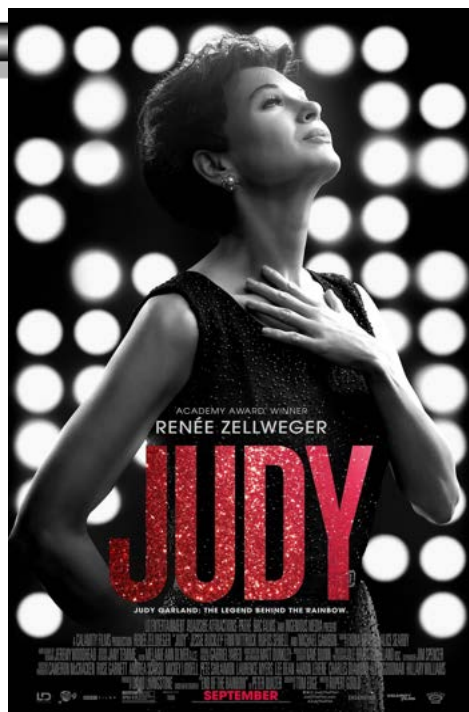
In 1967, *Time* magazine featured an article titled "Seance at the Palace," where the reviewer lamented that a performance by Judy Garland at Broadway's Palace Theatre had a "disproportionate" number of "homosexual" attendees. The reviewer mused that Garland's "appeal to the homosexual" was due to "the fact that she has survived so many problems; homosexuals identify with that kind of hysteria." And yet, much like Judy's many comebacks and her legacy, we too endure. Rupert Goold's film *Judy*, based on the Tony-nominated play *End of the Rainbow*, showcases the final months of Judy Garland. Though much of the film is seeing Garland at her lowest, a powerhouse performance by Renée Zellweger and touching scenes with her supporting cast make *Judy* an ultimately inspirational and emotionally cathartic drama.

Judy sets its tone with flashbacks to Garland's 14-year old self (a magnetic Darci Shaw) being complimented and intimidated by studio head Louis B. Mayer (Richard Cordery) about her talented yet impetuous nature. "You can be famous or forgotten, but you'll never be the pretty girl," he tells her to her face, in that matter-of-fact brand of Hollywood cruelty. More flashbacks show studio managers and assistants facilitating her dependence on amphetamines and diet pills, tightly controlling her appearance, schedule, and behavior to the point where her rebellious acts include diving into a swimming pool or eating a hamburger. These instances form the skeleton of Garland's future issues and insecurities.

We meet older Judy with her two kids being offered a measly \$150 for a singing gig. She's broke, and shortly thereafter, homeless. Her tantrums and health issues have cost her: agents say she's "unbankable and unpredictable" in the US, but adored in the UK, and she is offered a performance contract in London. Yet the specters of substance abuse and severe anxiety continue to haunt Judy, and years of poor health are taking their toll on her voice and body. Zellwenger's Garland is in her mid-40's, full of wiry, nervous tics and shockingly thin, and appears closer to being 60 years old. But when she takes the stage and belts out "By Myself," her first musical number at full energy, it's breathtaking.

Despite her fame, her social circle is extremely limited, and often she reaches out to after-show fans for her social connections, almost desperately at times. Two of these fans are an older British gay couple, Burt (Royce Pierreson) and Askith (Arthur McBain), who Judy meets after a less than spectacular performance. After failing to find an open bar, they take her back to their place, where Garland notices their couple's photos next to memorabilia from her past performances. "It's nice to have allies," she remarks with a comforting smile, and the scenes with Garland, Burt and Askith are some of the most moving story beats of the film. Garland sings a wrenching private performance of "Get Happy" with piano accompaniment from Burt; knowing of her frailty and grateful for her kindness that transcends it, he breaks down in tears, unable to finish the number.

Judy has several of these emotionally powerful moments, necessarily her signature number at the conclusion of the film. Yet, aside from Burt, Askith and her London manager, Rosalyn Wilder (Jessie Buckley), the supporting cast feels more like background noise, even with the likes of Michael Gambon as the venue manager for Garland's final run. Granted, Zellwenger is spellbinding in every scene, including those with her kids. But some stronger scriptwriting with its minor characters may have helped make a good movie seamless here. *Judy* may be overly sentimental for some, but if you want a biography that's unexpected and inspirational with a powerful lead performance, look no further.



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Breakfast Club, Inc.**

Judging a Book

By Steve Person

I should know better. All my life, I've been told not to judge a book by its cover. That adage applies as well to life situations, but this essay is literally about judging a book by its cover.

Recently a friend and I were in the Jordan Creek Town Center (a stupid name, by the way, for a mere shopping mall and an over-priced movie complex). My friend was looking to buy some shirts and ties and slacks to wear at his job. He was under a time constraint, so after he had made his selections, I asked if we had time to stop at the Barnes and Noble bookstore. He said yes, for a few minutes. I usually read biographies or histories and was having trouble finding what I wanted. On the sale shelf was Roger Powell's book, **Royal Sex: Mistresses & Lovers of the British Royal Family**. The dust cover portrayed tantalizing pictures of royal mistresses from centuries past. Being the Anglophile I am, and being on a short time schedule, I purchased the book without so much as reading the notes in the dust jacket. Big mistake!

Here is what the dust jacket says about the author: "Roger Powell has been a professional genealogist for more than forty years and is the coauthor of the best-selling book **Royal Bastards: Illegitimate Children of the British Royal Family**. Until his retirement he was a senior editor at **Burke's Peerage and Gentry** and director of Debrete Ancestry Research. He is related to the Duke of Monmouth, a bastard son of Charles II, and lives in Northamptonshire."

How I wish I had taken the few seconds it would have taken to read that blurb. I likely would not have purchased the book. But, alas, I did not. I was expecting to find juicy stories of illicit love affairs of kings and queens, both heterosexual and homosexual. By the time I got to page 85 of the 258-page book, I couldn't go on. Mr. Powell's alluring book title turned out to be one of the most boring treatises I have ever read. Expecting to find torrid descriptions of royal indiscretions, each person who became a paramour of a king or queen became for Mr. Powell an incredible source of genealogy. He chronicled the ancestry of the said royal favorite by citing who was that person's father or mother and what some distant relative had in connection with the royal person and who was the cousin of so-and-so and what aristocratic title bore that person's family name, etc., etc., etc. If anybody could make sex boring, I give you Roger Powell's book.

I appreciate genealogy as well as the next person, but by George, if you are going to write a book about sex, tell it like it is (or was)!

I will add it to the book exchange and hope that one of you will pick it up and find it absolutely fascinating. If you do, we can discuss it over a drink.

