



First Friday News & Views



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

October 2020

Volume 25

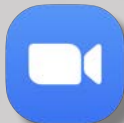
Issue 10

The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, October 2,
2020
7:00 a.m.



FFBC Meeting Location:

ZOOM!



OCTOBER MEETING

Current
Information
Inside This
Newsletter
(page 5)

FFBC Website:
www.ffbcowa.org



Intersection of Law, Science, Politics, and Theology

by Jonathan Wilson

I have previously written that this COVID-19 pandemic is forcing people to re-examine, of all things, their theology. For sure, there have been other issues occasionally that have found themselves on the line between politics and religion. Take, for example, the belief held by some that we are in or nearing the “end times;” that God is imminently going to wrap up the human creation/experiment once and for all and call the forgiven faithful to heaven. If genuine, that would mean that a person holding the belief would favor running up the national debt with utter abandon for the sake of short-term spending. The debt wouldn’t be a burden on our progeny because there wouldn’t be any progeny after the “end times.” Tax free money! That’s the logical conclusion and some of our political leaders appear to believe it -- or want to play politically to people who do -- by running up deficits year-after-year in order to avoid making tough, potentially-unpopular, decisions about government spending priorities. Logically, the same folks wouldn’t care a whit about climate change, global warming, rising sea levels on every coastline, and environmental pollution. All of those things go away after the “end times.” No problem!

Anyone with half a clue about what’s going on around them knows that the United States and the rest of the world are beset by a coronavirus pandemic that is killing Americans to the tune of 1,000+ every single day. And, there’s no end in sight. The current pandemic and responses to it, go further, and represent a perfect intersectional storm between theology, politics, and science. And, it does so in a high-profile way that no one can escape or ignore.

We’ve seen pushback from some religious leaders over prohibited, in-person religious gatherings that they consider “essential” (more likely to the point, “essential” for collection of tithes and offerings). We’ve heard other religious leaders claim that God will protect the truly faithful from contracting the virus. Ironically, and in a real-life challenge to either the limited temporal power of God or the depth of those religious leaders’ faith, some of them have contracted the disease and succumbed to it. Unfortunately, they aren’t alive to learn a very important theological lesson.



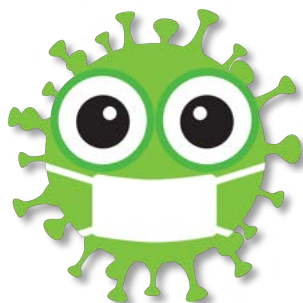
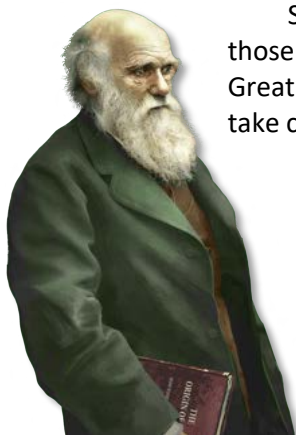
[continued on page 2]

Most recently, the law has been added to that intersectional storm. A Florida pastor of the Suncoast Baptist Church has sued over a mask mandate because his church supposedly can't pray if they are wearing masks. Closer to home, Governor Reynolds has reminded Iowa school districts that defying her back-to-school dictates wouldn't be in defiance of the governor; it would be in violation of the law. She also has said, nonsensically, that masks should not be mandated because she's sure that Iowans will voluntarily "do the right thing." I've recently shopped at The Brother's grocery store in Bloomfield, and half of the customers were wearing masks, and fully half chose not to do "the right thing." To be consistent, it makes you wonder if the governor opposes mandatory seatbelt usage and favors speed limit *suggestions* rather than speed limit enforcement.

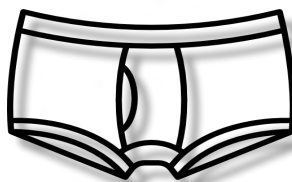
I've heard any number of well-meaning contagious disease experts say that people need to understand the gravity of the situation and agree to wear masks, socially distance, practice meticulous hygiene, and avoid large gatherings. I think those experts are asking for an impossible solution. It's not going to happen, human nature being what it is. How long have we all known that smoking will kill you, and yet there are still people who continue to smoke -- and die.

What the experts should be seeking is for the experts, media and political leaders to speak with one, consistent voice about what people *should do* to protect themselves (and potentially others). Period. End sentence. Drop microphone. Get the word out and leave it at that. Don't bother hoping or advocating for human nature to change. It won't. Also, when a vaccine is finally developed, those experts (and hopefully the media and political leaders) will be saying that everyone should get vaccinated, and there will almost certainly be some anti-vaxers who refuse.

Some will hear and heed those clear, consistent messages. Great. I say we should let Darwin take care of the rest.



Briefs & Shorts:



Thanks to **Suzanna deBaca** for introducing our September speaker, **Ambassador Luis deBaca**. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter production editor. Thanks to **David Cotton** and **Ryan Weidner** for their work as our technology gurus. Thanks to **Nicholas Williams** for managing our website. Thanks to **Joe Raetz** for keeping up-to-date the FFBC Resources page on the website. *Thanks to all our contributors to the 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.



United Way



Thanks also to all those **Amazon shoppers** who designate FFBC as the beneficiary when shopping **smile.amazon.com**. Doing your Amazon shopping using **smile.amazon.com** means that a small contribution to FFBC will be made with every purchase. Proverbial, found money.

Our fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have raised over **\$400,000** for scholarships that are awarded to Iowa high school seniors who have done remarkable, courageous things to reduce homophobia and teach about LGBTQ issues in their schools and communities. Please consider a contribution on-line or by sending a check.

The next copy deadline for the FFBC newsletter will be **October 12, 2020**. 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.



Consider a tax-deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax-exempt testamentary gift, or both. Our first legacy gift to the FFBC scholarship program came from **Cliff Paulsen** who passed away last year, to the tune of over **\$67,000!** Contact Jonathan Wilson for details about legacy giving.

How Many Slaves Work For You?

by Wade Petersen
(substituting for Bruce Carr)

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, September 4, 2020, was Ambassador (retired) Luis C. deBaca. He was introduced by his “big sister” Susanna deBaca, a previous speaker for FFBC. DeBaca is now what he calls an “issue ambassador” who is devoted to social justice and who is traveling all over the world to address slavery and human trafficking (which is not just limited to “sex” trafficking anymore).

The sobering topic of Ambassador deBaca’s presentation centered on the problem of 45.8 million people who are affected by human trafficking, not only around the world, but also in our own country. He discussed how many Iowans have grown up with the mistaken belief that “slavery” had been taken care of with the Civil War. He reminded all of us that, even in Iowa, men working in a turkey operation prompted the largest civil verdict in the United States about enslavement, resulting in \$240 million in damages. This example emphasizes how even something that happened “in plain sight” can go unnoticed by the average citizen. DeBaca’s expertise and involvement in this issue, along with many thought-provoking facts and statistics in his PowerPoint slides, immediately made an impact on all who listened.

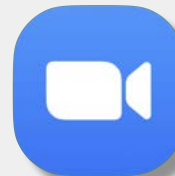
Ambassador deBaca challenged his listeners with the question, “How can we take our own journey to freedom?” In what ways can we all be advocates for change? Citing the 13th Amendment and the Matthew Shepard Act of 2009, deBaca noted that the issue goes beyond just young girls in sex trafficking rings with routes that stop in Iowa. It might focus on sex for survival for gay and transgender boys. Migrant workers are also common victims of trafficking. “Victims...if they only had a chance, an ability to make a run for it...need people to walk with them on that journey to freedom.”

Luis deBaca leveled a shocking question at the FFBC attendees, “How many slaves work for you?” He gave several examples of how greater self-examination may highlight how passively guilty that most of us are when focusing on the issue of trafficking: looking at the source of our shirts (cotton) and the use of palm oil in many common household products. He provided a great website for educating ourselves at slaveryfootprint.org. DeBaca also educated the group about the Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking (NAHT). What can each of us do to work on this issue?

If you click on the Speakers tab at our website, <ffbc-iowa.org>, you can listen to a complete audio recording of Luis deBaca’s remarks, and of the Q&A which followed.



Susanna deBaca introduced her “little brother” and gave him a big thumbs up for this presentation!



Ambassador (ret.) Luis C. de Baca coordinated U.S. government activities in the global fight against contemporary forms of slavery as head of the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons during the Obama Administration. Previously, in the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, he was one of the United States' most decorated federal prosecutors, investigating and prosecuting dozens of human trafficking cases involving over six hundred victims. He is currently Senior Fellow in Modern Slavery at Yale University's Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition. Ambassador C. de Baca is a proud Central Iowa Latino, having grown up on a cattle operation in Huxley where he was active in 4-H, theatre, and sports before attending Iowa State University and the Michigan Law School.



Covid-19 Reflections

By Jordan Duesenberg

I can't believe it's September. I can't believe that we've been living with COVID-19 for seven months or so. I also can't believe that the election is coming up in a couple of months and I'm trying to remain as optimistic as possible regarding that. Thank Cher that Chris Evans (yes, Captain America) accidentally posted a picture of his penis on social media over the weekend to give us a fighting chance of making it through this year.

Lately I've been trying to think about how I'm going to remember this year or what I'll take away from all of this. For me the biggest realization is how much I've depended on external factors and forces for just about everything and how little that was helping me. I turned 30 at the beginning of the year and had a schedule of events to cross off the list. Friday nights out on the town, the joint Pet Shop Boys & New Order concert in Minneapolis, Gaycation in Berlin in the fall, clubbing in Chicago spread out here and there, a gay underground dance music festival in the woods of Pennsylvania, and lastly and most importantly, a sea of endless brunches throughout the weekends. I deserved it damnit! I had somehow survived my tumultuous (but fun) twenties, and now it was time to celebrate a new decade and my supposed maturity and stability.

I thought not having the ability to do any of these things would be just about the worst thing imaginable and what I've discovered over these last couple of months is just how distracting all of that has been. I mean, don't get me wrong, I would love to do everything listed above and can't wait to again, but without the option to do really anything or to go anywhere, I have found myself diving deeper into the things I ultimately value and never seemed to have the time to catch-up on. I've spent more time reading, writing, practicing yoga, being outside, and DJing and creating music, than I ever have before. Naturally this has made me a happier individual all around. What I've especially noticed (and have written about countless times) is how distracting and draining things like the media and especially social media has become. It's so easy to get sucked up into the escapism that mindlessly scrolling through Facebook, Instagram, or Tik Tok provides (trust me I am a repeat offender). I've also recognized, as we've all either grown more comfortable with COVID or just care less, is how exhausting making plans have become again. How quickly FOMO (the fear of missing out) has become JOMO (the joy of missing out), something I never thought I'd actually mean. What I ultimately hope I think about when I think back on this time is that I grew as a person and hopefully I learned to live with less going forward. Also, I'm really, really hoping that Trump doesn't get a second term and that Chris Evans 'accidentally' leaks full nudes.



COMING
SOON

We will be transitioning soon to a new data-based system for meeting reminders, RSVPs, and on-line payment options for dues. This should make these activities much more convenient and efficient, and much less labor intensive. There is some cost associated with setting it up and operating the new systems. **Those costs are being underwritten by FFBC members Brad Holland, Joe Raetz, and Ascendant Wealth Management Group, a private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC.**

Thank
You!

October Virtual Meeting

There will be a virtual meeting using ZOOM in October. The announcement with the Zoom login information will be circulated on-line.

Make sure we have your current email address so you don't miss out on future announcements. You can contact David Cotton (Davidcotton@me.com) for assistance figuring out how to participate if you need that personal assistance.



zoom

Greater Grant Transparency

by Supervisor Matt McCoy, Polk County, 5th District

On the campaign trail for Polk County Supervisor, I promised more transparency in grant allocation. I also made it a priority to support non-profits in the community that have been passed over in previous years. Please note that grant funds are not derived from levied taxes, but rather lease proceeds from Prairie Meadows Racetrack & Casino. Polk County Supervisors distribute two types of grants—Community Betterment Grants (usually \$500-\$10,000) & Community Development Grants (more limited for large-scale projects and are usually \$10,000-\$250,000).



I'm proud of the grants I have supported these past two years, from supporting causes like Iowa Safe Schools, JOPPA, and even the First Friday Breakfast Club. Some non-profits have been hit especially hard during this pandemic, and I'm proud to support organizations like the Food Bank of Iowa with a \$200,000 grant so they may install a dehumidification unit to prevent food spoilage, and a \$50,000 grant to replace the entire roof on the Mickle Center. Below is a list of all 2020 Community Betterment Grants & 2019/2020 Community Development grants that I have supported. Grant funding has been more limited due to decreased funds because of COVID-19, and no more grants will be distributed until 2021. If you want more information on any particular grant or how funds may be used, do not hesitate to reach out. You may email me directly at matt.mccoy@polkcountyiowa.gov or my Executive Assistant Taylor Van De Krol at taylor.vandekrol@polkcountyiowa.gov.

2019/2020 Community Development Grants

Drake University - \$250,000.00
Hoyt Sherman Place Foundation - \$200,000.00
Iowa Asian Alliance Foundation - \$100,000.00
Boys & Girls Club of Central Iowa - \$200,000.00
Friends of Des Moines Parks (Witmer Park) - \$150,000.00
Food Bank of Iowa - \$200,000.00
Blank Park Zoo Foundation - \$200,000.00
Friends of Des Moines Parks (Woodland Cemetery) - \$150,000.00
The Riders Club - \$86,467.00
Childserve Foundation - \$200,000.00
Iowa Health Foundation fiscal agent for Blank Children's Hospital - \$50,000.00
Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Iowa - \$50,000.00
Neighborhood Investment Corporation - \$50,000.00
Fort Des Moines Museum and Education Center - \$10,000.00

2020 Community Betterment Grants

First Friday Breakfast Club, Inc. - \$3,000.00
Best Buddies Iowa - \$2,000.00
Des Moines East & South Chamber of Commerce - \$2,500.00
Food Bank of Iowa - \$2,000.00
NAMI Greater Des Moines - \$2,000.00
Bhutanese Community in Iowa - \$1,000.00
By Degrees Foundation - \$5,000.00
Children & Families of Iowa - \$2,500.00
City Sounds: The Des Moines Public Piano Project - \$2,500.00
Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus - \$5,000.00
Des Moines Historical Society - \$1,500.00
Des Moines Metro Opera, Inc. - \$5,000.00
Des Moines Public Library Foundation - \$2,500.00
Des Moines Public Schools Foundation - \$5,000.00
Des Moines Vocal Arts Ensemble - \$2,500.00
Des Moines West Side Chamber of Commerce - \$1,000.00
Drake Neighborhood Association - \$2,500.00
Iowa Safe Schools - \$5,000.00

October Speaker



Iowa Auditor of State Rob Sand



You won't want to miss and, since the meeting is virtual, there's no reason why you should not be able to participate.

You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend virtually -- simply share the participation instructions!

JOPPA - \$7,000.00
Mentor Iowa - \$1,000.00
Mid-Iowa Council, Boy Scouts of America - \$10,000.00
Mondamin Presidential Neighborhood Association - \$750.00
Neighborhood Finance Corp. - \$700.00
Salisbury House Foundation - \$10,000.00
Southwestern Hills Neighborhood Association - \$1,500.00
Waterbury Neighborhood Foundation - \$1,000.00
Watrous Heights Neighborhood Foundation - \$1,000.00
Young Children-Priority One, d/b/a Nutrition 4 Young Children - \$5,000.00
Young Women's Resource Center - \$3,000.00
Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center - \$2,500.00
Iowa Center for Children's Justice - \$1,000.00
John R. Grubb Community YMCA - \$5,000.00
New Frontier Action Fund, Inc. - \$5,000.00
Please Pass the Love - \$1,000.00
Rebuilding Together Greater Des Moines - \$4,000.00
The Bridge A Vision For Shared Downtown Ministry (Connection Cafe) - \$1,000.00

New Logo for First Friday Breakfast Club

by Jonathan Wilson

You will have perhaps noticed a new FFBC logo that appears in this issue of the newsletter and on the FFBC website. The FFBC Board of Directors decided to update our logo. The Board selected rainbow hearts configured to form a four-leafed clover. The four-leafed clover was a part of the prior logo.

You might be interested to know about the use of a four-leafed clover. We have all heard some of our detractors claim that homosexuality is not normal. Making that claim represents a linguistic slight-of-hand not recognized by many hearers, and it works to manipulate public opinion.

Here's the truth. Normal is whatever naturally occurs (in whatever context). Normative means that which is true of the majority (in whatever context). In the context of clover, four-leafed clovers are perfectly "normal" -- they occur naturally. But four-leafed clovers are not normative -- four are not the number of leaves on the majority of clover. Big difference.

In the context of sexual orientation, homosexuality is perfectly normal -- it occurs naturally among some number of human beings -- and it matters not whether it is due to nature or nurture. Homosexuality is not, however, normative. It is not what exists among the majority of human beings.

Interestingly, virtually every study or survey that tries to determine the percentage of sexual orientations to be found among humans starts by defining who for the purposes of the study are considered "gay." Each study defines it differently. Some, for example, define "homosexual" as any person who has had consensual, intimate relations with an adult of the same sex *ever*. Other definitions draw the line with any person who has had consensual, intimate relations with an adult of the same sex *within the last year*. See how that works? Change the definition, and the conclusion changes. If the definition of homosexual were limited only to those who have engaged in consensual, intimate relations with an adult of the same sex *within the hour immediately before being interviewed for the study*, there would be almost no homosexuals, period, according to that study.

Truth be known, if you define homosexual as a person who is incapable of intimate sexual relations with someone of the opposite sex, and you define heterosexual as a person who is incapable of intimate sexual relations with someone of the same sex, about 4% of the population would be homosexual and -- get this -- about 4% of the population would be heterosexual. The remaining 92% of us would fall on a continuum between homosexual and heterosexual. Yes, bisexuality is what is both normal (naturally occurring) and normative (true of the majority) when it comes to sexual orientation.

Andrew Gillum, the former mayor of Tallahassee and unsuccessful candidate for governor of Florida (he lost by around 1% of the vote), recently came out as bisexual. He's both normal and normative.

If you're gay, may you see yourself as being as perfectly normal as a four-leafed clover. You're not normative. So what?! And, remember the popular attitude toward four-leafed clovers? We're lucky to find one. And you -- you're perfectly normal, of great worth, someone to be prized, and someone who has nothing to be ashamed of or to be apologetic about.



“My cousin is gay. In school while other kids were dissecting frogs, he was opening flies.”

(Rodney Dangerfield)



The Invisible Man (2020)

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage

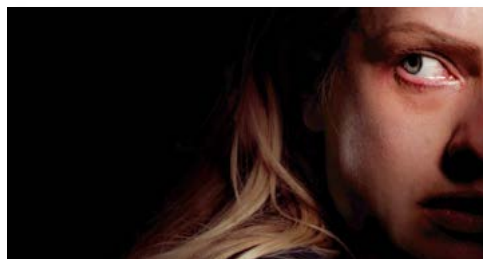
The challenge of remaking a classic film—in this case, a Universal Monsters classic film—is how to make it feel fresh and exciting while also playing with audience expectations enough to keep them guessing. Leigh Whannell, director of horror films such as *Saw* and *Insidious*, keeps some elements of science fiction in his version of *The Invisible Man*, but wisely chooses to move the narrative's spotlight to the real-life horrors of domestic abuse and gaslighting, resulting in a sleek, modern and genuinely unnerving adaptation of the 1930's original.

Elizabeth Moss, familiar to most from her work in *Mad Men* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, is no stranger to portraying beleaguered women—the way she simultaneously captures emotional fragility and tough-as-nails grit is truly a pleasure to watch. Moss plays Cecilia Kass, a woman trapped in an abusive relationship with genius optical engineer Adrian Griffin. Whannell trusts the audience to infer the nature of Cecilia and Adrian's relationship through clues in the opening sequence, which sees Cecilia stealthily slip out of bed, cautiously disable an alarming amount of security cameras, and run for her life when she accidentally activates a car alarm, scaling a retaining wall and sprinting through a forest to escape with her sister. It's fully a prison escape, and it's a brilliant example of "show, don't tell" writing so that the audience understands without explicit statement that Cecilia is a victim on the run from her abuser. Following her escape, Cecilia receives news from Adrian's estranged (but creepy) lawyer brother Tom that Adrian has committed suicide and has left her his house and five million dollars. If it sounds too good to be true, it is—a very much alive Adrian begins to stalk, abuse, and torment Cecilia and her friends while wearing a technologically-advanced suit covered in tiny cameras that renders him invisible. Props to Whannell for devising a disturbing-looking suit when it's finally revealed—think a Lovecraftian entity mashed up with a Terminator, and it's used to incredible effect visually when it begins to malfunction.

Most may be familiar with the origins of such famous movie monsters like Dracula or the Wolfman, but the Invisible Man's roots in literature are a little less rooted in pop-culture memory. H.G. Well's original story focuses on the Griffin character most, chronicling an already unstable scientist's descent into insanity after consuming a potion that makes him permanently invisible. The modern touches Whannell adds to his version of *The Invisible Man* make it a more present-day and socially relevant thriller, touching on the psychological trauma of an abuser manipulating the perceptions of those around their victim to isolate them from their social circle. Adrian's menace goes beyond lurking in the background—he also uses things like botching job interviews and nasty emails to beloved friends to wage psychological warfare on Cecilia. Yet for all the hell he puts her through, the steely determination Moss gives her character is inspiring, and the ending twist is both shocking and immensely rewarding.

As tense as this movie can be, what makes it truly chilling is the score by Benjamin Wallfisch. When the titular invisible man reveals his presence, a cacophony of industrial sonics and glitchy roars fills the soundtrack, evoking an unhinged technological terror. But my favorite musical jump-scare tactic Wallfisch uses is a combination of violin stings and synth bass moving at a slowly increasing tempo, keeping time with invisible footsteps running straight for poor Cecilia. It's a subtle homage to Bernard Herrmann's 1960 *Psycho* score that really amps up the fright factor.

If you need something to put you in the mood for Halloween while also offering chilling performances and smart storytelling, look no further than 2020's *The Invisible Man*.



Board of Directors:

David Cotton	(571) 480-1301
Ryan Crane	(515) 414-9860
Ken Hanson	(515) 783-3597
Brad Holland	(515) 707-3494
Byron Huff	(515) 371-6117
Scott Kuknyo	(515) 284-0880
Gary Moore	(515) 988-8490
Joe Raetz	(515) 229-1229
Randy Swarts	(641) 751-5060
David Wilfahrt	(415) 815-8537
Phil Williams	(515) 418-1937
Jonathan Wilson	(515) 288-2500

Officers:

Jonathan Wilson
President

Byron Huff
Vice President

Joe Raetz
Secretary

David Wilfahrt
Treasurer



Newsletter:



Wade Petersen
Production Editor

Webmaster:

Nicholas Williams



Publication Info:



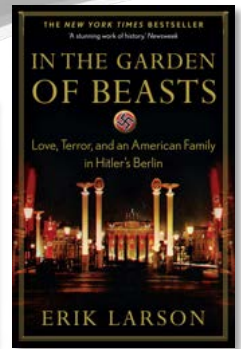
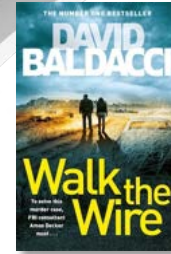
FFBC
Board of Directors

©2020

First Friday
Breakfast Club, Inc.

Murder, Mayhem, and Suicide: Both Real and Imagined

Two Book Reviews by Steve Person



In The Garden of Beasts, Erik Larson chronicles the early years of Hitler's rise to power in Germany. FDR, newly inaugurated as President on March 4, 1933, looked to appoint an ambassador to the Weimar Republic. He approached a number of highly qualified men for the job, but each one declined for understandable reasons ranging from family concerns to health problems. Eventually, Roosevelt appointed William E. Dodd, a history professor at the University of Chicago. An avid supporter of FDR, Dodd gained notoriety with his biography of Woodrow Wilson. Many in the State Department considered Dodd the wrong man for the job, but history proved those doubters to be wrong. A man of small stature and quiet dignity, Dodd observed firsthand the unimaginable acts of murder, terror, and prejudice that Hitler and his henchmen perpetrated upon the people of Germany, especially the Jews. Dodd assumed his post in mid-July, 1933. His daughter, Martha, accompanied him to Germany along with Mrs. Dodd and William Dodd, Jr. Daughter Martha, young and pretty, made a much different impression in Germany than that of her staid and cautious father. She was, to put it politely, rather promiscuous. While she initially approved of the new Germany, she came to realize what her father knew all along—that Hitler kept preparing for war while pledging peace. Dodd finally was confirmed in his job by the ailing president, von Hindenburg. The family eventually settled in a large house owned by a Jew across from the Tiergarten, a park in the middle of Berlin akin to Central Park in New York. The Tiergarten at one time acted as a royal hunting ground but later became a popular respite for Berliners who wanted to escape the noise of the city. After von Hindenburg's death, Hitler assumed the presidency, and his iron grip promised to bring Germany back to par with other European powers. Dodd, in his reports back to the State Department and FDR, warned of the upheaval to come, but his warnings were ignored. The State Department was more interested in having Germany pay its debts to American banks than in the supposed oppression of Jews in Germany. The title of the book has a double meaning—a park once known for its wild beasts and the new and more menacing ones in Hitler's Germany.

David Baldacci's latest thriller, *Walk the Wire*, takes place in the supposedly unassuming town of London, North Dakota. The town is booming because of the glut of oil in the grounds surrounding it, oil that is extracted through the fracking process. Amos Decker is the main character and one of Baldacci's most popular protagonists. It is a sure bet that whenever Decker is posted by the FBI to investigate an unusual murder, mayhem will follow. Alex Jamison, his female FBI partner, complements the rougher aspects of Decker's personality. Predictably, many murders and a suicide or two complicate the work of Decker and Jamison, and also predictably, an unknowing world is about to be destroyed unless these two agents prevent it. Even though the reader knows that the two agents will eventually succeed, it is Baldacci's gift as a writer to keep the suspense at an intense level. It is another enjoyable book by a superb author.

Both books will keep a reader fascinated for similar yet opposite reasons—fact and fiction.