



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

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CALENDAR

▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, October 7 @ Hoyt Sherman Place.

The speaker will be Ben Stone, Executive Director of the Iowa Civil Liberties Union.

▼ R.S.V.P. by Monday, October 3 to <Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com> or 288-2500 by phone.

*First Friday
News & Views*

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Americanized Apartheid

By Jonathan Wilson

People of color are all around the margins of our society, marginalized. It's a testimony to the irrefutable fact of the continuing racism, and residue of historic racism, that afflict us. Nothing has demonstrated this more graphically than the images coming out of the gulf coast disaster. Watching video footage I saw one lone, distraught white woman among the refugees with a look on her face that said, "What am I doing here with all these black people?"



JONATHAN WILSON

Refugees are predominantly people of color because many whites had long ago moved to higher ground in the burbs, and those remaining in the central cities had their own transportation to heed the evacuation call. It's a partial reason, but not even a partial excuse. Those demographic shifts and economic advantages, while explaining why people of color predominate among the refugees, in the bigger picture, also damn our society for letting this happen. The slow relief response adds insult to the injury. The rhetoric among Bush and other white politicians praising one another for their as-yet-unmaterialized-relief-efforts has a stench to it that's matched only by the decaying bodies in the streets of New Orleans.

Bush, I think genuinely, wonders why anyone might loot, steal a gun, and take a pot shot at someone, anyone. It should be no mystery to the thoughtful even if it's a mystery to him. He's been the one to adopt a gunslinger mentality toward "them", whoever he chooses to define as "them." Al Qaeda attacked us using predominantly nationals from undemocratic Saudi Arabia, and Bush took up the sword against . . . Iraq!! For him and his pre-Old Testament "Christian" supporters, retaliatory violence needn't be particularly focused, proportional, or even necessary. Same holds true, I suspect, for the snipers in New Orleans. They're just following the Bush doctrine.

The disproportionate burden on people of color, and even the gratuitous violence, are, sadly, the outgrowth of Americanized apartheid. And that's where the rest of us come in. Those of us well practiced in denial may, genuinely, claim we've done nothing to "those people." The introspective, who have been paying attention, know we've done plenty. Our hands are blood stained whether we admit it or not.

For decades we collectively under-funded predominantly-black schools until the Supreme Court put a purported stop to it in Brown v. Board of Education, saying separate is inher-

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ently unequal. Disadvantaged parents and grandparents of today are residue of that historic racism. That brought busing and desegregation. That brought complaints from people in Iowa and elsewhere objecting to busing despite the fact that most of them grew up in rural areas and always rode a bus to



“I’ve seen firsthand the walled communities in South Africa that inter-racial fear has engendered. I’ve also seen the walled community of Glen Oaks. It’s right there close to the end of I-235.”



school or went to school with kids who did. Brown only banned racially identifiable schools “within a school district,” so that led to federal funding of divided highways like I-235 that let the white affluent folks live in the burbs and commute in

safety and comfort, and send their kids to predominantly white schools. It led the state to adopt open enrollment that allowed affluent whites in the central city with their own transportation to participate in the re-segregation without even leaving home. Then we under-funded schools in the central cities that face the greatest challenges, leaving the predominantly people of color in the urban centers to bear the brunt of such public policy prescriptions for failure. Head Start, a *proven*, successful program, has never been fully funded. And the disadvantaged parents and grandparents of tomorrow are the residue of our current racism.

Beneficiaries of the way things are bear some responsibility for the oppression that the status quo spawns. Nobel Peace Prize winner, Elie Wiesel, said it best, “In the cause of human oppression, there is no neutral ground.” You’re either on the side of the oppressed or God Almighty assigns you to the side of the oppressor. Have you been made aware of your assignment yet? If awareness of the plight of others won’t do it for you, perhaps fear will. Shouldn’t we who are advantaged be implicitly afraid for our grandchildren that people of color, when they are in the majority, may treat our progeny as we have treated them and their ancestors? I’ve seen firsthand the walled communities in South Africa that inter-racial fear has engendered. I’ve also seen the walled community of Glen Oaks. It’s right there close to the end of I-235.



—Jonathan Wilson

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP to Jonathan no later than Monday, October 3, for the October 7 meeting at Hoyt Sherman Place. Contact him at Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com or by phone at 288-2500.



Thank you to John Schmacker for introducing our September speaker, Michelle Soria.



Remember that you can contribute through United Way to the FFBC. Simply put on your donation card to send the contribution to the First Friday Breakfast Club.



“Thanks to Jonathan Wilson for the opportunity to be involved with the FFBC newsletter over these past eleven months. I will be returning to work soon and anticipate this will limit the free time I have available for other interests.”

—Bruce McCabe

SYNECTICS EXERCISE IS FOCUS OF SEPTEMBER MEETING

By Bruce McCabe



Michelle Soria, Executive Director of the Iowa Council for International Understanding, conducted an interactive exercise in Synectics at the last FFBC meeting. Synectics is an approach to creative thinking that depends on understanding together things that are apparently different.

She began her presentation by holding up an attractive beaded handbag (which prompted appreciative noises from several in the audience), a single shoe, a piece of wood, and several other seemingly unrelated items. She asked everyone to contemplate each of the items and later asked for personal interpretations and impressions.

Michelle spoke about the need to recognize that a healthy multicultural society has to meet the challenge of ac-

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commodating diversity. During the Q&A period, responding to a question about whether there was a racist aspect to some of the media coverage of the recent Gulf Coast hurricane damage, she agreed that was probably true but also noted that racism can also be fought by using the same media. She emphasized that one-on-one communication is still one of the most effective tools, explaining that getting to know someone who is different from ourselves is the best method to dispel prejudice and promote acceptance.

—Bruce McCabe



Properly Focused Good Intentions

By Paul Sadler

I have been a Planner for the Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management agency for the past 15 years. I have also volunteered for the American Red Cross for 15 years. People who want to donate money, do not need to be afraid that their dollars will be wasted if they donate through the American Red Cross. [FFBC member John Schmacker is the local in-house accountant for the Red Cross]. Gifts for “Katrina Relief” should be so designated, otherwise the donation could be used for administrative costs or other needs. Gifts can also be made confidently to the “Bush - Clinton Katrina Fund” at www.bushclintonkatrinafund.org. The www.fema.gov website has links to several other responsible places to donate money.



American Red Cross

Together, we can save a life

As someone who has worked in disaster relief/recovery, I’m concerned that well-meaning people will go down to the gulf coast and complicate the ongoing response and possibly become victims themselves. I urge people who want to donate their time and talents, to affiliate with a state or federal agency or be affiliated with a bona fide volunteer group like the American Red Cross or Salvation Army or with a faith based organization. These groups are conducting appropriate training for volunteers.

Volunteers really need to work under an established support organization or their efforts could be wasted or counter-

productive.

If people feel helpless and want to do something, the preferable means is to donate money. Money is what all volunteer organizations need most right now. With money they can obtain the specific resources they need to support their volunteers on the ground, and do the most good for the people in need.

—Paul Sadler

~ Meet Your FFBC Board Members ~

I was born in Des Moines, and for most of my life have lived here. My Life-Partner, Jim Sellards, and I make our home in Beaverville. However, to pursue higher education I have also lived in Minneapolis and Rochester, Minnesota, and in Boston, Massachusetts.

My parents and my brother are all deceased, but I have three stepchildren and four grandchildren.

Following graduation from Des Moines Technical High School, I attended DMACC, Grand View College, and the University of Minnesota in the Theater Arts Department. In 1989 I was awarded the Bachelor of Arts degree from Drake University.



Terry Harris

With regard to my work-experience: I have served as teacher at Community Center for Minority and At-risk Children in Minneapolis, where I was a psychiatric nurse and in-patient facilitator. I also served as Assistant Director for the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Residential Center. Presently I work in the Psychiatric Unit at Iowa Lutheran Hospital.

Theater has always been my first love and I have worked as a make-up artist, both in theater and TV. I have also appeared on-stage in various venues, including performing in a rock musical off-Broadway in New York City as well as in Boston and Toronto. I also enjoy performing with The Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus, of which I am a charter member.

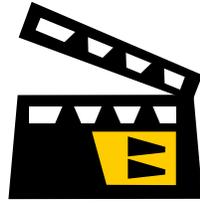
Jim and I attend Westminster Presbyterian Church where currently I am serving as Deacon.

—Terry Harris



Search for Sexual Intimacy – Two Views

By Gary Kaufman



Almost every adult human, be they straight, gay, or bisexual, seeks sexual intimacy with a partner.

Two comedies that take two different paths toward examining that intimacy are **The 40-Year-Old Virgin** and **Must Love Dogs**.

The **40-Year-Old Virgin** opens depicting, for the first time that I can recall, a common adult male malady – waking up with a rock-hard erection, walking to the bathroom, and the difficulty in urinating while in that state. The movie

“I generally prefer emotional endings over cute – but both movies do a good job of illustrating foibles, trials, and tribulations of human beings attempting to attain sexual intimacy with that special someone.”

uses it as an illustration of the sexual frustration of Andy (Steve Carell), who at 40-years old is still a virgin. As he later describes it, when he was young, he tried, but it didn't happen. When he got older, he got more nervous about it, and it still didn't happen. Then, thinking he shouldn't even try, it really didn't happen. After this status is inadvertently revealed at a poker party with his work buddies, it gets out to every employee at Smart Tech, where Andy is the stock person. After enduring the initial ridicule, his work buddies take it upon themselves to give him advice on how to change this status. Consid-

the advice is and the angst of our hero as he pursues sexual intimacy. It can be comic to watch someone else's disastrous results. Rather than starting with someone Andy cares about, he is urged to go out with really drunk women in order to gain experience. Supposedly, you wouldn't want to be pitiful with someone you care about. Humor then springs from incidents that are both gross and funny. He tries Date-A-Palooza, where you experience 20 dates over the noon hour. A buddy hires him a transvestite hooker (the buddy couldn't tell it was a transvestite). Another gives him an enormous box of porno including the always popular “Harry Twater”. He experiences a body wax to make him look sexier. And he is sexually harassed from his female boss (Jane Lynch) who is willing to be his “fuck buddy.”

Must Love Dogs features a heroine (Diane Lane) who has been divorced for 8 months and whose large family shows up to do an intervention to find “a friend for Sarah.” This being family members, the advice is a little more caring and respectful. The film features other members who are also striving for sexual intimacy: Charlie (John Cusack) a recently divorced man who spends his time hand-building wooden racing sculls; Sarah's father (Christopher Plummer) who is trying to replace the emptiness of losing his wife of 45 years by tap dancing through a succession of relationships with ladies; and Dolly (Stockard Channing) who is one of those ladies of dad's who has the smart fashion sense of wearing leather pants while meeting the father's children in her home. The main method of meeting others is the Internet, which “works for you 24-hours a day, bless it's sweet Pentium chip,” as Dolly says. You see the succession of disastrous first dates – a man who is a crier; a man who really had hoped Sarah had been closer to 18 years old; a man who Sarah beats in arm wrestling and says, “You'd look really good in handcuffs.” Sarah's search narrows to two men,

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Charlie and this hunk (Dermot Mulroney) with an adorable kid who Sarah meets while working at a day care center.

Both movies have a lot of similarity. Both have their condom moments. And both have their happy conclusions. Our virgin hero loses his virginity (presumably eliminating the possibility of a sequel). Our heroine goes for the emotional ending where she does, indeed, seem to end up with “Mr. Right.” I generally prefer emotional endings over cute – but both movies do a good job of illustrating foibles, trials, and tribulations of human beings attempting to attain sexual intimacy with that special someone. One is lower-brow; the other is higher-brow. As in life, you decide which is right for you.

—Gary Kaufman

I Have No Doubt

By Jay Cole Simser

I have no doubt that it is global warming that is contributing to the strength of recent hurricanes.

I have no doubt that there is global warming.

I have no doubt that our wasteful way of living has contributed to the acceleration of the situation.

I have no doubt that ignoring the plight of the poorest of those in our world to pander to the business of the few is evil.

I have no doubt that the rape of our lands will eventually destroy the very world in which we live.

I have no doubt that our world can be a good place to live – for the rich, the few.

I have no doubt that the religions claiming the name of

Jesus have been hijacked by self-righteous prigs who DO NOT understand what he meant when he said, “I have come that they might have life more abundantly.”

I have no doubt that there is no place to move. Our fragile planet is all we have.

I have no doubt that if humankind wants to we can come together and use our collective knowledge to solve the problems we have caused.

When we take self-interest out of our reasoning

And put in sincere compassion and self sacrifice into the mix.

When we look to the interest of all humankind and not just a few

And tolerate no exploitation of anyone ANYWHERE!

When we sit down together with our fellows and realize that everyone has the right to a good life, and then work toward solutions to our problems, not worrying about religious beliefs and how to please God-in-the sky, and worry instead about how to bring the best life for everyone within the limited resources that we have.

I have no doubt that we can become the solution instead of the problem.

—Jay Cole Simser



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FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views*

Des Moines, Iowa

OCTOBER 2005

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From the Editor

Hello, FFBC! I find myself in a position that I thought I would never be in again—namely, as editor of this newsletter. When I resigned from the position in February 2004, I put all that behind me and moved on. I was extremely busy, anyhow, working at three jobs and dealing with lots of stress. It was an opportunity to leave one of the things that kept me on edge.

When Jonathan called me in mid-August and said that Bruce McCabe had resigned the editorship because of time constraints with his new job, I understood Bruce's decision.

I left First Lady Christie Vilsack's Office at the end of June and began concentrating more of my time on my tour guiding work at the Capitol. In addition to wanting to slow down a bit, I also wanted to concentrate more time on my writing. When Jonathan called and asked me to resume as editor in place of Bruce, I decided to do so because of the opportunity to discipline myself to sit down and write again.

Writing has always been important to me—when I was in high school, college, graduate school, and in my work as an English teacher and later in the First Lady's Office. It is an outlet that soothes the soul and, with luck, educates others. I began my writing "career" with poetry, and not very good poetry at that. I tried my hand at fiction, but I didn't do very well at that, either. When I finally discovered that critical writing and expository essays were more to my taste, I really began to enjoy what I was doing. Having one's work published gives a great deal of satisfaction but not much money. That's OK.

So from now until who-knows-when, I will have the task of putting together this column, editing other submitted pieces, and getting the FFBC newsletter out to all of you. I have to admit that I am rather leery of doing this all electronically, because when I was first editor, things were completed in an entirely different manner. Still, I will learn how to live with it.

I want especially to thank Jonathan for asking me to become editor again, David Teachout for doing the formatting of the newsletter, and Bruce McCabe for all of his hard work in putting the issues together for the past year. I know what a task it is! Bruce will still be doing the article on our monthly speakers, and I appreciate that greatly.

I look forward to serving all of you once again.

—Steve Person

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