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The Bob Lemon Challenge: The Bob and MaryLou Lemon Promise

by Jonathan Wilson

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CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, April 6 at Hoyt Sherman Place.

Our guest speaker will be Mike Gronstal, Democratic Leader of the Iowa Senate.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by Tuesday, April 3 to Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com or 288-2500 by phone.

I met attorney Bob Lemon, and his lovely wife MaryLou, several years ago when I was speaking at a gay skiing/conference event in Aspen, Colorado. We became friends. Delightful, energetic people with a gay son who is also a successful attorney in Washington, D.C. To call them gay-supportive would be an understatement. Their gay son wasn't even attending the conference.

We kept in touch over the years and through the death of MaryLou in 2002. He remains in good health and energetically involved in working to advance the cause of equality for all law-abiding citizens regardless of gender orientation. Not surprisingly for anyone who knows me, he became aware of the First Friday Breakfast Club and has been a long-time paid subscriber to the newsletter. Last year he gave gift subscriptions to a dozen friends and relatives around the country.

In addition, this year Bob Lemon has purchased *two* FFBC memberships even though he's not eligible to join. The money is to be used to pay for up to two first-time attendees at each of our meetings, people who are eligible for FFBC membership. The challenge is simple and straight-forward. It's ours to accept. Among us we need to reach out to those who are still struggling with coming out and want a safe place to see how it feels, or to those who are already out and would be strengthened by the opportunity for friendship and networking that FFBC offers. If they attend once, they may become active. That, in turn, will help others as well as themselves.

That's the challenge. Now the Promise.

Bob and MaryLou Lemon stand as a metaphor for the absolute promise that there will come a day in America when gender orientation is a non-issue in the law and society. It will be an issue only in the selection of a life-mate, as it should be, and nobody else's business. Why the foreseeable change at this point in human history?! That's equally simple and straight-forward.

The Bible quotes Jesus as saying, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." *John 15:13* Wrong, dead wrong. That may have represented the greatest love that Jesus knew for himself, but Jesus was never a father as far as we know. The love of a father is far greater. I can think of any number of causes and friends I'd be willing to die for. I cannot think of anything, bar none, for which I would willingly sacrifice the life of one of my

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precious children. Nothing.

If you don't believe me, turn again to the Bible. *Genesis* 22. It is there recounted that when God wanted Abraham to prove he loved God more than all else, God didn't ask Abraham to lay down his own life for God. God commanded that Abraham build an altar and sacrifice the life of his only son Isaac. The story had a happy ending. When it became apparent that the depth of Abraham's love of God was sufficient even for that ultimate sacrifice, God produced a nearby lamb, gave the okay for a substitute sacrifice, and Isaac lived to tell about it.

The point is that there is a greater love than that of a friend for a friend. The greatest love for human beings is between parent and child. During many years on a public school board, I learned that good parents are passionately and irrationally protective of their children. And that is as it should be. Again and again, "Johnny didn't do it." "Oh, you have it on video?" "It wasn't Johnny's fault." All without skipping a beat.

The irresistible power of the Bob and MaryLou Lemon metaphor is demonstrated by the contrast between the struggle for racial equality and the gay and lesbian struggle for civil rights. When a person of color in the 60s experienced discrimination and called home to tell about it, whoever answered was likely a person of color also, familiar with such discrimination, and too often powerless to do much about it. When gay or lesbian children of God experience discrimination, and they call home, no matter who answers—mom, dad, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparent [and do watch out for *grandparents*]
—they are likely straight, a member of the majority, and decidedly *not* powerless. While persons of color have had to appeal to the majority based upon what is right in order to make advances, gays and lesbians have inseverable blood-ties to the majority. You do the math.

Bob Lemon has given us a wonderful challenge. Invite new guests to the FFBC for free. As parents of an unapologetically out gay son, Bob and MaryLou Lemon have made us an absolute promise. And E.T. has told us what to do about it, "Phone home!"

—Jonathan Wilson

Music and Lyrics

Starring Hugh Grant, Drew Barrymore, Kristen Johnston, Jason Antoon, Billy Griffith, Scott Porter, Toni Trucks, Haley Bennett



Directed by Marc D. Lawrence

1 Hr 46 Min

Music and Lyrics opens with the rock video of **Pop**, one of those boy bands of the 80's with two lead singers, Alex Fletcher (Hugh Grant) and Colin Thompson (Scott Porter), who had two totally different career trajectories since their song, "Pop Goes My Heart," was a mega hit in 1984. Colin broke off forming his own band with phenomenal success, and Alex went through a series of depressions, had one flop of a CD, and recently sank to a new career low, a gig on "Battle of the 80's Has-Beens," where the former rock stars actually slug it out boxing. "That Debbie Gibson, she can take a punch," Alex relates. But Alex has a new hope, Cora Corman (Haley Bennett), a Britney Spears-type songstress with wild sexual videos, who has always considered Alex as her favorite member of **Pop** and she asks him to come up with a song called "A Way Back Into Love" to launch her world tour which would be a duet for Alex and her to perform on her new album. He has one week to come up with the song. However, Alex is a melody writer and can't write lyrics. Enter Sophie Fisher (Drew Barrymore). She comes to care for Alex's houseplants and he discovers she has a knack for writing lyrics. Alex and Sophie team up and fall in love.

That is the plot, but the real joy of the film is the in-

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State Senator
Mike Gronstal
Serving Senate
District 50



Senator Mike Gronstal, from Council Bluffs, represents District 50 in the Iowa Senate. District 50 includes the communities of Council Bluffs and Carter Lake.

Senator Gronstal was elected Senate Majority Leader by his fellow Democratic Senators after spearheading their efforts to capture 30 seats in the Iowa Senate in 2006. In addition to serving as Majority Leader, Senator Gronstal also serves as chair of the Rules & Administration Committee.

Gronstal has been in the Senate since 1985 and was a member of the House from 1983-85. Senator Gronstal is a graduate of Council Bluffs St. Albert High School and Antioch College in Ohio. He also attended Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois.

As a legislative priority, Senator Gronstal has worked extensively on the issue of renewable fuels and making Iowa the nation's leader in this field. Under his leadership, Iowa passed the nation's strongest ethanol legislation in 2006, and Senator Gronstal continues the effort to bring more biotechnology jobs and businesses to our state.

Senator Gronstal has also been a leader in restoring funding to Iowa's community colleges and school districts. Moving Iowa to 25th in the nation in teacher pay and making community college affordable for all Iowa families will continue as priorities. Additionally, Gronstal has been recognized by his colleagues for his dedicated work and knowledge of complex issues in the insurance and utilities business.

Senator Gronstal and his wife, Connie, have two daughters. Kate is a civil engineer at Schemmer Associates in Council Bluffs; and Sara is currently working on her masters degree at Minnesota State University at Mankato.

To find out more about Senator Gronstal's committee

work and to see his voting record, please visit the official state legislature website at:

<http://www3.legis.state.ia.us/ga/member.do?id=142> ▼

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credibly witty dialog that has been written for the two principal characters. There are times that the banter between Grant and Barrymore rival those of Cary Grant and Katherine Hepburn in **Bringing Up Baby** and the classic screwball comedies of the 30s. The comedic delivery of Grant and Barrymore is a pleasure to witness, and for once we have a warm, romantic, lovely film.

There are enough plot twists to keep it interesting and, although it is a little formulaic, there is a reason those formulas work, and this is a comedy that works. It is one of those movies that just makes you feel better about life when you leave.

Two of the supporting cast members do outstanding work as well. Brad Garrett (**Everybody Loves Raymond**) as Chris Riley, Alex's manager, and Kristen Johnston (**3rd Rock From The Sun**), who plays Sophie's married sister. She has had the hots for Alex Fletcher for over 20 years. Enjoy!

—Gary Kaufman

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the April 6 meeting no later than Tuesday, April 3. Contact Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com or by phone at 288-2500. The April speaker will be Senator Mike Gronstal, Democratic Leader of the Iowa Senate.

▼ ▼ ▼
The March meeting was canceled because of inclement weather. Thanks to those on the board who called club members to let them know of the cancellation.

We've been warned! Gay Equality Needs to Get Out of the Religious Civil Wars!

by James Nimmo

We've been warned! Religious fundies are going to use the tactic of lobbying all 50 state legislatures to demand that Congress pass an anti-gay constitutional amendment outlawing same-gender marriage. (<http://okstonewall.org/forums/index.php?topic=1663.0>)

Ever notice that the history of homophobia has nearly always been rooted in religious dogma?

With the halting progress that gay equality has achieved in America, we've seen the spectacle of religious hypocrites advocating for strict opposite—gender marriage laws which they claim will strengthen the “natural, God-ordained” institution of marriage.

But these same loud, in-your-face, self-appointed advocates of piety are very quiet when you ask them about opposing divorce, the undoing of marriage. Nope, nary a negative word drops from their slaving lips.

As they proclaim marriage to be a religious rite, they forget, or disingenuously disguise that they ever knew, that this rite of marriage is only possible because of the issuance of a license by the state in which they are living. That is, the civil authority is what makes a religious marriage ceremony valid under state and federal law.

No one is compelled by law to have a religious prelate validate the state-issued marriage license. Any official prescribed by law can complete the marriage, and the opposite-gendered couple is as married as if they had the Pope himself doing the honors.

When legislators trumpet marriage as a religious bond that should not be tampered with between heteros, they are mixing the emotion-laden desires of religion with the neutral point-of-view that civil law

requires. They are violating the First Amendment of the Constitution. Congress is not to make any law honoring religion nor interfering with its practice.

What are we to make of the denominations that do honor the desire and need of same-gendered people to marry and receive the federal and state civil benefits given to those who have followed the procedures set out by state law? www.marriageequality.org/meusa/facts.shtml?religious-vs-civil

Why is the dogma of the United Church of Christ that performs same-gender blessings suppressed by the dogma of the Southern Baptist Convention?

Why is Reformed Judaism held hostage to its cousin, Hasidic Judaism?

“If you can't give us the word, give us the rights.”

Why is Roman Catholic dogma more authoritative than the Episcopal Church? (Interesting side note being that the Anglican Church of which the American branch is called Episcopal is only here as an historical relic of the need for Henry VIII to get a divorce.)

Why should American civil law be immersed in the hornet's nest of religious doctrinal disputes—the equivalent of civil war? Why does the “god” of the legislators and homophobes only seem to speak for the public record to them?

The word “marriage” is a loaded religious word that carries hundreds of years of tradition that doesn't include gay people.

“Civil union” is self-defining—no supernatural intrusion has weighed this phrase with oppression.

That's why I'm going to be agitating for laws to be passed that legalize civil unions, domestic partnerships, reciprocal benefits, whatever civil language is developed that recognizes the full citizenship of America's gay citizens who want all the rights and benefits received by straight citizens.

As Ms. Jo-Ann Adams of the Hawaii GLBT Caucus said recently in regard to Hawaii's tabling of a marriage rights

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From the Editor

The Sausage Makers

“To retain respect for sausages and laws, one must not watch them in the making,” said Otto von Bismarck. He was right.

In my latest attempt to bring home the bacon, I have become a legislative assistant to Senator Amanda Ragan in the Iowa Legislature. Seeing lawmaking up close has taught me what an antiquated and arcane process it is. I am amazed that ANYTHING ever gets accomplished, but that I will save for another time.

One of the interesting facets of the job, however, involves the top bananas of the law making process—the Presidential candidates. Since the Democrats took over the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the Governorship in the November election, many of the Presidential wannabes have made their way to the Iowa Capitol in search of support in our first-in-the-nation caucuses. So far, I have been privileged to see Connecticut Senator Chris Dodd, Illinois Senator Barack Obama, New York Senator Hillary Clinton, and Arizona Senator John McCain.

These were not large campaign events in some vast gymnasium or hall, but rather, intimate encounters in a Senate meeting room in the Capitol. The only people in attendance were the senators, their clerks, and the pages—no Press and no hoopla. Each of the four provided an articulate and impressive case why he or she should be President.

Even though I believe Senator Dodd doesn't have a ghost of a chance at this point, I did like his comments about making sure that the not-so-“Superstar” candidates be given an equal chance to be heard. I liked that, especially since my first choice candidate, Governor Vilsack, was early on forced out of the race by lack of funds. He is a grounded and pragmatic man who has compassion for others and integrity. He will be missed.

Senator Obama has an electric quality about him that draws people in. He is an articulate, dynamic, and intelligent man who seems to have the momentum at present. I enjoyed listening to his ideas and was impressed with his enthusiasm and genuine charismatic demeanor. Whether he is ready to be President, I'm not sure, but then, anything would be better than what we have now.

Senator Clinton is clearly the most intelligent and sure-footed of any of the candidates I have seen so far. She has a clear grasp of this nation's problems and a positive outlook for tackling them. Her grasp of the issues is as impressive as her rhetoric. She appears at ease with every individual she encounters, a technique she obviously honed during years as First Lady of Arkansas, and then the nation, and as a United States Senator.

I have not made up my mind which sausage maker I will support in the 2008 caucuses, but there is lots of time to decide. What is clear is that people want change—genuine change—and a way to extricate ourselves from the morass that has engulfed our nation's credibility and belief in itself since the election of 2000.

—Steve Person

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