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FIRST FRIDAY
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Going Both Ways

by Jonathan Wilson

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CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, October 5 at Hoyt Sherman Place.

Our guest speaker will be Judy Bradshaw, Chief of Police for the City of Des Moines.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by Tuesday, October 2 to Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com or 288-2500 by phone.

When I was a kid I occasionally shared the back seat of the car with my sister. We were terminally territorial; if you put a body part across the half way point, there was going to be trouble and, eventually, parental intervention. I confess that sometimes, for sheer entertainment, I was known to inch a foot closer and closer to the line of demarcation, sometimes getting the desired reaction and even parental attention before an actual incursion. If only I had known about the excuse that “I merely maintain a wide stance when seated.” That, of course, was the justification offered by Republican Idaho Senator Larry Craig when explaining why his foot managed to touch that of an undercover cop in an adjacent bathroom stall in a Minnesota airport, a fact that he admitted on a tape recording.

For starters, he’s the only person I’ve ever heard of who maintains such a wide stance that they can’t go to the bathroom within the confines of a public bathroom stall and avoid touching a user of an adjoining stall *in the adjoining stall*. Beyond that, his explanation seems physically impossible. If he were seated to use the toilet, he would presumably have his pants down, in which case he would be constrained from such a wide stance as would reach into the adjacent stall. If he had his pants up, he clearly could achieve the desired width of stance, but then he would forfeit the ability to use the toilet, which was the pretext for being in the bathroom in the first place. He can’t have it both ways. He was either caught with his pants down, or caught with his pants up. Either way, he was found *again* soliciting illicit sexual intimacy in a public place. When found this time it was by an undercover cop and not a willing participant.

That was in early June. It was not until early August that he pleaded guilty to a lesser crime arising out of the incident, purportedly without consulting with an attorney, purportedly without telling his wife or family, and purportedly without informing members of his staff or the Republican Senate leadership. He claimed the decision was poor judgment. He got that right; it was poor judgment, but it was by no means a snap judgment. He had lots of time to evaluate options carefully. He had plenty of time to consult, to ponder, to consider consequences, and to find alternatives. He even returned to the scene to get the name of a person he could have his lawyer contact about the incident. He could talk to an attorney in complete confidence no matter how embarrassing the circumstances. He would have us believe that he was not smart enough to do that. I think he’s smarter than he thinks the public is. After all that, he did what a guilty person would do when caught red handed, or with a hand under a bathroom stall partition. He pleaded guilty to the crime *and* the underlying factual allegations.

So I’m satisfied that he’s guilty as charged. But I actually don’t care about the offense itself. It’s generally not a crime to ask, and best to ask without offending — thus the tap dance in which he was engaged. The conduct is the product of a society that represses its gay citizens, conditions them to hate themselves, denies them open opportunities to satisfy their needs for intimacy consistent with their orientation, and drives them to aberrant behavior in public places. They are scarred. Larry Craig has been scarred. Well-adjusted gay men don’t try to hook up in public bathrooms. That’s where you find closeted *married* men looking for an anonymous outlet, some temporary relief from the lie they’re living. I feel sorry for Larry Craig. He was 27 before the American psychiatric profession decided that homosexuality isn’t a mental illness. At that time, same gender intimacy was a crime in every state. I know because he and I are the same age.

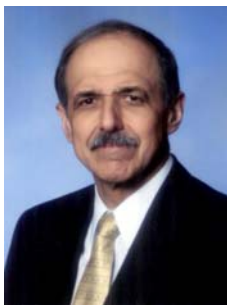
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What I do care about is his subsequent, unbelievable denials, and his prior hypocrisy. I've reviewed his record. Talk about a wide stance. Across the board he opposed same-gender marriage, opposed the right of gay people to serve in the military, opposed gay adoptions, opposed hate crimes legislation that includes sexual orientation, and opposed employment non-discrimination. His only defense against unqualified hypocrisy is the fact that he has never actually voted against soliciting gay sex in public bathrooms.

At this writing he is vacillating over whether or not to resign his Senate seat. First he said he wouldn't; then he said he would; and then he said maybe. Even in this dilemma he has been conflicted and wants to go both ways. You'd think he'd have figured out that going both ways inevitably gets you into trouble. Some people just don't learn. The rest of us have certainly learned that we cannot trust Larry Craig.



Our September speaker was Ivan T. Webber, a lawyer and local activist for Amnesty International.



Ivan T. Webber

Webber began with an energetic reading (in Latin!) of the passage from the Magna Carta which states that men ought not to be imprisoned or harassed for expressing their opinions, the first formal articulation (1215 CE) of this basic principle of human rights. He moved to the foundation in 1961 of Amnesty International, a defender of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948.

"AI's mission," he continued, "is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights. AI is independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest, or religion. It does not support or oppose any government or political system, nor does it support or oppose the views of the victims whose rights it seeks to protect. It is concerned solely with the impartial protection of human rights."

In practice, Webber said AI's work is to confront repressive world leaders and governments: to say, "we know what you're doing, and we're telling everybody!" As a Local-227 AI volunteer (one of more than 2.2 million members internationally), Webber serves as a "Freedom Writer," writing several letters each month to offending government leaders that docu-

ment what is known of their oppression of particular individuals—and argue that there are better alternatives which honor human freedom.

Webber cited three exceptions to AI's policy of taking no position on domestic issues:

- (1) AI opposes the death penalty;
- (2) AI opposes the prohibition of abortion in cases of rape; and
- (3) AI supports non-discrimination towards LGBT persons.

He went into more detail on this last point. Amnesty International believes that LGBT people are entitled to the full range of human rights protections afforded to anyone else, and that governments have an obligation to protect and promote the basic human rights of LGBT people. Amnesty International considers people imprisoned solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity to be prisoners of conscience. Amnesty International calls on governments to:

- ▼ Repeal sodomy laws and all other laws criminalizing homosexuality, including discriminatory age-of-consent legislations.
- ▼ Enact non-discrimination laws that are inclusive of LGBT people.
- ▼ Condemn torture and ill-treatment, including forced "medical" treatment of LGBT people, and release immediately and unconditionally all LGBT prisoners of conscience who are imprisoned solely for their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
- ▼ Protect LGBT people against violence in the community.
- ▼ Work to ensure that the protection and promotion of the human rights of LGBT people are effectively advanced within the United Nations (UN) and other international governmental bodies.

Amnesty International's campaign against police brutality (called *Stonewalled*, and begun last September) has now been joined by 36 nations. Their newsletter is called *OUTfront*. For more information, you can consult Amnesty International's extensive and highly organized Web site at www.amnesty.org

—Bruce Carr

From the just published Ronald Reagan Diaries, dated May 17, 1986

"A moment I've been dreading. George brought his ne're-do-well son around this morning and asked me to find the kid a job. Not the political one who lives in Florida. The one who hangs around here all the time looking shiftless. This so-called kid is already almost 40 and has never had a real job. Maybe I'll call Kinsley over at The New Republic and see if they'll hire him as a contributing editor or something. That looks like easy work."

Would Straight Adults Settle for the Treatment we LGBT Citizens Receive?



by James Nimmo

James Kirchick, assistant to the editor-in-chief of **The New Republic**, wrote an article urging the Democratic presidential candidates to shut up about gay marriage. You can read it for yourself at:

<http://www.tnr.com/doc.mhtml?i=w070813&s=kirchick081607>

Here is the concluding paragraph:

“But in the present climate, asking that presidential candidates support same-sex marriage—while serving an important moral purpose—demands a significant political sacrifice. At most, gays should expect a president to act as a bulwark against congressional attempts to limit their rights and to support congressional attempts to defend those rights. This means pledging to repeal anti-gay laws like the Defense of Marriage Act and Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell and to sign pro-gay ones like the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which all of the Democratic candidates have explicitly promised to do. Seeing the Democrats squirm on the issue of gay marriage may make for good political theater, but it does not make good politics.”

Helpful in the fight for LGBT equality, isn’t it? I can’t speak for those gay people who insist on the “marriage” word, but I do know what I want. For myself, I’m willing to accept the phrase “civil union”, provided it carries ALL the provisions, benefits, and privileges that accrue to the word “marriage” and that these said conditions are legally recognized in law and by the courts—state and federal—without exception or legal prejudice being applied.

To me and many others “marriage” connotes a religious observance that has become attached to the word and implies a religious sponsorship. ANY religious sect can recognize or deny any straight or gay couple it wants as guaranteed by the First Amendment, but they CANNOT impose their religious observance on to others—be that recognition or denial—again thanks to the First Amendment, in theory. This religious magnetism, the clinging to temporal power, is the source of the resistance to same-gender marriages or unions.

But what we see in practice is that the deniers, aka Bible-bangers, get their religious practices written into law, forcing others who are either religious or atheists, to kow-tow to something they should not be required to observe or PAY for, either in taxes or psychological conditioning and denial.

To paraphrase Dr. M.L. King and his Birmingham Jail essay, “If not freedom now, when?”

Mr. Kirchick is telling gay people to wait for the con-

venience of straight people who hate us as they preach hell fire and damnation for those who disagree with them.

“Friendly” people were telling Dr. King and the civil rights marchers to slow down and wait for the public mood to catch up with their band. To lead is to be in front; to be in the back is to lag and eat the dust of what has been trampled.

This is the same crowd that splits the hairs of their biblical prophets by choosing cafeteria-style the gospel whims and proscriptions that satisfy THEIR dietary or societal selections and help distance themselves from their own insecurities and paranoia while hiding in the closets and confessionals of churches while diddling young children and smiling at those victims’ parents.

This is the same crowd that knowingly uses divisive social wedge issues to raise the mammon that keeps them in the luxurious lifestyle they say is a blessing from Jay-sus for keeping his commandments, all the while butting their noses into the private lives of others, even as their own lives are less than salutary.

Of course, I’m speaking of the smug curmudgeons who preach and exhort to the great crowd of sheep that to be hateful is to be closer to God. They use the euphemism of

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BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the October 5 meeting no later than October 2 to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com. He can also be reached by phone at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Judy Bradshaw, Chief of Police for the City of Des Moines.

Thanks to Randy Happel for introducing our September speaker, Ivan Webber, speaking on behalf of Amnesty International.

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to the FFBC Scholarship Fund. Send your check to Jonathan Wilson, 666 Walnut Street, Suite 2500, Des Moines, IA 50309. Make the check out to FFBC and write “Scholarship” on the memo line.

A reminder to both members and non-members to designate FFBC when filling out your United Way pledge card.

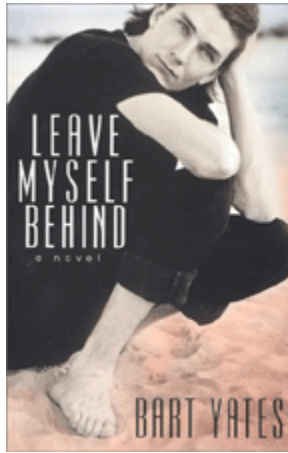
Archived issues of the FFBC newsletter are available on our web site: www.ffbc-iowa.org.

Leave Myself Behind

by Bart Yates

A Book Review by

Jay Cole Simser



This book, published in 2003, won the American Library Association's Alex Award in 2004. In 2007 it made its way to my "in" basket of books to read. It came at just the right time.

The story is about Noah, a young man who has just moved from Chicago to a small town in New England. His father has recently passed and he and his mother are restoring a Victorian home before school begins. His mother is a poet and teacher.

He says this about her: "I've never wanted a different mother. I just want my mother to be different." Get in line, right?

Anybody who tells you he doesn't have mixed feelings about his mother is either stupid or a liar. Granted, Virginia York, Noah's mother, is a special case. Living with Virginia is like living with a myth. She's only half-human; the rest is equal parts wolverine, hyena, goddess, and rutting goat. In other words, she's a poet.

But she smells great."

The imagery throughout his writing was so vivid and natural that I felt drawn into Noah's world. The author lets us know what is going on in the mind of this young man as he deals with life in a small New England town. During the remodeling project they begin to find clues hidden throughout the house in sealed Mason jars, clues about the life of a woman who had lived there and disappeared decades before.

His mother becomes obsessed with these clues as Noah becomes obsessed with J. D. who lives next door. There is enough pain in this novel that anyone who grew up gay can relate to it without much trouble. There is enough humor in it that you can enjoy the book and laugh as you cry at the pain.

Any time I can find even one passage in a book that I want to remember makes the book worth its price. This book had many.

One passage that particularly resonated with me: "I've got a theory. I think most people hate themselves. They may not know it but they do. I have yet to meet a really secure human being; by secure I mean someone who doesn't need constant maintenance on his self-esteem, usually from outside sources. I know all the self-help books say we don't need other people's positive feedback to like ourselves, but that's bullshit. It's been my experience that self-love only becomes possible after receiving an inordinate amount of external validation, usually from a person who adores you. And that's a best-case scenario. I think instead most

people get saddled with someone even more bogged down by self-loathing than they are themselves, and the relationship turns into an unconscious, morbidly dysfunctional, please-bring-your-own-nails crucifixion party."

I loved it when two Jehovah's Witnesses came to the door. Noah says, "One of them asks me if I've accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal savior. I tell him that Jesus and I go way back, and He prefers to be called by his middle name (which, by the way, is Hubert), and He's coming over later to help me with my homework. For some reason that makes them mad and I close the door before they decide to crucify me in the name of the Lord."

Christianity pisses him off. "The only Christian sect I can stand is the Quakers. They're as fucked-up as everybody else but at least they're quiet about it."

The review on the back of the book by Brian Malloy says – "Part Portnoy, part Holden Caulfield, never less than truthful, and always fully human, Noah York is a touching and unforgettable character. His story is one of hope and heart-break, love and redemption, holding on to old wounds when new skin is what's needed, and of the power of growing up once every secret has been set free."

Sorry, but this one goes on my "keeper" shelf. I'm not bringing it to the book exchange. I am currently waiting for his other book, [The Brother's Bishop](#). You can check out his Web site at: www.bartyates.com

—Jay Cole Simser

BART YATES lives in Iowa City, IA, where he works as a freelance musician and teacher. He has a master's degree from Boston University, and he plays clarinet in the chronically unemployed jazz group, Nica's Dream.

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maintaining the sanctity of their blood-washed savior, lamb of the sky-god, knower of all things, who just happens to be a mind reader and fulfills what they want.

Barney Frank, Massachusetts Democratic representative, has said many people are not as homophobic as they think they're supposed to be. Yet, how are these people going to know that alternative if we gay people don't show them day after day who we are and what we do?

We pay taxes, we work jobs, we have loves and losses, we have lives and deaths, and we have sweat and blood. Would straight adults settle for the treatment we receive?

I'm not giving a single minute of my life over to those who would think of me or other gay people second class. I'm paying the price for a ticket to first-class citizenship, and I intend to sit at the front of the bus! ▼

James Nimmo is treasurer of Oklahoma Stonewall Democrats (www.okstonewall.org) and is active in progressive issues.

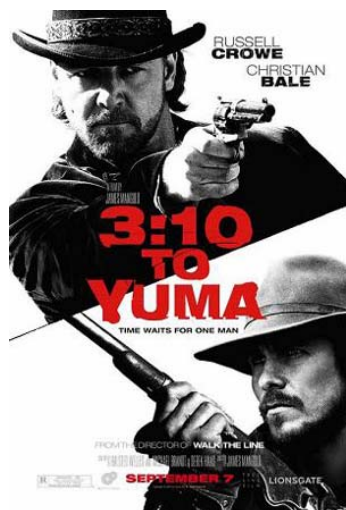
3:10 TO YUMA

Starring Russell Crowe

Christian Bale

**Directed by
James Mangold**

Running time 120 min.



3:10 to Yuma opens with Dan Evans (Christian Bale) and his poor farm family awakening in the middle of the night to a raid on their farm. The neighboring land baron, Glen Hollander, to whom they owe money on the farm, has sent his thugs to burn down their barn with a warning, “You have a week Evans. And then we burn the house!” Of course the land baron does not really want the payment. As he tells Evans in his office, “The railroads are coming through and your property is worth more with you off of it!”

This is the gritty world of **3:10 to Yuma**. Although a few people are trying to make honest livings in the post-Civil War era in the old Southwest, those who seem to be getting ahead are the land barons making money from running people off their land, the railroad barons often doing the same thing, and the cutthroats and thieves who rob the money that the land barons and railroad barons are bringing into the community.

The head of the worst vicious gang of cutthroats and thieves is Ben Wade (Russell Crowe) who has great artistic talents and can quote the Bible to fit his purposes. Yet, his evil side is as dark as they come. We are introduced to him through witnessing a brutal raid of a stagecoach where Ben Wade shoots down one of his own men in order to kill a Pinkerton cop who has gotten the drop on the youngest member of his band. The young man, Tommy Dalton “got stupid; he endangered the rest of us; Tommy is dead,” proclaims Wade to his disgruntled gang.

The number two man of the gang, Charlie Prince (brilliantly played by Ben Foster), is a truly brutal, sadistic man, clever and evil. After Ben Wade got sloppy and did not get out of town before the return of the sheriff from visiting the stagecoach robbery, it is Charlie’s duty to bring the gang along to rescue their leader, killing anyone who gets in their way. The railroad company’s smarmy spokesman, Mr. Butterfield (Dallas Roberts), wants to have an example made of Mr. Wade, who has successfully raided 22 shipments and has stolen over \$400,000. Mr. Butterfield insists that Wade be transferred alive to federal prison where he can be tried and publicly executed. In order to accomplish this, a group is hired to take Wade to the town of Contention where he can be placed on the 3:10 train to Yuma prison. In order to save his family and his farm, Dan Evans signs up for \$200. When asked by his wife why he took this dangerous job, he laments, “I look at the way the boys look

at me, and that you don’t. I have been working this land for five years waiting for a break from God, and He ain’t listening.”

His son, William, over his objection, later joins the crew transporting Wade, but William’s romantic image of the bandit is tempered when he tells Wade that he knows deep down inside he wasn’t all bad. “Yes I am,” responds Wade. “I wouldn’t live five minutes leading an outfit like that if I wasn’t bad as hell.” He then proves it by slowly dispatching the men one-by-one as they transport him to Contention.

Of course a Western is not a Western without a moral theme, and in this movie it is the bonding of a father, Dan Evans, and his son, William. The father lost his leg in the Civil War, and in his son’s eyes the father has been weak. The son has idealized images of bandits from reading the dime novels of the era. The moral theme is also about committing to something and following it through regardless of the horrors it may put you through. The son is eventually brought to see his father’s strengths and admire his determination.

Above all, a Western has action, and this has plenty of it. Although there is none of the romanticized style of the Sergio Leone Spaghetti-westerns shootouts, the film successfully has its own style of grittiness and violence to keep you on the edge of your seat throughout most of the picture. It is indeed a tough ride getting to that train.

—Gary Kaufman

The stock market has shown considerable recovery based on reports that the US economy continues to perform well on a war footing and on borrowed money.

The mint continues to change the appearance of US currency in an attempt to foil counterfeiters, and now law-abiding citizens don’t know what a dollar is supposed to look like, which should help the counterfeiters.

(EDITOR from page 6)

the world. He was bigger than his country—bigger than all the Presidents put together.

“We are still too near his greatness,” Tolstoy concluded, “but after a few centuries more our posterity will find him considerably bigger than we do. His genius is still too strong and too powerful for the common understanding, just as the sun is too hot when its light beams directly on us.”

Enough said.

—Steve Person



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From the Editor

A President for All Time

“Now he belongs to the ages,” said Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, shortly after 7:22 a.m., April 15, 1865. He referred, of course, to Abraham Lincoln. Arguably the greatest man ever to hold the office of President of the United States, Lincoln was a man not only for his time but also a man for every generation since.

Doris Kearns Goodwin’s 2005 book, **Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln**, should be required reading for any person seeking the exalted title of “President,” and by any other person seeking to understand what it means to be the chief executive of this country. It most certainly should be read by the current White House occupant, appointed by the Supreme Court of the United States. I doubt, however, that “W” has what it takes to read such a lengthy tome, let alone understand it.

Lincoln came to office at the most troubled time in United States history, the eve of the Civil War. His nomination by the fledgling Republican Party in 1860 came as a surprise to most, including the front runner, William H. Seward of New York. Equally anticipating their chances for the nomination were Salmon P. Chase of Ohio and Edward Bates of Missouri. Lincoln, however, being a man of patience and organization, had gained considerable western influence from the time he arrived in Illinois in 1830. His burning ambition to improve himself by whatever available means led to his lifelong love of books and education. From his initial job as a shopkeeper in New Salem, Illinois, to his successful law practice in Springfield, Lincoln never lost his love of learning and his innate faith in the goodness of people.

When he arrived in Washington, D.C., his most important task was to put together a Cabinet, a team who would advise him and give him the guidance he sought to steer the nation through the most perilous of times. Unlike the current White House denizen, who has taken cronyism to its worst extremes, Lincoln appointed his political enemies to important government posts. Seward became Secretary of State; Chase the Secretary of the Treasury; and Bates the Attorney General. Lincoln later appointed Stanton, a former legal rival, to Secretary of War. Each man harbored initial doubts as to the ability of the new President, but each eventually appreciated what a shrewd and able statesman Lincoln was.

Although slavery was perhaps the catalyst that precipitated the Civil War, Lincoln was willing to let the institution stand in the states where it already existed if that would preserve the Union. Believing that slavery eventually would come to a natural end, he was not, under any circumstances, prepared to agree to its extension into the burgeoning territories of the West. With his Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, however, he staked himself to its complete abolition. His decision to do so resulted in a great split in the Republican Party between the Radicals, who wanted rid of it, and the moderates who willingly tolerated it where it existed.

Goodwin relied heavily on government documents, diaries, and personal letters in writing this magnificent historical work. Her frequent references to the magnanimity of Lincoln underscore the terrible loss this nation endured upon his assassination.

Countless people have extolled the virtues of Abraham Lincoln, but perhaps the greatest tribute came from the Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy in 1908: “Washington was a typical American, Napoleon was a typical Frenchman, but Lincoln was a humanitarian as broad as