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Eventual Limits On Privilege

by Jonathan Wilson

INSIDE

Event Review by Gary Kaufman	2
Briefs & Shorts	2
Movie Review by Gary Kaufman	3
From the Editor	4

CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, August 1, 2008 at Hoyt Sherman Place.
Our guest speaker will be Kyle Carlson, Counsel to Planned Parenthood of Greater Iowa and Chairperson of the Governor's Generation Iowa Task Force.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by Wednesday, July 30 to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or 288-2500 by phone.

To say that Bush, throughout his life and career(s), has been privileged would be an understatement like calling Katrina a tropical depression. Both would be true, but neither would do the subject justice. Bush has been successful in having his backside covered repeatedly by connections in the Establishment. You have to hand it to him, and his handlers, who put together a presidential campaign that pitted this consummate insider nominally as an outsider running against the politics of the Washington beltway.

He got to the head of the line to avoid the draft and service in Vietnam. The records of his undistinguished military career, and his abysmal attendance for training and service were kept from developing "legs." He was admitted to and graduated, but barely, from some of the best schools in the country. His history of drug and alcohol abuse and philandering were effectively "erased" by a second birth among fellow religious zealots. His lack of any demonstrable business acumen and repeated bailouts are legendary. His selection to the office of President was accomplished thanks to Supreme Court appointees of his father.

And for eight years it's been payback time. The paybacks have taken the form of no bid war contracts and unprecedented profiteering by big oil companies. They've come in tax breaks for the rich. They've come in government deregulation of business, industry, and financial markets. They've come in the export of American jobs that undercut American workers and unions. They've come in relaxed environmental protections and by rescinding the Executive Order banning off-shore oil drilling that virtually all the experts acknowledge will do nothing to reduce our dependence on foreign oil or lower oil prices.

His penchant for avoiding accountability has also found expression in unbalanced budgets, unprecedented deficits, and astronomical growth of the national debt owed principally to our international competitors. When members of his inner circle purposely leaked the identity of a CIA operative for perceived political advantage, he, with self-righteous indignation, falsely denied their complicity, and when the Vice President's former Chief of Staff was convicted of crimes arising from his role in the matter, Bush concluded that his friend had suffered enough and commuted the sentence. Contrast that with Bush's record during six years as Governor of Texas that saw not a single death-row commutation and 152 executions. The most of any state in modern times. Those unfortunates weren't friends of Bush or useful to him except to the extent that their deaths enhanced his image of being tough.

He has dodged responsibility for the inept federal response to the Katrina disaster, despite the fact that he was specifically warned in advance. Same with the attack of 9/11. He and his administration avoided accountability, so far, for the torture of people in US custody, or for out-sourcing their torture through extra-ordinary renditions. By defying Congressional subpoenas, members of his administration have ducked scrutiny of politically motivated prosecutions and did so under the guise of none other than "Executive Privilege." At least it was honestly named.

Most recently, the paybacks have continued with his signature on a rewrite of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). With it, he was willing to compromise our Constitu-

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

tional liberties in ways beyond the reach of our adversaries on their own, and he held our national security hostage as a means to gain retroactive immunity on behalf of big telephone companies that were complicit in his illegal requests for warrantless wiretapping of US citizens.

This last payback has drawn fire from the American Civil Liberties Union in the form of a law suit on behalf of human-rights groups, journalists, labor organizations, you, and me. The suit challenges the Constitutionality of the new law. I've sent a contribution to the ACLU, and you can too. Do it on line at www.ACLU.org, or send a check to 125 Broad Street, 18th Floor, New York, New York 10004.

Bush has been an embarrassment to the office that he holds and to the nation. A nation that has tolerated the means by which he gained the office and his abuses of power while holding it. He has been a modern-day civics lesson in our slow but hopefully effective Constitutional checks upon the power of our own government. Time, and the courts, will tell. ▼

"I'm the commander—see, I don't need to explain—I do not need to explain why I say things. That's the interesting thing about being president." George W. Bush

EVENT REVIEW

Midwest Male Naturist Gathering

by Gary Kaufman

I had been traveling in rain off and on for hours—but then came an almost Biblical event. As I traveled along a serpentine road among the rolling hills of northeastern Kansas, the clouds parted and the sun came out to shine on my arrival at Camp Gaea, home of the 16th Annual Midwest Male Naturist Gathering, or MMNG. There I was to spend the next 4 days with 180 naked men.

The MMNG attracts men from 15 states including Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Missouri, North Dakota, Arkansas, Wisconsin, Colorado, Nebraska, Michigan, Florida, Texas, Oklahoma, California, and New York. I learned right away that it was perfectly fine to look at everybody. In fact, each attendee is given a ballot on which to vote for "Best" body parts and appendages, and even the distinction of Mr. Golden Oldie. In order to be informed voters we had to spend some time looking! At least, that was my interpretation. Some admittedly took the investigation beyond mere observation. I guess they wanted to be particularly informed voters.

Facilities at Camp Gaea were excellent. Most people pitched tents, although there were a few in travel trailers and some limited multi-bunk cabins available, mostly for disabled persons. There is a lovely pond for swimming and sunbathing; a dining hall; a main hall that is used for movies; a bath house; and a pavilion for larger events such as talent shows, auctions, and receptions.

On the opening night the *Kansas City Boys*

were having a Beach Luau Social down by the pond where they were passing out leis and some teeny tiny Hula skirts that were just big enough to fit around one's testicles. And they made drinks called "Pink Panty Pulldowns" for those daring enough to try them.

The meals are standard camp-type meals except, they spice up the flavor thanks to the gourmet chefs from *The Cabbage Roll*, an eatery just up the Missouri river from Camp Gaea at St. Joseph. The owners close it down for a week each year so they can cater the meals at MMNG. So, although one may be eating coleslaw, it is a very zingy coleslaw. Probably their biggest hit is their "Death By Chocolate" in which a 20-foot table is laden with a wide variety of gourmet chocolate treats that is held at 11PM on Friday night. All you can eat!

As an avid movie buff, it was great to see all the gay-themed movies being shown. I was able to see **Because the Bible Tells Me So**, that we've heard described and advertised at breakfast club. Other movies were **Naked Men Singing**, **Touch of Pink**, **East Side Story**, and **The Ritz**.

Each day had lots of discussion groups available, or one could catch a volleyball game. They had a number of fun contests: Body Painting, Costume, the Drag Races (where participants run to one location to grab a dress, another location to grab shoes and a purse, another for putting on lipstick, and another for a wig—they are judged on their speed and the way their ensemble looks after running and grabbing the "right" garb), Oiled Wrestling (always popular, with wonderful photo opportunities), Sweet Ass Sundae (where participants are decorated by their team as if they were a sundae), Mass Twister

(Continued on page 3)

"The problem with the French is that they don't have a word for 'entrepreneur.'" George W. Bush

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the August 1 meeting no later than July 30. E-mail JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or call him at 288-2500. The August speaker will be Kyle Carlson, Counsel to Planned Parenthood of Greater Iowa and Chairperson of the Governor's Generation Iowa Task Force.



Thanks to Brown Bag Deli for wonderful catering services at our breakfast meetings. Catering can be arranged through Scott Hoffman, 440-6000.



Thanks to Allen Vander Linden and Michael Thompson for hosting the July 19 party that took the place of the July meeting.

It's not the bears or the bulls that make you lose money on Wall Street. It's the bum steers.

GET SMART

Review by
Gary Kaufman



Get Smart was one of my favorite TV series when I was young, and

I am pleased to report that it has faithfully been brought to the large screen as a very funny movie. Steve Carell was a perfect casting choice for the Don Adam's character, Maxwell Smart. His deadpan looks and comedic timing are impeccable. Teamed with Anne Hathaway as Agent 99, the chemistry between them is electrifying, and the writing is superb. The cutting banter between Max and Agent 99 is a delight to hear, often rivaling that of Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant in those screwball comedies of the 30's. And the writers, unlike many remakes, did not abandon the general plot of a *Get Smart* television episode. In this case, KAOS, the evil crime syndicate, has stolen radio active materials which are then being converted into bombs and given to unstable governments throughout the world. If the United States does not pay a ransom, the launch codes will be released to those possessing the bombs. The President (James Caan) doesn't believe he can respond to every threat, so he ignores it and soon becomes one of the targets of the first attack. It is up to Max, Agent 99, and the other agents of CONTROL to save the President and the United States from nuclear attack.

The movie version of Maxwell Smart is a lot more skillful as a field agent than the guy in the TV series. The action sequences are exciting and often funny as well. The show is so funny at times I was laughing to tears. The writers used a couple of the signature jokes from the series "Sorry about that, Chief" and the bit often used in the series that would usually go something like, "Would you believe that we're surrounded by the entire U. S. Coast Guard—would you believe a squadron of U.S. Marines—would you believe two cops in a row boat," etc. But they were used only once apiece and not overdone. The special effects are great, and the comedy is really top notch. The film credits list Mel Brooks and Buck Henry as "Consultants," and it must have worked. One of the great comedy bits in the film is one with Max demonstrating his jealousy over Agent 99 while she is dancing with the handsome bad guy. Max decides to compete in dancing by grabbing a 300 lb. dancing partner. It is a hoot. There are also a few comedy cameos featured in the film. I spotted Bill Murray, and there are a few others.

Fans of the TV series will most likely love this movie. It is extremely well-written and executed. Also, for those who enjoy comedy, this is a must-see movie for the summer. **Get Smart** and see it! ▼

FFBC Board Plans 2009 Scholarship Committee

by Allen Vander Linden, Chairperson

At the July FFBC Board of Directors meeting, plans were laid for the 2009 FFBC scholarship program by approving the following:

The FFBC Scholarship Committee is to include a maximum of 11 and minimum of 7 members. Membership will, as much as possible, represent diversity in background, experience, and age. The Chairperson of the Scholarship Committee is appointed by the FFBC Board of Directors. It is the responsibility of the Scholarship Committee chairperson to recruit and select committee members.

The board also reappointed Allen Vander Linden as FFBC Scholarship Committee Chairperson for the 2009 scholarship program.

Anyone interested in being a member of the Scholarship Committee or wanting more information about the committee should contact Allen Vander Linden by September 15. His phone number is 266-7638 and email is alvanlin@yahoo.com. ▼

Be who you are and say what you feel...Because those that matter...don't mind...And those that mind...don't matter.

(Continued from page 2)

(another camera favorite), and the Pudding Melee (where the participants toss pudding at each other). That last event only got better with a mass shower for all the pudding throwing participants.

There is "Dancing in the Dark" or "Country Western Dance" each night; campfires; and plenty of time for lounging, swimming, socializing, or pretty much whatever one wants to do. It is a totally different world with lots of camaraderie and positive energies. A great group of people; and really very inexpensive (\$160 for the 5 days—which includes all meals and some drinks). If you would like to check out the experience, it is held every June ending on Father's Day. Web info is at <http://midwestmalenaturistgathering.org>. ▼

Church Bulletin: Don't let worry kill you off—let the Church help.

FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views
Des Moines, Iowa*

AUGUST 2008

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From the Editor In Name Only

Living downtown, I have the advantage of being in the heart of the Court Avenue entertainment district. The area has changed a great deal over the last decade, and *most* of that change has been good. There is a new establishment in an old venue with a well-known local name, Johnny's Hall of Fame. The new version of this bar opened this past spring.

The former Johnny's Hall of Fame, at the corner of Third and Court, was a sports bar that had a certain kind of local charm to it. Auto-graphed photographs of baseball players from the Iowa Cubs and the former Iowa Oaks baseball teams lined the west wall of the bar, and the décor was—well—less than elegant. The food featured burgers, hot dogs, and grilled delights, along with crispy French fries and other comfort staples. The wait staff was efficient and friendly, and it was always a pleasant place to have a meal, even if I didn't give a damn about the sports programs on the televisions.

Then the place was sold and new owners took over. The old Johnny's closed over the winter, and renovations began. I watched the progress with some interest since I can see the place from my balcony. It opened in April and sports a completely new look.

When I do go out to eat in the Court Avenue area, I prefer The Trattoria and its small companion restaurant, The Pasticceria on Fourth Street. Both are intimate with loyal clientele and provide an atmosphere inviting conversation. I also enjoy The Royal Mile or the Court Avenue Brew Pub. A few weeks ago, some friends and I went to The Pasticceria only to discover that it closed because of recent flood damage. Having a restaurant below street level is not always a good idea in the Court Avenue area. We decided to try the new Johnny's Hall of Fame. What a mistake!

The new Johnny's is a horror house passing itself off as a sports bar. Gone are the local touches that made this restaurant unique. In its place are intrusive large screen televisions, blaring as loudly as possible. The ceiling has been stripped up to the rafters, making the noise reverberate and conversation impossible. When I ordered a glass of chardonnay to go with my less than mediocre dinner—ordered from a “temporary” menu even though the place had been in business over three months at that point—I was told the bar didn't have any wine. I settled for a Diet Coke. The scatterbrained waitress came back a few minutes later and said the bartender had located a bottle of pinot. I said that would be fine. To my surprise, she served me a glass of pinot noir, and I am no fan of red wine. I don't know if she didn't know that chardonnay is a white wine or that pinot can be either red or white. In any case, the wine sat untouched. We would have been better off going across the street to Legends. At least the food there is better and the bar well supplied. The new Johnny's is nothing more than a dumbed down version of Legends. I do have to say that it is a popular place. There are people there every night of the week, and it is especially busy on Friday and Saturday nights. There is no accounting for taste.

—Steve Person

*Church Bulletin: The peacemaker meeting scheduled for today
has been canceled due to a conflict.*