



First Friday News & Views

August 2014

Volume 19

Issue 8

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

Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Are

By Jonathan Wilson

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▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,
Friday, August 1, 2014, at Hoyt
Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland,
Des Moines, IA

▼ RSVP by July 30 to
JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com,
or phone 515-288-2500. Our
Speaker will be Steve Pilchen (The
Round Guy), emcee of The Funny
Bone comedy club.

"Pretty clearly, God's purpose for sex is reproduction." The words came from my father after I, at age 44, first came out to my parents. Dad was a retired United Methodist minister, so these first words, and the religious reference, were understandable.

"Yes, I'd think that sex just for pleasure is hedonism," added my mother.

This one-two punch to the gut was how the dialogue began as we shared a cup of coffee while sitting by a crackling fireplace. Clearly I had my work cut out for me.

We had a long family history of openness and civil dialogue on myriad topics. Never, however, had that history been put to such a test. It was like taking oral exams in order to pass the Gay 101 course.

I'd done my homework; God knows I didn't *want* to be gay. I'd prayed fervently. I'd gotten professional counseling. I'd read stacks of literature on the subject. And I'd gotten valuable input from my remarkable, supportive spouse and a wider and wider circle of gay friends who had traveled the same road before me. I was ready. It was time. Damn the torpedoes; full speed ahead.

I replied, "Yes, clearly *one* of God's purposes for sex is reproduction, and I've given you two beautiful grandchildren, haven't I? "Yes," they said in unison. They couldn't possibly have disagreed.

Then I said, "You and mom aren't going to have any more children -- would be unable to have any more children together at your ages -- and yet, from any number of comments each of you has made, I know that the two of you are still intimate with one another and enjoy that intimacy immensely. I figure such heterosexual 'hedonism' is just as sinful -- or not sinful -- as homosexual 'hedonism.'" Dad allowed that he thought I had made a good point.

There followed an avalanche of questions trying to make sense of their only son being gay, married to a woman for almost a quarter of a century, and making an abrupt and distressing mid-course correction. Beautiful wife; beautiful children, lovely house, lucrative law practice, and successful political career that provided opportunities for worthwhile public service. To them as outside observers, their son was enjoying an enviable life, all of which could be jeopardized by this new revelation.

Not surprisingly, religion and religious references characterized much of our discussion. It was a dialogue format with which I was well-familiar. I can remember saying, for example, that I thought God Almighty had instituted the Metropolitan Community Church, a denomination that caters especially to predominately LGBT congregations. I said that I thought God had looked upon us and found that

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mainstream churches were judgmentally rejecting God's gay and lesbian children with unacceptable and inaccurate "moral" lessons, and God would have none of it. "Nothing -- *nothing* -- can separate us from the love of God." Romans 8:38. Not even the church.

Mainstream churches (including the United Methodist Church even to this day) were teaching that whether gay persons are utterly promiscuous with those of the same gender until they die of either exhaustion or worse -- or faithful to a monogamous same-sex relationship for a lifetime it's a moral equivalent -- you're going to hell either way. I asked them to imagine what behaviors society could expect if churches taught the same "moral" lesson to straight folks who already lacked a very good track record for fidelity. For good measure, I mentioned that gay people certainly don't celebrate promiscuity, while straight society reveres promiscuity by touting the likes of Don Juan and Casanova. To the question, "But what about gay pride parades?" I asked if they were familiar with antics of straight people at notorious Spring Break festivities, or at Mardi Gras. Hmmm. Perhaps promiscuity is just that and lacks a sexual orientation dimension.

I left them with some literature, and much to think about. A couple of weeks later I received a heart-felt letter from my Dad. He wrote that he'd read the literature, the Scriptures, and prayed a lot, and he'd concluded that homosexuality is not a sin and anyone who thinks otherwise has misunderstood the true word of God. Thereafter, he became a very public LGBT ally, publishing supportive letters to the editor of the local newspaper, **The Des Moines Register**, and **AccessLine** signed Rev. Carl E. Wilson, Milton, Iowa.

From our exchange, I learned a couple of things: (1) The fear that keeps us in the closet is not premised upon reality -- our families love us uncontrollably and, with gentle but persistent dialogue, they will come around. For a parent to reject a child over something like this violates the laws of the Universe; (2) When we do come out we bring allies with us -- those allied to us by indestructible blood ties -- which largely explains why such rapid progress has been made in gaining government recognition of civil equality for law-abiding LGBT citizens.

Come out, come out, wherever you are, and we'll make more and even faster progress.

My M.O. continued from p. 6

they are stored and uses her most persuasive "meow" to get what she wants. She's no dummy for sure. According to Janik's and Rejnis's **The Complete Idiot's Guide to Living With a Cat**, "... cats talk. They also understand. Experts estimate that with training and repetition, cats can be taught to respond to 25 to 50 words. They may not always respond exactly as we want them to, but they do respond."

So there you have it. Speciesism is a hoax, and as in the original film version of **Doctor Dolittle**, Rex Harrison poignantly asks, "Why do we treat animals like animals when animals treat us so very well?"

Briefs & Shorts

Be sure to RSVP for the August 1 meeting no later than July 30. Contact Jonathan at 288-2500 or email him at JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com. Our speaker will be Steve Pilchen (The Round Guy), emcee of The Funny Bone comedy club.

Thanks to Michael Thompson and Allen VanderLinden for hosting the July party at their Urbandale home.



Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to Barry McGriff for coordinating the book exchange.

Consider a tax deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both.

The following article supplemented the recent FFBC application for eligibility under the United Way Donor Direct program that allows contributors to designate FFBC as the recipient of their philanthropy. The application was approved, making FFBC eligible for another three years.

Saggy Baggy The Elephant

By Jonathan Wilson

When I was a kid my parents bought me various books from the Golden Book series. Some were better than others and some carried a meaning beyond the obvious. As an adult who struggled but finally came out as an unapologetic gay man, I have reflected on one of those books and gained some insight that escaped me as a child -- **Saggy Baggy The Elephant**.

As I recall, it's about an orphaned little elephant, alone in the jungle, and perfectly content and happy. Life was good. As with people, the little elephant was born without a discriminatory bone in his body. As with people, he would have to learn about that pernicious trait.

While prancing merrily along, his reverie is interrupted by a shrieking, colorful parrot. The bird commences to berate the little elephant, commenting derisively on his appearance. He had clumpy legs/feet, a l-o-o-o-o-n-g nose, floppy ears, and his skin -- his skin was a drab gray and all wrinkled. It was saggy and baggy, and the parrot decided to call him Saggy Baggy.

The little elephant looked at his reflection in the lake and confirmed what the parrot said. He was ashamed and miserable. He tried all sorts of things amusing to a child, like filling his belly with food or water to stretch the skin tighter and make himself more acceptable. It didn't last, of course, and he was right back where he began with nothing really changed. He chose then to hide himself in a dark cave; elephants don't have closets.

Shortly, a hungry lion happened along and fancied the little elephant for his lunch. I've been to Africa and can tell you that tiny elephants are a favorite menu item for lions. The little elephant, sensing the danger, began to run for dear life. The hungry lion was right on his tail. Just before the lion was about to catch him, the little elephant stumbled and went roly-poly through a thicket into the midst of a huge herd of full grown elephants. They made short work of the lion and sent him on his way. I've seen that happen in the wilds of Africa as well.

The little elephant then picked himself up, dusted himself off, realized that he was safe, and he . . . looked . . . up . . . at . . . these . . . magnificent . . . full-grown . . . elephants that surrounded him. For the first time the little elephant was able to see the truth; he was beautiful without making any changes whatsoever. To hell with ignorant, bigoted parrots (read: right wing-nuts). He was an elephant and rightly proud of it. With time, he'd become as magnificent as the ones who had saved him. That bird had been reading the wrong book about what is and isn't beautiful.

The First Friday Breakfast Club provides a unique "Saggy Baggy the Elephant" experience for those who attend, particularly for those who are still struggling through the coming out process. It can be grueling and protracted. It requires folks to shed the shame they have been conditioned to feel growing up in a heterosexist society. That shame has been aggravated for centuries by institutional churches still touting a First Century view of human sexuality, and the implicit belief that all of God's children are straight. Not so. I am a gay man; I am decidedly *not* a straight man merely acting out or, worse, "sinning."

The First Friday Breakfast Club provides exposure to well-adjusted, productive, successful, intelligent, spiritual, accomplished, compassionate, and unapologetic gay men. Real men. Straight forward, but not straight. Those who attend can draw confidence, strength, and direction from those who have previously traveled the same road.

The First Friday Breakfast Club does one more important thing. It affords the opportunity for those well-adjusted gay men who are members to "thank" those who have gone before them. You see, those who have gone before us don't need our help. In fact, many are nameless or already deceased. The only thanks they would want -- could want -- would be for each of us to help others who are coming along behind. And the road grows ever smoother for future generations.

Gay men don't have to lift a finger other than turning off the alarm and showing up once a month to participate in the First Friday Breakfast Club. When they do, they are -- perhaps unwittingly -- an important part of that monthly "Saggy Baggy the Elephant" experience for others. By simply warming a chair, a service is done for others who are now where so many of us fearfully have been.





A COMMITMENT TO GOOD IOWA GOVERNMENT

By Iowa Senator Matt McCoy

Here in Iowa, we have one of the best state governments in the country. Republican and Democratic legislators are always looking for ways to ensure government runs efficiently and offers good service to Iowans.

Those efforts have made Iowa one of the top three best run states, according to [24/7 Wall Street](#). Our high ranking is a result of our strong agricultural economy, low unemployment, perfect credit rating and strong budget.

Each year, we balance the state budget without raising taxes and set aside money for a rainy day. Iowa is expected to have had a budget surplus of about \$881 million when this fiscal year ended on June 30. We also have \$650 million in our rainy day funds, the largest amount in state history.

Not only do we budget responsibly, it is easy for Iowans to see how their tax dollars are spent. Iowa was one of only eight states to receive an “A” grade from the U.S. Public Interest Research Group in their [2014 Follow the Money](#) report, which grades states on spending transparency.

Iowa's easy-to-use State Transparency Website allows citizens, experts and watchdog groups to find information on a variety of expenditures. The site at <http://data.iowa.gov> offers datasets, charts, tables, maps and other resources on Iowa's financial, tax and performance data. It even provides information on money recouped by the state when recipients fail to deliver the agreed-upon results, an accountability practice that sets us apart from most other states.

If legislators do discover problems in state government, we address them. For example, when we learned that taxpayer money had been paid to former state employees in secret settlements, the Senate's Government Oversight Committee immediately began looking into the matter and continues to work this summer to find out what happened and how to prevent the problem in the future.

Additional information

This is a legislative update from Senator Matt McCoy, representing west part of Des Moines, portions of West Des Moines and Cumming in northwest Warren County. For newsletters, photos and further information, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/mccoy.



To contact Senator McCoy during the week, call the Senate Switchboard at 515-281-3371. Otherwise he can be reached at home at 515-274-0561. E-mail him at matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov. Senator McCoy is an Assistant Senate Majority Leader, chair of the Commerce Committee and chair of the Transportation & Infrastructure Budget Subcommittee. He also serves on the Appropriations, State Government, Transportation and Ways & Means committees.

TAMMY

Review by Gary Kaufman

It has been a long time since I found a movie that was just a sheer joy to sit through. With the release of **Tammy**, that drought has ended. True, there is a lot of that gross, over-the-top humor that Melissa McCarthy is noted for and got her an Academy Award nomination for her performance in **Bridesmaids**. But it is also so much more. There is a story of a budding romance, a dysfunctional family, alcoholism, and a lesbian 4th of July party featuring a Viking Funeral of a waterski.

The movie starts out with Tammy whizzing down a two-lane blacktop highway in the country singing to the songs she has playing on her boombox in the car. Then “Wham!” She runs into a deer. “Not again!” she says. When she got down in front of the deer and tried to revive him, her responses from the deer were several kicks on Tammy’s chest and a quick run back into the woods. She tries to be optimistic, “Good gait. Good gait.” But her car later goes from steaming to smoking and is totaled. She finally walks all the way to work only to be fired for looking dirty and being late! She then walks home

only to discover that her husband was having an affair with the neighbor girl and had made the neighbor a delicious dinner as well. “You never ever made me dinner! Not once! And it smells really good, too!” Tammy says as she packs her things, and heads out to leave for her parent’s house. So Tammy is having a bad day, and it ain’t even noon yet! And her day goes downhill from there.

Eventually Tammy ends up on a road trip with her grandma Pearl, using Pearl’s money and automobile. Part of the joy of seeing this film comes from the fabulous chemistry between Melissa McCarthy and Susan Sarandon. Susan Sarandon plays Tammy’s alcoholic grandmother, Pearl, who drinks all the time, which makes her horny and from then on she is hot to trot! Eventually they get to grandma’s lesbian friend Leonor’s 4th of July party. The role of the Leonor is played by Kathy Bates; and she likes to blow up stuff! There are fireworks galore!

If you like comedy movies at all, I recommend you see this film. And should you see it, be sure to sit throughout the credits. There are some fun plot twists in there and Melissa McCarthy reveals her secret during a fun outtake!

H m m m . . .



CFO asks CEO: “What happens if we invest in developing our people and then they leave us?”

CEO: “What happens if we don’t, and they stay?”

Those favoring the proposed Keystone Pipeline running north-south across the United States would do well to take a look at the pipe line break that occurred in northeast Los Angeles, spilling over 10,000 gallons of crude oil into the community that ran knee deep in some places.

Where there's a will, I want to be in it.

The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on my list.

Since light travels faster than sound, some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.

We never really grow up; we only learn how to act in public.

War does not determine who is right - only who is left.

In filling out an application, where it says, 'In case of emergency, Notify:' I put 'DOCTOR'.

Women will never be equal to men until they can walk down the street with a bald head and a beer gut, and still think they are sexy.

I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not so sure.

You're never too old to learn something stupid.

I'm supposed to respect my elders, but it's getting harder and harder for me to find one now.



FFBC

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Des Moines, Iowa

August 2014

*First Friday
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MADE ON A  MAC

MY M.O. (MONTHLY OBSERVATIONS)

by Steve Person
Feline Felicitations

In **The New York Times** crossword the other day was a clue that read, "The theory that human beings are superior to all other creatures." The answer was "speciesism." I had not heard of that word before, but it is just like we humans to believe we are somehow superior to all other living beings. We are so superior, in fact, that we are noted for discrimination against our own species, murdering our own kind, creating religions that are intolerant of other beliefs, and thinking that animals are somehow beneath us.

I have lived with my cat for four-and-a-half years now, and that little creature has more intelligence than the vast majority of people I've encountered. Among her observable traits are "values" that human beings would be wise to emulate daily.

The old saying goes that "curiosity killed the cat." Oddly enough, curiosity is a good thing. My cat is naturally curious about every-day events, whether it be watching water running in the sink or scurrying to the door when someone comes to visit. She is far from being a "fraidy cat." Her curiosity is a gift of intelligence.

Mine is, by necessity, a house cat. Another trait cats are noted for is bringing "gifts" to their human companions. An outdoor cat may bring in a dead bird or mouse and present it to its owner. My cat has the instinct but not the opportunity to do that, so she brings me her favorite toys and drops them at my side when I am sitting on the sofa. Isn't it better to give than to receive?

Being well groomed is important not only to people but also to cats. When I am getting ready for the day, my cat often mimics my morning ablution by sitting on the sink edge and giving herself a cat bath, licking her paws and cleaning her body. Likewise, she loves to be brushed and sits contentedly when I remove excess hair from her. She is smart enough to let someone else do the grooming from time to time.

Cats spend approximately sixty percent of their lives asleep. Naps are good for both humans and felines. Even though asleep, her hearing is acute and constantly monitors her surroundings. When awake, she observes before she acts. Would that more humans copied the cat in that matter.

Like most humans, my cat eats when she feels like it. She never gulps down all her food like many humans do but apportions it all day long, eating just enough to appease her appetite. She has also learned the most important quality of all: persistence. By observing when I go into the kitchen, she is at my feet asking for a treat. She knows where

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