



First Friday News & Views

February, 2017

Volume 22

Issue 2

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

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▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,
Friday, February 3, 2017, at Hoyt
Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland,
Des Moines, IA

▼ RSVP by February 1 to
JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com,
or phone 515-288-2500

Animal Farm Revisited

By Jonathan Wilson

Customarily, I don't do book reviews; I defer to others who have proven more consistently adept at that genre, like Steve Person. But these are unusual times and recent events from the Presidential election have taken me back in time about forty years when, in college, I read *Animal Farm* by George Orwell (who also famously authored the prescient book *1984*). For some details, I have relied heavily on Cliff Notes rather than my memory.

The story is told of farm animals, led by the pigs (in modern day parlance, *Trump*), that rebel against Mr. Jones, their human owner, and drive him and his ilk (*swamp dwellers*) from Manor Farm (*Washington DC*) that they rename *Animal Farm*. Seven commandments of Animalism (a *Constitution* of sorts) are written on the side of the barn.

Originally their Constitution read as follows:

Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
No animal shall wear clothes.
No animal shall sleep in a bed.
No animal shall drink alcohol.
No animal shall kill any other animal.
All animals are equal.

As the story unfolds, the pigs learn to walk on two legs, start wearing clothes, go into the (*White*) house and sleep in the beds there, drink alcohol, have some of their animal detractors killed, and assume a variety of privileges that are denied to other animals. The pigs edit the Constitution by writing that there's *an exception for pigs when walking on two legs and wearing clothes* (read: *conflicts of interest, the emoluments clause, and a seven year hiatus for retired military to serve as Secretary of Defense*). Sleeping in beds is prohibited *but only if there are sheets on the bed*. There's to be no drinking of alcohol "*in excess*," killing of animals is prohibited *unless they deserve it*, and all animals are equal, *but some are more equal than others*.

In the end, the pigs are living in the (*White*) house and meeting there regularly with humans. The other animals peering in through the windows cannot distinguish the pigs (*Trump and his cabinet picks*) from the previous swamp dwellers. They realize they've been duped, but by then it's too late.

There is a certain, sad irony that the most qualified person to run for president in modern history – a woman – was defeated by a male chauvinist pig.

In two years, if we can survive that long, we can make Trump a lame-duck president. That should become our collective mission.



Quit Bitchin' and Start Fixin' By Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday, January 6, 2017, was Bill Moulder, former Chief of Police of the City of Des Moines, who entertained us-- and encouraged us after what he called "an ugly year, 2016"

-- with a clear message derived from his almost-50-year career in law enforcement: "If you don't like what you see, Quit Bitchin' and Start Fixin'!"

Among the "ugly" aspects of 2016 that Chief Moulder cited were the over 60 police officers shot in the line of duty last year, over one-third of them targeted *because* they were police. The growing use of body-cameras is a positive development, said the Chief; just as effective in reducing violence is a mantra he cited that intelligent trainers are emphasizing more and more for defusing confrontation:

- Slow Down
- Back Up
- Give Space

Among the memorable features of the Chief's presentation was his way of focusing on the essential crux of an issue. In a lively Q&A he was asked about speed cameras installed on throughways, and he noted that fixed cameras do not address the police department's only real concern here, which is to expedite the movement of traffic. Mobile units with cameras can better identify and address problem drivers (rather than simply penalize them).

Also evident were Chief Moulder's patience and his Long View. We continue to recover from bad times and bad events, he said. We stop crying and complaining about what we don't like, and we get together and solve the problem with care and mutual respect. We carry on, with optimism.

You can listen again – or for the first time – to Chief Moulder's complete remarks by going to our Web site, <ffbc Iowa.org>, and clicking on the "Speakers" tab.

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William H. Moulder began his law enforcement career in the police department of Kansas City, Missouri, where he served for 25 years, rising to the rank of major. In 1984 he moved to Des Moines, and served as our Police Chief for 18 years, retiring in 2003. Following retirement, he stayed here and formed Moulder and Associates, Police Consultants who provide a wide range of technical and administrative services (executive selection, litigation support, complaint investigation and organizational review) for local law enforcement agencies. Chief Moulder has a Master's Degree in Public Administration and currently serves as chair of the Resolutions Committee, guiding policy for the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). He has been Legislative Committee chair for the Iowa Police Executive Forum, a statewide organization of Chiefs of Police, and has also served as chair of the Polk County Chiefs and Sheriffs Association. Bill and his wife, Louise, are avid bicyclists and have ridden in a goodly number of RAGBRAIs. Chief Moulder can be reached at (515) 371-1669 and at williammoulder@mchsi.com.



Briefs & Shorts

Be sure to RSVP by February 1 for the February 3, 2017 meeting by calling 515-288-2500 or on line at: JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com. Our speaker in February will be Drake University political science professor Dennis Goldford who will do a post-mortem on the November election. You may want to invite some of your friends to attend!!

Thanks to David Twombly for introducing our January speaker, Bill Moulder, the former chief of the Des Moines Police Force.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. **Book donations are always welcome.**

Thanks to Scott Kuknyo for helping coordinate the book exchange. Thanks for Steve Person for going out of his way to help get out the last issue of our newsletter.



Consider a tax deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both. We're all going to die, and we can't take it with us. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details.

Join with other FFBC members and supporters to celebrate our fundraising success in support of the scholarship program. We're having a party on February 3 from 6:30 – 9:00 p.m. at the home of Jonathan Wilson and Scott Kuknyo, 2924 Druid Hill Drive, Des Moines. All are welcome and there is no charge for attending.

Reflections on the Election and our Symbolic History

By Brian Taylor Carlson

This past year has been a doozy. It's been full of great times, fun memories, moving milestones, and incredible achievements. It's also been a whirlwind of dashed dreams, highly pressurized tension, and reactionary behavior. In one extreme, I've been a palette of mixed emotions, shock, and chaos; and in the other extreme, I've directly focused on history, activism, and defiance. And I've had some strange epiphanies branch from these events. Reflection can be therapeutic as I write my way through my feelings, and 2017 is a new year.

This past year my lifelong dream came true. In May, I graduated from Drake University as a rare non-traditional student with two degrees. One degree in journalism and mass communications, and one degree in English. All words; all the time. This has been my dream for over two decades. There's a reason why I could not finish college the first time around, and that is better left to another autobiographical piece. But I had a long, rewarding career in the restaurant industry in Key West, Florida. After moving to Des Moines to be with my husband, this educational opportunity presented itself, and I was again ready for academia. I worked hard for these degrees. After three intense years, I walked across the stage at Drake, proud to be a member of the class of 2016. My graduation party was combined with my husband's 60th birthday party, and a good time was had by all. It was filled with good food, lots of wine, smiles, laughter, and relief.

Then, the Pulse Massacre took place in Orlando during Pride Weekend. A mass murder of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters and our cherished allies. It was a direct attack on our community, fueled by our country's intolerance of Muslims, the Muslim faith, and, once again, internal conflicts between religious constriction and sexual freedom. What was to be a Sunday afternoon of nursing hangovers and rehashing details from the previous night turned into hushed conversations, grief, and internalization. But this was just the tip of the iceberg.

As time marched toward Election Day, things became even more dreadful. Being a hardcore liberal and a staunch Democrat, and being in my comfort zone for eight glorious years, enjoying advancements in civil rights and marriage equality, I was blissful. I caucused for Hillary and was ecstatic that Bernie was eliminated. I would have voted for Bernie, had he been nominated. And I was ecstatic that out of the Duggar-like uterus of Republican candidates, Donald Trump was the emerging pillar of faux conservativeness. In my complacent and unenlightened mind, anyone who supported our now President-Elect was considered unworthy as a citizen. Uneducated. Racist. Bumpkin. Misogynistic. Homophobic. Transphobic. Anti-Islam. Anti-Mexican. Anti-Diversity. Anti-everything that did not benefit them directly. Them. THOSE people. White and religious and out of touch with reality.

I began noticing anti-Hillary memes in my Facebook newsfeed. I already noticed the anti-Obama language, twisting his name into things like "Obummer" and "Obama bin Laden." People said he was born in Kenya, and that he was Muslim, and even going so far as to say that Michelle Obama was transsexual. People called us names like "libtard" and "Dummocrats." My Republican friends that I formerly adored complained about Obama, saying things like, "This is the worst President we have ever had," and, "I hate Obama. He was the reason my insurance went up this year." I shrugged it off. I started to pluck people off my Facebook friends list who lamented about anything "Democrat and liberal." If anyone disagreed with my views of equality and inclusion, I considered them racist and homophobic and intolerant. This has always been my liberal and Democratic way of shaking the uneducated and the misinformed back into my corner. Simply make them aware and educate them, and they will succumb and be welcomed into a world of tolerance and inclusivity. Or so I assumed.

I was wrong. I was the one who was out of touch. I did not and could not see past my smugness and my snobbery and my pseudo-intellectual façade. And my emotions paid the price.

Never, in a million years, did I think the presidency would be stolen this

Reflections by Brian Taylor Carlson
Cont'd from page 3

way. Mere weeks before the election, I argued with family members on "The Book of Face." We do not speak anymore. The blocking and the shunning and the disowning took place. Aunts, uncles, cousins. Permanent damage has been done. We won't speak for the rest of our lives, but at least I know where they stand. And they know that I am better off without them. Trump was not the sole catalyst behind these severed ties; there were underlying issues that were dealt with simultaneously. But this brutally intense election cycle was all we needed to cut the last cords of our severely degraded family relations.

In the months since the election, I've gone through various stages of grief, epiphanies, and actualizations, and I've reflected at length with the power of the written word. I placed my journals into a folder to come back to later, and instead of dwelling on these passing feelings and reactions, I've turned my attention to things that matter the most: my husband, my brother, Christmas, family, friends and, of course, writing and cooking – and writing about cooking. I've thought about "the way the other side thinks." I've thought about the "why" and the "how" of the election. I've devoured every news article I can find. And, as time progressed, this anger and frustration has been redirected into a focus. And that focus is about remembering the beginning of my journey of activism in the early 1990s.

I came out in 1991. I was 20 years old. During that time, I became aware of our gay symbols. I learned about the lambda sign and the rainbow flag and the pink triangle. I learned about our gay history and about the Stonewall Riots. I learned about the AIDS epidemic and the gay rights movement, including ACT UP or the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. I dedicated countless

hours to volunteer work and raising awareness and passing out literature and writing to members of Congress and community leaders. I marched in Washington and New York, always seeing our symbols everywhere we went. And these symbols truly meant something to me, and still do. In fact, right after the election, I switched my Facebook profile picture to a picture of the pink triangle. This was my first raw reaction. No picture of me. No shared memories. Just the pink triangle. It was a reminder that during the Holocaust, homosexuals were rounded up and forced to wear this symbol before being executed. I remember in November my frame of mind was such that no matter what happens, we are all capable of going back to our activist roots, and we should never forget the people who struggled and died for us to have the rights that we enjoy today. Many of them are reading this newsletter along with you and me. I remember that I was not going to give up the fight for equality. And I still haven't. And it took a situation like this to bring out the old stubborn fighter in me, and get me ready for the years ahead.

We may have lost this election, and our adversaries may be temporarily emboldened. But we are not helpless, and we are not without channels of support and solidarity. There is strength in numbers, and our community will need to pull together to protect what rights we have. We need to ensure that our pride and history are not diminished by forces that seek to undermine our legal protections or our right to the pursuit of happiness. This war has been fought before, and we can fight it again. But, for now, we must remain vigilant and spot discrimination and marginalization as much as we can. We've come far, and we still have a long way to go, but what we have now cannot be taken away from us. Not without a fight. And our treasured symbols will continue to help us with the necessary focus and determination.

I just received the Program & Budget for Fiscal Years 2018-2019 from Gov. Terry Branstad & Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds. Iowans NEED to know what our Governor is proposing.

CUT \$7,700,000 from an already underfunded court system.

CUT \$8,700,000 from Community Colleges

CUT \$5,500,000 from the Department of Education

CUT \$20,300,000 from Department of Human Services

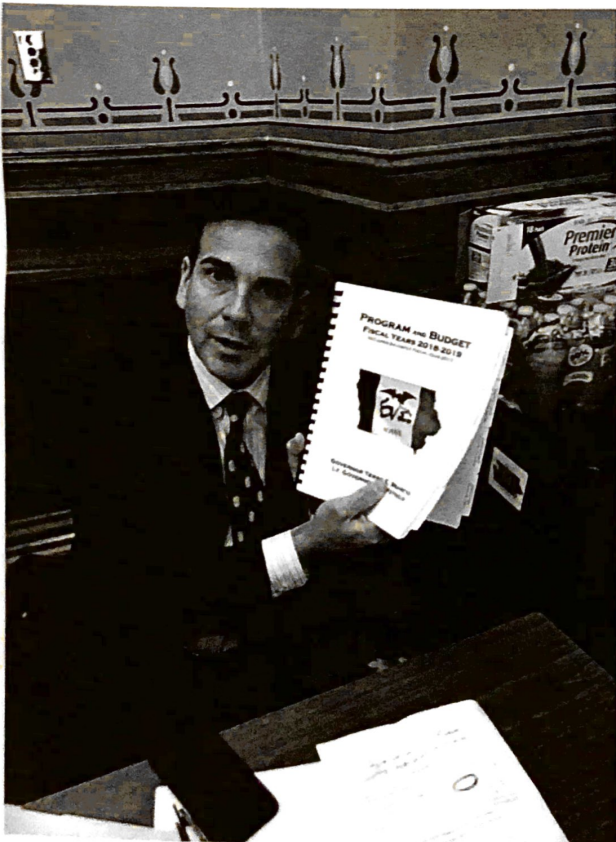
CUT \$15,500,000 from Department of Corrections

CUT \$3,800,000 from Department of Public Safety

CUT \$13,800,000 from Department of Human Services and Medicaid

**Gov. Branstad's total cuts made = \$110,000,000
which is the SAME amount he awarded Orascom Construction
Industries, a publicly traded fertilizer company in Lee County.**

Go to www.mccoyforiowa.com to learn more & stay up to date on recent news.



Senator Matt McCoy
www.mccoyforiowa.com

f www.facebook.com/senatormccoy

t www.twitter.com/mccoyforiowa

e matt@mccoyforiowa.com

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.



[The following is the fascinating conclusion about the intriguing mother that five half-siblings share, including former FFBC member John Tompkins, pieced together bit by bit before, during, and since the siblings learned as adults that she bore five children, and they held a reunion of sorts in order to become acquainted with one another. Chapter one appears in the last FFBC Newsletter.]

Mom, the Procreator and Common Denominator

By John Tompkins, former FFBC member and
Continuing Supporter

Our shared mother, Marjorie, was born in 1919 and raised on a farm near Kellerton in southern Iowa during the depression. Her parents were apparently good providers but may not have demonstrated a great deal of affection in her upbringing. With times being what they were with the Great Depression, Dust Bowl, and the grasshopper plague of 1934, I imagine it was hard to do much but survive. She became an attractive young woman, and made the quickest escape possible following high school graduation in 1937. The escape was to the "big city" of Des Moines where she attended Capitol City Commercial College for secretarial training. She first married on July 4, 1941, just prior to the beginning of US involvement in World War II. Her first husband enlisted, and her first child, a son, was fathered by a man other than her husband. Her husband returned from the war to find a child in the household. Forgivingly, he did not end the marriage and, in due course, fathered her second child, also a son. When the two boys

were about 11 and 6, the marriage ended in divorce.

While separated, but not yet

divorced, she became pregnant by a third man, and gave birth to her third son, John Tompkins. This child was born in Des Moines, placed for adoption there, and later attended Roosevelt High School, where he unknowingly shared the hallways with his next older half-brother. The two were a year apart, so she was pregnant with John three months after the next older half-brother was born. Because she was still married when John was born, he was "legitimate." John's biological father is not known; he was 30 and single when John was born.

Marjorie had a fourth child, a daughter, by a fourth man, also born in Des Moines. Around 1953 she divorced her first husband and moved to Lincoln, Nebraska. Thereafter, she remarried, and had her fifth child, another son, fathered by her second husband, who she subsequently divorced.

Despite having a problem with alcohol, she was employed as a professional secretary for many years. In 1969, apparently in a very intoxicated state, she fell down a flight of stairs, hitting her head on concrete at the bottom of the stairwell. The family was summoned in the middle of the night because her brain was hemorrhaging and it was uncertain whether



John Tompkins (Center) and his four half-siblings at a family reunion after they learned for the first time that John existed. The five share a mother but have five different fathers. Read all about this remarkable story in this issue and the last issue of the newsletter.

she would live through the night. Miraculously, she survived and, after nearly a year in the hospital, regained some functions, including the ability to speak, read, and walk. Compromised permanently, however, were some cognitive functions and motor skills, which made it impossible for her ever to return to secretarial work

Marjorie ended up living another 37 years after that accident, though the last ten or so required residence in an Omaha care facility. She died in 2006 at age 87. While disappointed I was not able to meet my mother and realizing she definitely had some demons as we all do, I must admire her for making what I am sure was a difficult choice way back in 1948. That choice allowed me to be born and to grow up in a loving, stable home.

Four of her five children graduated from college. One, John, has a PhD. Perhaps, she would be delighted that all of her children were at last able to meet. May she rest in Peace! I feel at peace as well that, while I may never see the original adoption records, I have been able to claim the important part – reunion with my family of origin.

It is reassuring to know that organizations that serve adoptees have appeared on the scene and are working for changes in laws regarding the adoption records from many years ago. One such group, known as *Bastard Nation*, claims to have helped bring about changes in seven states at this point. Apparently some lawmakers have finally been convinced that the protections provided by sealed records are no longer relevant when all the protected parties are deceased, some for many years. Perhaps one day Iowa and the state of Arizona will wake up! John Tompkins can be reached at jftphd@msn.com.

PONDERABLES

This month our Ponderables are brought to us by The Washington Post that annually publishes the winning submissions to its contest, in which readers are asked to supply alternate meanings for common words. (Thanks to Steve Person for finding these gems.)

And the winners are:

1. *Coffee*, n. The person upon whom one coughs.
2. *Flabbergasted*, adj. Appalled by discovering how much weight one has gained.
3. *Abdicate*, v. To give up all hope of ever having a flat stomach.
4. *Esplanade*, v. To attempt an explanation while drunk.
5. *Willy-nilly*, adj. Impotent.
6. *Negligent*, adj. Absent mindedly answering the door when wearing only a nightgown.
7. *Lymph*, v. To walk with a lisp.
8. *Gargoyle*, n. Olive-flavored mouthwash.
9. *Flatulence*, n. Emergency vehicle that picks up someone who has been run over by a steamroller.
10. *Balderdash*, n. A rapidly receding hairline.
11. *Testicle*, n. A humorous question on an exam.
12. *Rectitude*, n. The formal, dignified bearing adopted by proctologists.
13. *Pokemon*, n. A Rastafarian proctologist
14. *Oyster*, n. A person who sprinkles his conversation with Yiddishisms.
15. *Frisbeetarianism*, n. The belief that, after death, the soul flies up onto the roof and gets stuck there.
16. *Circumvent*, n. An opening in the front

From a Bad Governor to a Worse Governor

By John Clayton

Family Leader, an ultra-right Republican, extremist evangelical organization in Iowa, has been touted by Reynolds as an ally. While Branstad had been outside this organizations orb, Reynolds is in lock step with Family Leader.

The Family Leader organization (TFL) focuses on the issues of marriage being defined as between a man and women, and opposes what it terms distortions of sexuality or special rights to those practicing distorted sexual behavior. This is an extremist Evangelical organization in Iowa bannerng four goals:

- Transform the culture
- Impact elections
- Influence policy

- Become a model organization other states can follow

Bob Vander Plaats is CEO of The Family Leader in Iowa. Let's survey some of Bob's public statements. In April 2012 he boycotted Starbucks for supporting same sex marriage; saying, "Starbucks walked away from God's design for the family." In a 2014 speech, Bob said, '....God might stop his blessing of the USA because of Gay marriage and abortion.' On October 12, 2016, Bob stated, "We need to be a prophetic voice to the culture. You take the church's voice out from the culture and you do not even know which restroom you should use anymore, think about that." Recently, Bob attributed Trump's November victory to 'the hand of God'.

This organization is not fringe. Through TFL's campaigning Iowa judges have been removed.

They catapulted Ted Cruise into first place in the 2016 Iowa Republican primary. In mobilizing TFL supporters, Trump's Iowa

victory in November was delivered.

A wrinkle of resistance to TFL has been Terry Branstad. With a campaign launched against Branstad's funding Planned Parenthood, Branstad did not cave. A further contentious upset was over the annual Governors Conference on LGBT Youth. Year after year, TFL has campaigned to have the governor eliminate that conference.

However, the annual Governors Conference on LGBTQ Youth may not receive future support. Why? Kim Reynolds will ascend to be governor. In the past, Kim has been cozy with TFL's agenda and with Bob Vander Plaats.

For instance, in 2014 Kim Reynolds gave a speech at The Family Leader Summit. On entering the stage, she began by throwing her arms around Bob Vander Plaats. In opening remarks to the auditorium Kim said, "...I am simply here today to say, thank you, thank you for all your work to protect those (*family*) values." At the end she closed with, "You are so important for our state; and the families of Iowa are counting on you; and they are counting on your voices." (*Attibution: Youtube video of speech*)

How close can we see Kim standing with The Family Leader's agenda? At a 2014 prayer service Kim attended at the Capitol, she said, "As a mother and a grandmother and a public servant, it is important for us to remain engaged in the public square, protecting God's place in our conversation..." That is seamless from the context of the words Vander Plaats says.

Branstad never received an election-run endorsement from TFL's leadership. The lieutenant governor has enjoyed long-time support from the vast majority of The Family Leader's rank and file members. Now, with Terry off to China, The Family Leader will use Kim to move its anti-LGBTQ agenda forward.



What Its Like to Attend an FFBC Meeting

By Jonathan Wilson

Expect to see about 60 well-adjusted gay and bi men and their guests in the gallery of Hoyt Sherman Place. Smoke free; alcohol free; loud music free. There's ample, free, surface parking east of the building. Enter through the most westerly door on the south side of the building. Follow your nose to the registration table located near that entrance. Sign in and, assuming you've given an RSVP, find your printed name tag. Choose a seat anywhere; breakfast buffet-style will begin at 7:00. After brief announcements, the distinguished speaker will be introduced, speak for about 20 minutes, and then answer questions. The meeting will end around 8:00 and you can start looking forward to the next meeting.

Today's haiku by A.H.

The listening sun
paints a coat of life on earth
by way of reply.

<http://www.alharris.com/ponderables/index.htm>

Why Him? Review by Gary Kaufman

Hollywood's most-out gay actor, James Franco, has a new vehicle, *Why Him?* It is an extremely well-written comedy for the Holidays. The set-up is the always good format of the conservative father of the soon-to-be bride and the conflict of values with his soon-to-be son-in-law. In this interpretation, the potential son-in-law, played by James Franco, is a free-spirit who has built his fortune by creating a popular video game and has no personal filters – he says whatever he is thinking.

The father has more things to worry about than his potential son-in-law; the printing manufacturing company he has built and run his entire life is falling on hard times and may have to close. He just has not changed with the times and the times seem to be passing him up. His son has new ideas; he isn't ready for new ideas. This conflict between the new and the old ways of doing things drives the comedy.

The actors are great. Bryan Cranston was brilliant in communicating to the audience through his facial expressions his dismay at just about everything his potential son-in-law says while trying not to express shock or consternation audibly. Megan Mullally (who is known best for playing Karen, the rich socialite on *Will and Grace*, is hilarious as the mother of the bride as she delivers her under-the-breath reactions to James Franco's wild orations.

The film is a real joy, and should you see it, be sure to sit through the credits. It contains explanations as to what happens to all of the principal characters in the future. Enjoy.

John Adams by David McCullough
Book Review by Steve Person

In a **Des Moines Register** editorial of January 9, 2017, Iowa's senator Chuck Grassley earned some well-deserved criticism: "When historians turn their attention to the Supreme Court and the manner in which politics play a role in the selection process, Grassley's name will be writ large. Fairly or not, his actions in 2016 are likely to be cited as an example of politically motivated obstructionism."

As chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Grassley steadfastly refused even to grant a hearing on President Obama's nominee to fill Antonin Scalia's seat after Scalia died suddenly last winter. At the time of the nomination, Obama had almost a year left in office. Grassley and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell employed the weak excuse that a Supreme Court nominee should not be confirmed in the final year of a lame duck presidency. If for no other reason than that, both should have been voted out of office in the November election, but, alas, that did not happen.

David McCullough's exceptional biography, **John Adams**, illustrates a stellar example of a true lame duck president executing his job as prescribed by the Constitution. In the contentious 1800 election, Adams received 65 electoral votes to Jefferson's 73 and Aaron Burr's 73. Obviously the loser, Adams continued his job as chief executive while the House of Representatives eventually chose Jefferson to be President (thanks largely to Alexander Hamilton). In those days, newly elected presidents took office on March 4. "On January 31, 1801, at the President's House, Adams signed (John) Marshall's commission as Chief Justice, *which the Senate confirmed without delay* (my Italics)."

If Grassley had been the assiduous student of history that he claims to be, he would have known that a President is **the** President until he leaves office and a new person is sworn in. That John Adams could nominate and have John Marshall confirmed in so little time underscores how truly awful our fractured republic has become. While Obama may have been considered a "lame duck" last year, he was not truly so until after the November 8, 2016, election. Grassley just didn't get it.

It's a pity history books aren't written by people like David McCullough. His ability to relate the lives of historical figures in clear and riveting language is testament to his skill as a writer. The public service of a man like Adams—when this country was in its infancy—makes the politicians of today pale by comparison. Adams literally spent years away from his wife and family, made numerous grueling sailings across the Atlantic to act as minister to France and England at a time when news and travel took months, and yet managed to keep in tact his sense of humanity. If you are a genuine student of history, **John Adams** should be on your reading list.

