

FFBC

First Friday News & Views

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

November 2017

Volume 22

Issue 11

The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, November 3,
2017
7:00 a.m.



FFBC Meeting Location:
Hoyt Sherman Place,
15th and Woodland,
Des Moines, IA



R.S.V.P.

JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com

or phone

(515) 288-2500

by Wednesday,
November 1.



FFBC Website:
www.ffbc-iowa.org



We Are Not Without Options

by Jonathan Wilson

With the advent of Trump's incompetence and impulsiveness (that could easily be mistakenly seen as fulfilling his narrative about shaking things up in Washington) the only hope is that Congress will act to rein him in and right the ship of state. There is a Constitutional balance of power in Washington for good reason and it "trumps" partisanship (pun intended).

On the debt ceiling, Congress can do that unilaterally by a veto-proof majority. That puts the issue to rest, frees us from jeopardizing the full faith and credit of the United States government, and eliminates the prospect of taxpayer dollars being spent on a useless wall on our southern border.

On North Korea, Congress can adopt legislation prohibiting the first-strike use of nuclear weapons, absent an act of Congress declaring war, as well as prohibiting an unprovoked military attack on North Korea by the United States or an attack by South Korea with US support. That alone would help de-escalate the current situation that is being aggravated by two very unstable people with equally crazy haircuts. North Korea is pursuing nuclear weapon capability, not out of fear of a nuclear attack but, rather, for the sake of security from a conventional weapons attack being launched. North Korea isn't hoping to deter a nuclear attack; North Korea is more afraid of a conventional military intervention. Congress can fix that.

On DACA, Congress can act with or without Trump's concurrence by fashioning compassionate legislation that gives permission for youngsters brought to this country against their will to remain here so long as they are otherwise law-abiding. They can be educated and work as productive members of our society, eventually, perhaps, becoming US citizens and, in the meantime, pay taxes, serve in our military, and contribute to Social Security (which could use some more contributors). Congress, with the power of the purse, can refuse tax dollars from being spent on deportation of DACA beneficiaries.



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["We Are Not Without Options" / continued from page one]

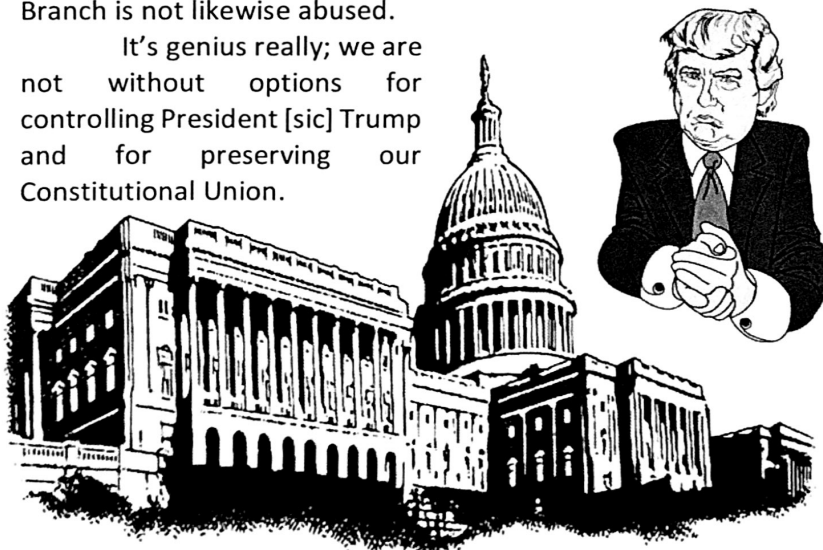
On tax reform, Congress should politely but firmly inform Trump that tax reform will not be considered unless and until he has fully disclosed his tax returns. Period. End of sentence. Drop mic. Only such disclosure will demonstrate how self-serving any of his reform proposals might be.



On the Trump-Russia investigation into the integrity of our democratic election system (something Trump has not acknowledged or condemned), Congress, without any approval from you-know-who, can take Robert Mueller under its jurisdiction and authority, removing any potential that you-know-who might try to fire him.

Senator McCain said it *almost* right: he said that Congress is not the president's subordinate but, rather, Congress is a co-equal branch of government. In fact, with action by veto-proof majorities, Congress has the greater power if members of Congress are simply willing to grow a pair. That is the check on abuse of power by the Executive Branch of government that the founders envisioned and put in place with our Constitution. The third branch of government – an independent judiciary – is there to ensure that the Congressional check upon the Executive Branch is not likewise abused.

It's genius really; we are not without options for controlling President [sic] Trump and for preserving our Constitutional Union.



In the Spotlight

November's Speaker: Dean Learner

Our speaker in November will be Dean Learner, an attorney and retired Assistant Attorney General of the state of Iowa. He will be talking about what aging Iowans currently can expect when they move to assisted living environments, a fitting sequel to the presentation of Dr. Loren Olson. You won't want to miss this meeting, and you're welcome to bring one of more cans of food to donate to the Food Bank. We'll get the food delivered! You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend Breakfast Club!



**Mark Your
Calendar**

*"Relationships can
achieve no higher level of
development than the
level of each partner's
maturity."*

(Loren Olson)

"Volunteers Needed" to Train Future Doctors on LGBTQ Medical Issues

by Don Jones

The Des Moines University is expanding its educational system to train our future doctors on how to take "better care" of LGBTQ patients on aging and health issues.

The DMU LGBTQ Medical Student's President, Josh Tomashek, was a guest speaker for the Prime Timers of Central Iowa last August. The discussion found that our doctors are not well-equipped to handle LGBTQ medical issues.

Now the Des Moines University is in need of 12-15 LGBTQ volunteers to step-up and help.

DMU is hosting a week of events around HIV care and activism. Volunteers are needed on November 27th from 4:00-6:00 p.m. As standardized patients, the volunteers would be given a scenario and a short list of talking points, and then the student would be asked to interact with the "patient" in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner. The two scenarios they will be running are one where a patient that is at high risk for HIV infection comes into the clinic and the physician is tasked with talking about the need for an HIV test and potentially getting them on PrEP. The second case is one in which the student is asked to deliver positive HIV test results to the patient. The volunteer "patient" would have an opportunity to tell the medical student what they felt went well and what they felt went poorly in the encounter.

Anyone in the LGBTQ Community of any age and any health status is welcome to volunteer. It is your chance to help out in training future doctors to do better in serving the LGBTQ Community.

Please contact Don Jones at PTClatl@large1@gmail if you are interested.

LGBTQ

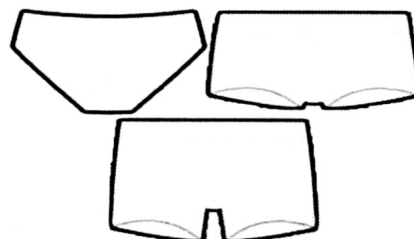
DES MOINES
UNIVERSITY



"Do the things that give your life meaning. Let your past become history and the future be a surprise. Make this day the best time of your life. The past is immutable my future is unknowable. Why should I worry about them?"

(Loren Olson)

Briefs & Shorts:



Thanks to **Doug Aupperle** for introducing our October speaker, Mark Stringer, the newly appointed Executive Director of ACLU of Iowa. Thanks to **Brian Taylor Carlson** for his work on the FFBC website. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our new newsletter production editor. Thanks to **Ryan Weidner** for his work as our technology guru.

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.

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.

I Can't Dance

by Brian Taylor Carlson

SO AWKWARD



I recently dined at Irina's Restaurant & Bar during one of its signature Russian dinners. Four courses were included at a set price. Drinks were extra. And, as to be expected, the vodka began flowing – between the soup and entrée courses. Tables were arranged in a way that mixed groups of people together. And our party of three happened to be combined with a table of four pretty Russian ladies from the Ukraine.

I'm socially awkward as it is, but pretty, Russian ladies who are not familiar with gay American men makes for an interesting dinner conversation. The lady next to me – the ringleader, so to speak – asked me what I did for a living. I told her I am the food and dining reporter for *The Des Moines Register*. I explained my job to her and that I was there to taste Russian food and perhaps write about Irina's in the future. "I never meet someone who does this before," she said. She told me she was a friend of Irina's and that she runs a cleaning service.

"Before the night is over, you drink vodka and you dance," she nodded at me firmly, batting her eyelashes and smiling. That's when my smile faded. Not only have I become sober – having quit drinking in June – but I am probably one of the few gay men on the planet who was not gifted with the dancing gene.

I can cook, decorate, organize, sew, and write. I can discuss travel, literature, art, and academic disciplines. But ask me to dance, and my eyes widen and I freeze like Cindy Brady at the game show on *The Brady Bunch*. My only dance move that I have perfected and have used for three decades (that was usually seen only after midnight in Key West, around the time the sixth cocktail was consumed) is the one where I stagger onto the dance floor, plant my feet firmly in place, swivel my hips like a belly dancer, and move my hands like I'm dribbling a ball down the court at a Harlem Globetrotters game. This dance move was only seen when club music was playing and I was hidden among the crowd so no one could see me from the perimeter of the dance floor. Sure, I used to dance on a banquette one summer in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, but you can only do so much while standing on top of a little wooden box.

Even my brother has perfected his impression of me on the dance floor, and he performs this impression at the most inopportune times, comparing it to the "Elaine dance" from that famous episode of *Seinfeld*.

dancing with the stars

Seriously, dancing is one of those things I often want to learn. I love to watch great dancers; I'm envious of how effortless they make it seem. I see glimpses of *Dancing with the Stars*, and think to myself, "I could learn how to do that with the proper instruction." That thought gets lost in my daily routine and busy work schedule. Plus, my love of reading takes precedence over everything else.

Plenty of YouTube videos are out there to teach those of us who are gifted with two left feet some snazzy new dance moves, but my left feet happen to be encased in cement with taproots growing 20 feet down to the nearest water source. I find myself getting frustrated, and I move on, instead, to Amazon.com to shop for new books to add to my collection.

For me, dancing is the outward embodiment of my social awkwardness. It is literally my personified shyness. I have learned to embrace my social awkwardness. It is part of me, and I am not apologetic about it. But sometimes, it makes for some bizarre circumstances. For instance, I was recently in the elevator with a fellow reporter from *The Register*. The usual pleasantries are what you would expect. For socially awkward people like me, my brain becomes preoccupied with choosing responses too quickly, and I trip all over myself. The conversation went like this:

Co-worker in elevator: Hi, Brian! Great to see you!

Me: Yes! (Translation: Hi! Great to see you too!)

CIE: (Quizzical look.)

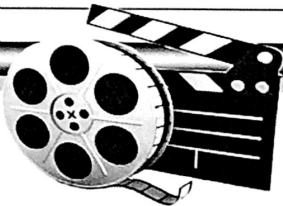
Me: You doing? (Translation: Are you doing well?)
(Uncomfortable pause.)

CIE: Am I doing well? Yes.



SOCIALLY AWKWARD

[continued on page seven]



Beach Rats

Movie Review by Mark Turnage

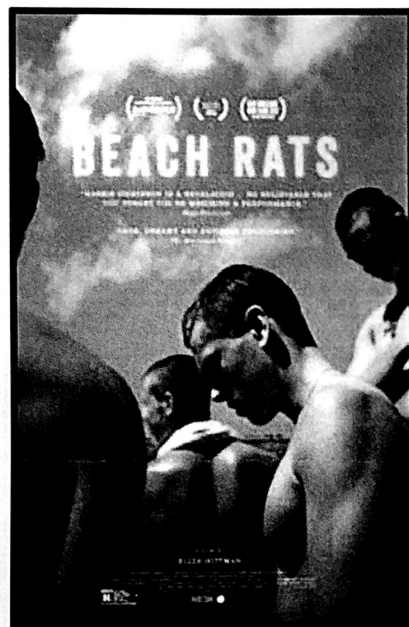
I remember what it was like to have “bummer summers” as a closeted gay teenager, and it’s what attracted me to the subject matter of *Beach Rats*. Yet the adolescent problems of exposure and amorphous identity seem pale and dreamlike, filtered through the reality of being a gay adult, and perhaps contributed to the dissociation between me and this movie. Director Eliza Hittman delivers a coming-of-age film that’s somewhere in-between *Kids* and *Moonlight*, an immersive dream-scape without the gripping social gut-punches of either one.

Granted, the stakes of the plot are concentrated solely on one lower-middle-class Brooklyn teenager, Frankie (marvelously acted by Harrison Dickinson) managing both his closeted sexuality and his dying father amidst bumps of drugs, anonymous gay hookups, and an attitude of outward passive indifference and hidden inner turmoil. No one really gets Frankie, so Frankie doesn’t bother getting anyone beyond their immediate use. But that passivity is the core of the film’s tone and plot, slowly building to a wake-up call that forces our protagonist to awaken from his washed-out teenage dream and look hard at what that passivity has wrought. What does your sexual awakening cost if you allow others to determine its validity? The question isn’t that the story needs told; it does, especially through a queer lens, and Hittman tells it well enough.



The erotic sequences especially are haunting, graphic, and poignant. Hittman doesn’t pull her punches when depicting the beautiful and ugly realities of anonymous gay sex, and she should be applauded for her courage as a filmmaker. One sequence that stuck with me was Frankie following a trick through the woods to someplace secluded, an increasingly tense scene reminiscent of something from *Cruising* the longer it played out. And that’s where *Beach Rats* succeeds: conveying the fear and uncertainty of a closeted teenager hooking up in secret with strangers who could, at any moment, threaten his life. It’s an expectation that’s cleverly reversed in the penultimate scene.

Beach Rats delivers an immersive world, and for better and for worse, it’s the world of a bored, white, lower-middle-class, sexually confused teenager. Yet like fireworks, one wonders if more complexity would have yielded a more sustained brilliance.



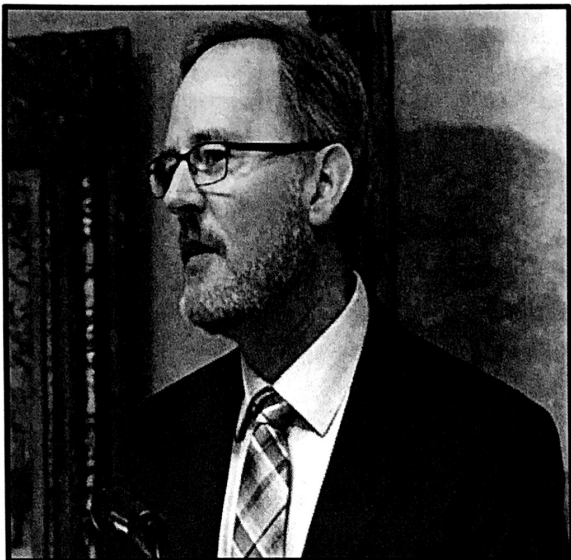


Photo by Gary Moore

Born and raised in Akron, Ohio, Mark Stringer attended Ashland University to study theater and English before receiving a master's degree in theater from Bowling Green State University. After trying acting and a number of other odd jobs, Stringer returned to school once more, this time earning a Master of Divinity degree from Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. His first full-time pastoral job brought him to Des Moines, where he served as senior minister of the First Unitarian Church starting in 2001, guiding that liberal congregation through sixteen years of exceptional growth and community involvement. Late last year, just as Stringer was considering moving in a new career direction, the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa began looking for a new executive director. He and the ACLU quickly came to an agreement, and he took up his new post part-time in May, and full-time in July.

Since moving to Iowa, Mark Stringer has also been involved as a leader in many civil-rights and opportunities organizations. He served as chair of the board of the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa; was a leader with AMOS, a broad-based community organizing effort; and was founding board chair of Project IOWA, a local workforce development initiative. He also officiated (as FFBC members well know) at Iowa's first legally recognized same-sex marriage in 2007, in the front yard of his home. Mark Stringer lives in Des Moines with his wife and two school-age daughters. He can be reached at the ACLU of Iowa at 515-243-3988 or mark.stringer@aclu-ia.org.

In Good Hands with Mark Stringer

by Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday, October 6, 2017, was Mark Stringer, former senior minister of the First Unitarian Church in Des Moines (2001-2017), and, since March of this year, the newly appointed executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa. This was, in fact, the third time that Stringer has addressed us: the first time was in December 2005, representing the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa as its board chairman; and the second was in November 2007, when he regaled us with his account of how he became the first minister to officiate at a legally recognized same-sex wedding in Iowa. **An audio recording of this latest presentation is available on our Web site, ffbc-iowa.org, under the "Speakers" tab.**

Stringer was a moving speaker as always, this time describing to us how his ensuing reputation as the "go-to" pastor – nationwide – for same-sex couples who wanted to marry legally, affected him and his ministry. He gave us many thrilling tales of how newly-marrieds, their children and their parents and their friends, were all changed by the services he was privileged to lead, and their tears and laughter and joy were all reflected in our own FFBC faces. His experiences, Mark said, made him feel that he was standing in a flowing river of love, and left him, too, feeling changed forever.

Towards the end of 2016, Mark said, he had decided to step away from ministry, to take all that he had learned as a pastor and apply it to a new career. When he saw the ACLU job description, he thought, "Wow, this really looks like what I want to do." Really, running a church the size of First UU was basically running a nonprofit, he thought, and that was the kind of transition he'd like to make. "I'm grateful this opportunity coincided with me deciding to step away from congregational ministry. I can still do a lot of the things I was doing as a minister, but in a more focused way and for an organization whose values I share."

"The ACLU," he concluded, "is particularly well-positioned in our current social and political climate to be a voice of reason in a stew of partisanship and rancor. I think the ACLU, because we operate on principle and in defense of our constitutional liberties, is an excellent organization to further democracy during difficult times. This is my new ministry, and I want to feel the flow of more rights."

***"Holding onto anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die."* (Loren Olson)**

"I Can't Dance" / [continued from page four]

Lucky for me, the conversation resumed and the redness on my face dissipated. She understood that I wasn't just some weirdo, but a guy whose brain gets all jumbled up before the neural impulses travel to my motor functions that control speech. The same thing applies to my dancing.

In Key West, people knew I had to be sailing along if I was out on the dance floor. But in Key West, no one cares if you dance poorly. Everyone else is just as drunk or worse than you are. Sometimes, the cute guy you had your eye on all night was out there, and that was the only way to get close to him for perhaps some eye contact, a coy smile, or just to check out that hot little ass of his.

In 2011, after I met my husband, Ed, he flew down to see me. I took him to the Sunday Tea Dance at La-Te-Da on Duval Street in the late afternoon. This was after lounging around at the Island House for the four-hour pool party (where free shots were served around the pool by attractive men). After several giant frozen drinks, we were already moving along rather swimmingly.

After a few more ice-cold adult beverages at Tea, I asked Eddy to join me on the dance floor. Within five minutes of doing my usual foot-planting, hip-swiveling, basketball-dribbling dance move, I leaned in close to Eddy. I had the audacity to ask him if he could find the downbeat – as if I had any right to ask him to step up his dance game when mine was virtually nonexistent. I have never again asked him to match my dancing skills. It would be like playing a game and asking him to lose on purpose.

The first time I ever danced at the legendary Blazing Saddle, I dragged Eddy up onto the tiny packed stage. About 10 other people were up there as we climbed up the steps and made our way to the back near the wall. Within two minutes, the dance floor cleared, leaving just the two of us on the tiny but elevated platform. I am still certain it was because of my poor dancing skills. Since that night, I have only been on that dance floor two other times. And yes, a hefty amount of vodka was sitting in first class on those hazily-remembered evenings.

The dinner at Irina's was the first time I've been in a situation where dancing was almost a requirement. Luckily, I made it out of that predicament without having made a fool of myself, my husband, and our dinner companion. Once the soup was served, the Russian duo began to play Russian dance music, rap (you have not lived until you've heard Russian rap music), and folk songs. The ladies occupied themselves on the dance floor, but every so often, the ringleader would catch my eye and motion for me to join her. I would shake my head no and smile, and she would throw her hand up in exasperation. As the ladies danced, we discussed the state of crushing oppression of the LGBT community in Russia.



After a few songs, a tall, young gentleman appeared. He was friends with the ladies and introduced himself to us in his Russian accent as "K." Our dinner companion was quite smitten with him. But he was straight, of course, and he joined the ladies on the dance floor in a frenzied Russian line dance that showed off his dance moves, and they were far superior to mine. That's when, in my mind, a series of "ifs" took place. I knew then that a special set of circumstances would need to be met if I was ever to be lured to the dance floor again. I will only dance... 1) if I am drunk, 2) if I am single, 3) if I am attracted to a hot guy on the dance floor, and 4) if I am in a gay bar.

All four of these conditions would need to be met. Since this set of circumstances is unattainable, I think it's safe to say that the unwary public will never have to see the sad spectacle that is my dancing. Ever.



"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

(H. Jackson Brown, Jr.)

"Pain is being realistic about my age; suffering is being defeated by it."

(Loren Olson)

Something To Be Proud Of

by Jordan Duesenberg

When I think about **Pride**, the first that comes to mind is a street party: shirtless men dancing, drinks, cliché dance songs from 80s divas, and maybe a parade. While I honestly do enjoy everything I just listed (and perhaps a little bit too much), I can't say those things particularly make me proud. However, what does make me proud is the level of advocacy our community does for those who are oppressed. I'm proud of the resiliency of our community in the face of adversity – surviving bigotry and hatred, being bullied, even surviving a plague that nearly wiped out an entire generation – and yet we carried on. I'm proud of the incredible talents of everyone in our community, from doctors, lawyers, actors, artists, etc. I'm proud of how much our talents as a community have shaped mainstream popular culture in the past and present and into the future. I'm proud of the money we continually raise to help and better LGBT youth (something for which I'm particularly proud of FFBC). So why don't I ever think of any of these things when someone brings up **Pride**?

I've been recently volunteering for Capital City Pride, and we want to change the way that we think about Pride in this community. Although the street party that I always think about will still be there in 2018 (and bigger and better than before), we want to make Pride something that isn't just an event one weekend in June, but something that goes on all year long. I'm not just talking about parties that are going on throughout the year either (although we do have a lot of those if you're interested). It's our goal to have educational events as well as to start taking part in community service, along with the parties that we are used to.



PRIDE

Just a few examples of some of the educational events we have planned: we are starting a speaker series which will feature prominent members of the LGBTQ community which will start early next year (speakers and dates will be announced shortly). We are also starting Capital City Pride Book Club to create a space for members of the LGBTQ community to engage with LGBTQ literature, old and new. We have more events that we are planning; all that will be announced on the calendar on the Capital City Pride website. Also, as I have previously mentioned, we are looking to get involved with community service, both that serves the LGBTQ community and the greater Des Moines community.

Although we are still in the early stages of planning these events, I wanted to write this article to ask for your help. We all have reasons to be proud of our community, but I understand, in Des Moines, not everybody has the most positive things to say about Pride. So, if you're reading this and agree with that statement or just want to help, I'm asking you to please contact me to let me know what we can do to make Pride better for you and the community. What type of events would you like to see throughout the year? What kind of events would you show up to or even get involved in? What types of community service do you think we should get involved in to better our community? At the end of the day, we are really trying to better this community and build something that will last and that we are truly proud of – not just a street party in the second weekend of June.

To contact me, please email me at jordan-duesenberg@hotmail.com, and any comments you have are greatly appreciated. Thank you!

What is Fake News?

by Jonathan Wilson

News, genuine or fake, is information generated to inform people of supposed facts -- current or recent events - in a timely manner. Genuine news sources aren't flawless, but when errors are identified, those sources publish a correction and even apologize for the error. That's what makes them not perfect, but genuine. It's a litmus test for all consumers of news. President [sic] Trump has repeatedly been the source of demonstrably false information. I am unaware of any instance in which he has later acknowledged the error(s) or apologized. This means that the one most vocal in condemning so-called "fake news," turns out to be the one most guilty of generating it.

**FAKE
NEWS**

FAKE

**FAKE
NEWS**

Oct. 11



A Tribute to Donna Red Wing

Speech delivered by Iowa State Senator Matt McCoy

Today [October 11] is a day for all of us who live “out” lives to celebrate our unique qualities. Sadly, many Iowans and many Americans are not **out** at work, home, and in their communities. Many feel afraid for their safety, job security, or housing if they come out.

In more than 28 states in our nation, you can be fired for being gay or transgender. Attorney General Sessions just announced that gender identity is not protected in this country. President Trump sent a message that impacted more than 15,000 brave transgender Americans who serve the United States Military; by tweet, he announced to those Americans that he would ban transgender Americans from serving in the U.S. military. Imagine waking up to that tweet as you defend your nation in hostile parts of the world.

For those who feel that the battle is over for full-equality, I have a message. You simply are not paying attention. LGBTQ Americans are under attack. This is the most anti-gay administration ever elected to the White House. After waving our PRIDE flag in the campaign and promising to be right on LGBTQ issues, Trump has shown us what a dirty, filthy, racist liar he is. The impact of this administration’s backward, hateful racist policies will be felt for decades in the courts through Trump-appointed judges, the policies they have enacted, and the executive orders that judges have issued and will issue.

One person who will never be victimized by backward, racist policies is **Donna Red Wing**. Everyone who knows Donna loves Donna. She is kind, wicked smart, and a champion for the underdog. She has been described by the Christian Coalition as “the most dangerous woman in America” (which makes her golden in my book). Throughout her life, she has always stood for equality for all. As a visionary leader, she headed Interfaith Alliance and The Gill Foundation; she was the National Policy Director for the Human Rights Campaign, National Director of GLAAD, Director of the Lesbian Community Project, and a member of President Barack Obama’s Kitchen Cabinet on LGBT concerns.

Donna led One Iowa as our Executive Director and helped Iowans talk about being LGBT. She discovered Iowans who were forced back into the closet as they entered the twilight of life entering nursing homes and not being welcome to live honestly nor having long-term partners acknowledged.

Donna is facing a new challenge herself. She is courageously battling cancer today. It is so fitting that we acknowledge her work on National Coming Out Day. I can tell you that Donna is an incredible fighter, and she intends to kick cancer in the butt (as if any of us had any doubts about that). It is the strength and courage that Donna has demonstrated over her lifetime that allows individuals to live and speak freely about their sexual orientation.

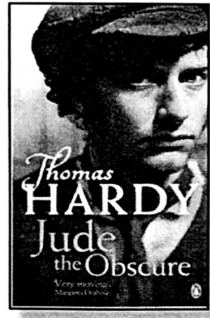
I am honored to recognize Donna Red Wing for her life’s work and to recognize her wife Sumitra who has been with Donna on every step of this journey.



A Tale of Two Books

by Steve Person

Flying across the Atlantic Ocean allows for lots of time to read. I don't partake of the entertainment options that the airlines offer and prefer to read or try to sleep. My September trip to England afforded the chance to complete two entirely different reads: Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, and Leslie Carroll's *Notorious Royal Marriages*.



In the introduction of this edition of Hardy's final novel, it states, "Hardy's 'tragedy of unfulfilled aims' shocked many when it appeared in 1895...." The odyssey of Jude Fawley's life unfolds from an orphan of eleven years of age to the finality of an unremarkable death after a lifetime of unrealized dreams and foolish decisions, all the while exacerbated by the British class system with its rigid rules and standards of proper behavior.

Jude yearns to leave his tiny village of Marygreen and journey to the city of Christminster to study in one of the colleges there and become a doctor of religion. Unfortunately for him, his loins dictate his behavior more than his desire to improve himself. He teaches himself the classics in Greek and Latin but gains no entry to the education he sorely desires. He contracts an early and unfortunate marriage with a local wench who eventually leaves him to go to Australia. After the divorce, he becomes transfixed on a cousin whose nervous disposition and uncommon views of society's strict norms lead to his downfall. Both women offer Jude physical and emotional outlets in different ways, but both are ultimately his ruin. The theme of mismatched love in the book is a common element in Hardy's writings as evidenced by novels such as *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

Notorious Royal Marriages continues the idea of mismatched people through the ages, but this time it is for marriages mostly of convenience and rarely for love. The book traces chronologically the marriages of kings and queens, princes and princesses, and the occasional commoner who manages to gain entry into a royal enclosure with ultimately unfavorable results. Carroll begins his book in the twelfth century with Eleanor of Aquitaine's two royal marriages—first to Louis VII of France and later to Henry II of England. Ferdinand and Isabella of fifteenth-century Spain (think Christopher Columbus) made an unusual couple because Isabella was actually the more powerful of the two. Their unfortunate daughter, Joanna of Castile, went mad after marrying the handsome but dissolute Philip, Duke of Burgundy. Of course, Henry VIII's six marriages figure prominently in the book, as does the illegal marriage of George IV to Mrs. Fitzherbert and his legal marriage to Caroline of Brunswick whom George detested, and he locked her out of the coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey. The upstart Napoleon's two marriages remind readers of the capriciousness of powerful men. The twentieth century included matches purportedly for love that may or may not have been happy unions: Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson; Prince Rainier of Monaco and Grace Kelly; Prince Charles and his marriages to Diana and later to Mrs. Parker Bowles.

So much for family values!