

FFBC

First Friday News & Views

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

February 2018

Volume 23

Issue 2

The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, February 2,
2018
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,
January 31.



FFBC Website:
www.ffbc-iowa.org



Talking About Behavioral Causes

by Jonathan Wilson

Words matter. But, true to the adage that actions speak louder than words, behavior matters. Matters more.

The current occupant of the White House, very publicly, has, by his behavior, come to epitomize some very undesirable behaviors and has done the opposite of demonstrating aspirational traits in any human being, let alone the supposed leader of the free world.

Examples are legion and should be embarrassing, if not to him, then embarrassing to those who cherish the highest values uniquely espoused in this country since its founding.

Ignoring the time before his election, since his inauguration he has lied repeatedly at the rate of over 2000 fact-checked lies per year starting with lying about the crowd size at his inauguration that anyone with one eye could see was a lie (compared to 87 fact-checked lies by President Obama in eight years in office). The POTUS seems at times incapable of telling the truth or, when something is misstated (which can always happen with any president), incapable of correcting the record. Rather, he doubles and triples down by repeating his lies unabashedly. In so doing he implicitly insults the intelligence of his supporters and exposes the cowardice and compromised character of his enablers.

I think indisputably, he has engaged in name calling: expressions of racial bigotry; lack of empathy; vulgarity; prideful philandering and infidelity toward three wives and counting; hypocrisy; purposeful alienation of personal, political, and international allies and friends; erratic behavior (including making inconsistent statements days, hours, even minutes apart -- with a straight face); petulance; vengefulness; demonstrating demands for nonreciprocal loyalty; appealing to our baser nature; cultivating fear of those who are in some way different from us in our multi-cultural society; and attacking the press, a cornerstone of any democracy that has a hope of surviving. He shuns reading, lacks curiosity, and refuses to learn even verbally from experienced advisors.

[continued on page two]



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["Talking About Behavioral Causes" / continued from page one]



He [Trump] has inspired fawning expressions of praise and adoration from subordinates, including a meeting of his cabinet where every participant took turns extoling his virtues and greatness. It was bizarre, to say the least; he was the only one in the room, I think, who failed to recognize the insincerity. Everyone else had to have left that meeting feeling the immediate need to take a hot shower -- one that could never be hot enough to cleanse their consciences -- they'll have to wait for hell to accomplish that kind of heat.

Against the backdrop of these undeniable behaviors that have been displayed publicly and repeatedly by the POTUS, what are we to tell our children and our grandchildren? What are his children to tell his grandchildren? The most honest and, coincidentally, the most charitable thing that can be told to children, including Trump's own grandchildren, is that he suffers from a readily diagnosable personality disorder -- **narcissism**. A narcissist is not simply someone who is self-indulgent. And you don't need to be a psychiatrist to make the diagnosis. Check out the Mayo Clinic website on this subject. Mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/narcissistic-personality-disorder/basics/definition/con-20025568. The recent medical exam of the POTUS screened for cognitive mental capacity -- a very low bar for mental health assessment. The exam conspicuously neglected to examine for readily diagnosable narcissistic personality disorder.

All of the uncivilized behaviors exhibited by the POTUS are classic examples of every single characteristic described by Mayo Clinic for the purposes of diagnosing a narcissistic personality disorder. A personality disorder. All his uncivilized behaviors are things he simply can't control. They are part of his arsenal of survival skills. It leaves him unprincipled and purely transactional.

The presidency does not change one's character; it magnifies one's character. Similarly, the presidency does not cure a pre-existing personality disorder. Every news report on his latest antics and miscreant behavior should be introduced with the phrase, "Most recently, the President exhibited his personality disorder by saying . . . ; or by doing . . . [fill in the blanks]." Failure to do so gives credence to the conduct and infuses it with some degree of normalcy that it should not have in a civilized society.

Our children and grandchildren, and all of us, need to understand that such behaviors are *not* normal, and it's not okay to emulate such behaviors. Those messages can only get through if it is first understood that the POTUS is *not* well mentally.



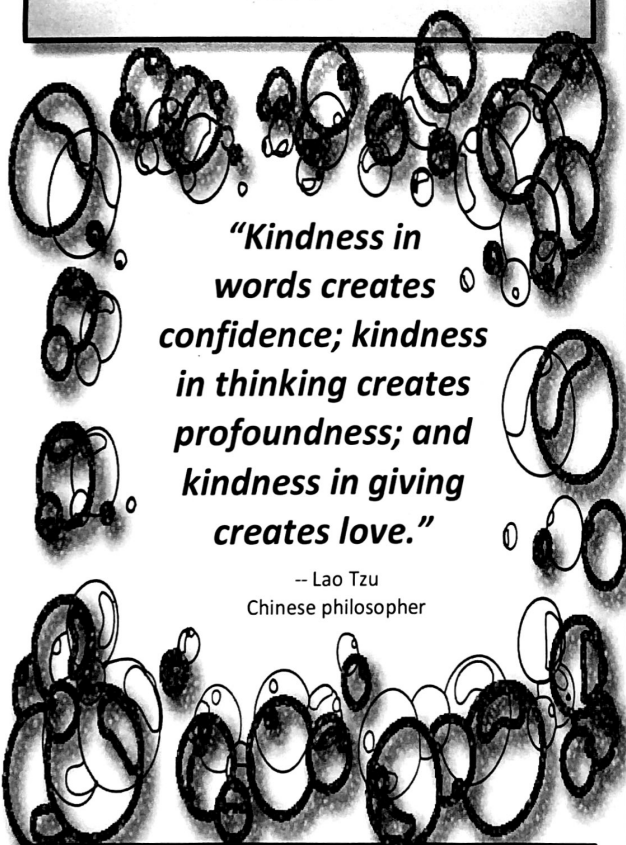
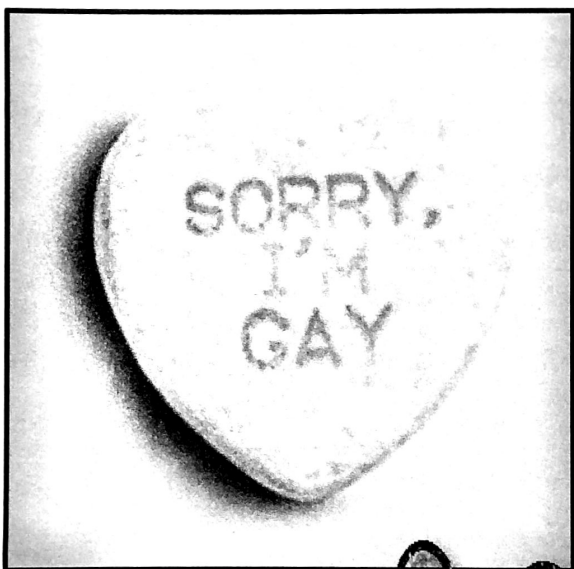
February's
Speaker:

Carol ☒ Mark Your
Hunter Calendar



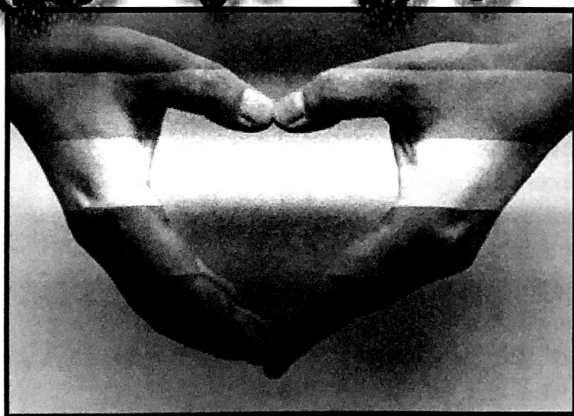
Our speaker in February will be Carol Hunter, Executive Editor of the *Des Moines Register*. You won't want to miss. You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend!!

*The key
to success is
sincerity; when
you're able to fake
that, you'll have it
made.*

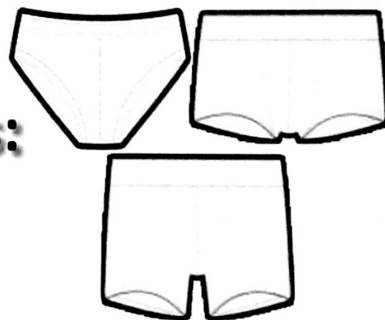


"Kindness in words creates confidence; kindness in thinking creates profoundness; and kindness in giving creates love."

-- Lao Tzu
Chinese philosopher



Briefs & Shorts:



Thanks to **Taylor Van De Krol** for introducing our January speaker, Iowa State Senator (and FFBC member) **Matt McCoy**. Thanks to **Brian Taylor Carlson** for his work on the FFBC website. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter production editor. Thanks to **Ryan Weidner** for his work as our technology guru.

A special thank-you to those FFBC members who have chosen to designate FFBC through the Donor Direct program of United Way. The contributions through United Way are tax deductible.

The next copy deadline for the FFBC newsletter will be February 12, 2018. If you have something on your mind, put it on paper and get it to me by the copy deadline. It'll be interesting, good therapy, or both. Caring is sharing.

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.

Dues Reminder. The annual dues for 2018 are \$180 if paid by the February meeting. The dues cover our meeting rental, twelve monthly breakfasts, one social event in July, the monthly newsletter, and other expenses.

Consider a tax deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both. We are in the midst of our principal fundraising effort so that we can maximize the number of scholarships that we can award. Thanks to a generous contribution from member **Gary Moore**, every dollar contributed goes exclusively to the scholarship program. We're all going to die, and we can't take it with us. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details about legacy giving.



Save the date. The scholarship fundraising reception to thank everyone who gives to the scholarship fund will be February 2, 2018, from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the home of Jonathan Wilson and Scott Kuknyo, 2924 Druid Hill Drive, Des Moines, Iowa. Food, drink, and a good time will be provided.

Martin Luther King, Jr., Day

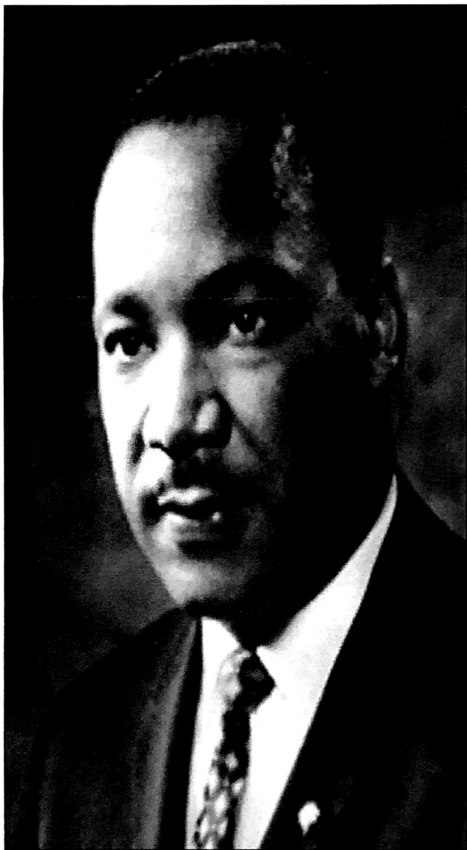
by Iowa State Senator Matt McCoy

As we reflect upon Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, I found this excerpt from Dr. King's letter from the Birmingham jail to be particularly moving and fitting for this difficult time in our country.



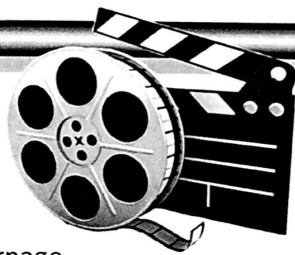
"We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was 'legal' and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was 'illegal.' It was 'illegal' to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's anti-religious laws.

"I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace, which is the absence of tension, to a positive peace, which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action'; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a 'more convenient season.' Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection."



In the first paragraph Dr. King reminds us that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything that the Hungarian freedom fighters did was "illegal." I think about the way the current administration is handling nearly 200,000 Salvadorians who were allowed entry into our country following the devastating earthquakes under the Temporary Protected Status program. We have allowed these individuals to live and work here legally for over a decade, and now the Trump administration is saying they must go. This is clearly legal for the President to do, but it is immoral in my view.

There are nearly 800,000 Dreamers who voluntarily came forward under a program named Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This program was an American Immigration Policy that allowed some individuals who enter this country as minors, and either entered or remained in the country illegally, to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and be eligible for a work permit. DACA was rescinded by the Trump Administration on September 5, 2017, but full implementation of the rescission was delayed six months to give Congress time to decide how to deal with the program and people who voluntarily signed up under this program. Research has shown that these Dreamers have reduced household poverty, increased the levels of skills and education, and contributed to the American economy in a major, positive way. [continued on page seven]



Star Wars: The Last Jedi

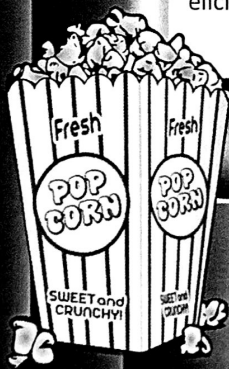
Movie Review by Mark Turnage

"This is not going to end the way you think." There's a reason this line, growled by Mark Hamill's brilliantly bitter Luke Skywalker, is the opening salvo of the ubiquitous trailer for *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*. Yes, the most famous space opera has a monolithic place in pop culture and cinema history, but does this latest installment helmed by Rian Johnson have anything relevant to add other than simply continuing a familiar story? With *The Last Jedi*, Luke's admonition encapsulates the central thesis of a franchise film that deconstructs the very idea of franchise films: specifically, why keep offering more of the same?

Star Wars, as a whole, is the story you know without even knowing it: a nobody from nowhere discovers they're a somebody with legacy, which both heralds a hero's destiny and warns of a daunting shadow over their family name and the universe around them. They're only able to succeed with the help of a motley group of unlikely friends, who overcome incredible odds to save said universe. This core "hero's journey" has driven all seven *Star Wars* films—it's what fans might come to expect when they buy a ticket. But *The Last Jedi* flips the script on every component of that expectation. Nobodies stay nobodies. Heroes aren't lauded; they're short-sighted to the point of catastrophic failure. Arguably, each major "hero" of this story suffers a major failure that proves devastating to themselves, their allies, and the audience. Misread intentions, misplaced trust, and misinterpreted faith are all shadows just as threatening as the First Order fleet that chases the remnants of the Resistance throughout the film (now, if only the plot's timeframe were a bit more believable). To borrow another Skywalker scolding, "Amazing. Every word of what you just said was wrong."

But *The Last Jedi* isn't all doom and gloom—after all, what would a *Star Wars* movie be without hope? And hope does come—with great sacrifice, and through the bravery of everyday people who stand up to lead, not the chosen few of a single family (or religious!) lineage. It's a strident message of populism—and a departure from a central tenet of the *Star Wars* universe. The risks Johnson takes with the mythology of the series are bold and fresh, yet still honor that legacy while pushing its characters in new directions. Adam Driver's Kylo Ren, summing up his own themes of nihilistic destruction, saying, "Let the past die. Kill it, if you have to," might also be the director's tongue-in-cheek way of expressing his views on the overreliance on nostalgia as a plot device. Johnson deftly avoids this, instead preferring stunning references to Japanese samurai-film cinematography. The "Throne Room Scene" stands as one of the most thrilling and beautifully shot sequences in the entire series, including a character exit so awe-inspiring it elicited gasps from the movie theater audience.

Perhaps the most powerful message *The Last Jedi* has, though, concerns dogma and extremism. "That's how we're going to win," Resistance mechanic Rose (Kelly Marie Tran) tells Finn (John Boyega) during the film's final act, "Not fighting what we hate. But saving what we love." Daisy Ridley's Rey is caught between two extremes—not necessarily "good" and "evil," but two opposing spiritual viewpoints. Only through understanding the perspective of both sides does she emerge as a stronger, wiser, central protagonist—one that speaks to the next generation of *Star Wars* fans. See it—the Force is strong with this one.



Movie Reviews



Brace Yourself: The Legislature is Reconvening

by Bruce Carr



Matt McCoy graduated from Dowling High School in 1984 and earned his B.A. degree from Briar Cliff College in Sioux City in 1988. A Democrat, he is serving his sixth term in the Iowa Senate, following two terms in the Iowa House; he represents Senate District 21 which includes the southwestern and western portions of Des Moines, part of West Des Moines, and Cumming in northwest Warren County. Senator McCoy is an Assistant Leader, as well as ranking member on the Transportation & Infrastructure Budget and the Government Oversight Committee. He also serves on the Appropriations, Commerce, Local Government, and Ways & Means committees. During recent sessions he has led the passage of updated HIV and contagious disease transmission legislation, making Iowa the first of 34 states with outdated and unjust legislation to do so. He also worked with House and Senate leaders in capping tuition costs at Iowa's state universities and helped introduce and move positive initiatives for metro Des Moines.

Matt McCoy's civic participation and legislative leadership have earned him numerous honors and awards from such organizations as the Autism Society of Iowa, the Iowa Health Care Association, Easter Seals of Iowa, Tai Dam Village, Iowa Federation of the Blind, Central Iowa Shelter & Services, and many others. Matt McCoy is the father of one son, Jack, and attends Plymouth Congregational Church. He is the author, with Jim Ferguson, of *McCoy, You're Going Straight to Hell: Heartfelt Letters to a Gay State Senator on Marriage Equality* (2014); he can be reached at matt.mccoy@legis.ia.gov or his office at Suite 115, 1717 Ingersoll, Des Moines IA 50312; 515/274-0561.

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, January 5, 2018, was FFBC member Matt McCoy, who is the state senator for Iowa District 21, and who has spoken before our group several times before. This time he discussed what might be expected from the Second Session of the 87th General Assembly of the Iowa legislature, that opened on January 8.

Matt wasn't overly optimistic in his predictions. With the Executive Branch and both legislative chambers controlled by members of the Republican Party – who last session rushed through a shameful number of regressive measures – and a rapidly increasing budget shortfall, the problems just keep mounting. Matt mentioned, in particular, anticipated attempts to “improve” IPERS, tax reform, bills that will allow the restriction of civil rights on grounds of so-called “religious liberty,” “bathroom bills” discriminating against transgender persons, and prohibition of sanctuary cities – almost all in clear imitation of Trumpian political projects. “Our democracy is pretty fragile right now,” he said, and will be revived only if we can figure out how to re-engage a public that is exhausted, numbed-out, and depressed by the antics of Washington politicians and the secrecy around who is providing campaign funding and to whom it's going.

Yet Matt finds hope in the very frustration he described: the 2018 mid-term elections are bound to produce a wave of new, progressive officials, once the appalling extent of Republican failures are realized.

You will be able to hear, or re-hear, a complete audio recording of Matt's talk by going to our Website, <ffbc-iowa.org> and clicking on the “Speakers” tab.



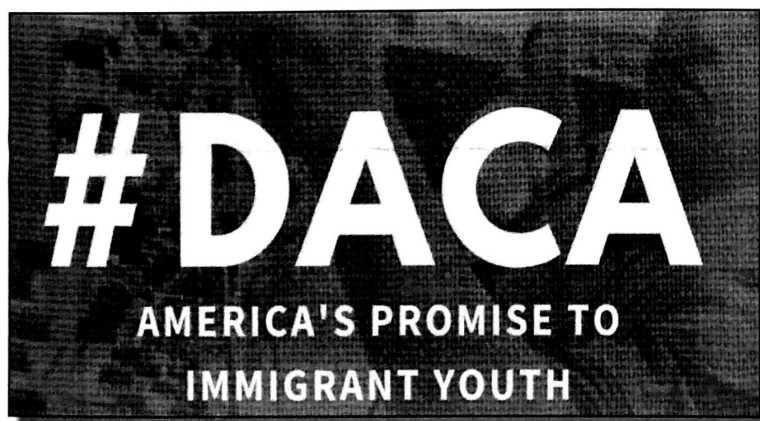
Photo by Gary Moore

I believe that if Dr. King were here today he would be speaking up for the Dreamers, defending their right to live in the United States and participate fully in employment, education, and citizenship. These kids were brought here through no fault of their own. Now, they risk being deported for voluntarily signing up for a program that was designed to be a path to citizenship.

We are truly living in difficult times. The past election cycle has divided America in ways that we have not seen since civil rights battles of the 1960s when Dr. King wrote this famous letter.

We should be more concerned about the white moderate indeed. Not speaking out against this "legal" process that the Trump Administration is using to attack our brothers and sisters of color is "lukewarm acceptance" derided by Dr. King. Trump is a racist who will use all legal methods to attack any class of individuals he despises. We have seen his attack on Transgender Americans serving bravely in our military.

Dr. King challenges us from his grave to speak up and act up to whatever degree necessary to thwart oppression in any form. How fitting that we honor Dr. King with a national holiday and day of service. As I write this article, a group of 200 Iowans are boarding a bus for Washington, D.C., where they hope to get a resolution to the DACA crisis. Godspeed and best wishes on their journey.



You can't make this stuff up: the unsuccessful Alabama senate candidate, Roy Moore, accused of molesting female minors, rode a horse named Sassy to the polls to cast his ballot. Sassy is the name of a now-defunct magazine that targeted teenage girls in the late 80s and early 90s.

Mark Your Calendars! FFBC Speakers Announced:

March: Ann Selzer
(founder of Selzer and Associates, a polling firm).



April: Sergeant Paul Parizek
(Public Information Officer for the Des Moines Police Department)

May: Keith Snow
(CEO of the personal data "mining" firm, B2E Data Marketing, Inc.)

June: Brad Clark
(Executive Director of the Gill Foundation)



July: Tom Vilsack
(40th Governor of Iowa and former United States Secretary of Agriculture)



Trash collectors aren't trained; they just pick it up as they go along.

Breaking Up with Social Media

by Jordan Duesenberg

My generation gets a lot of flack for the amount of time we spend on our phones, although I would definitely argue it's not just my generation (I see you Baby Boomers and Generation Xers). It seems like the more technology progresses, the more we hear about the negative implications of it and, in particular, social media.



Social Media Addiction is something that I had heard about but thought the entire concept was ridiculous – I had never heard of anyone spending their life savings on Facebook or having their kids taken away from them because they couldn't stop using Instagram. But, nevertheless, last November I decided to test myself and delete Facebook from my phone since it was easily my most used social media app, just to see what would happen and whether I was capable of functioning without it.

Here's what I discovered:

#1: I never realized how often I went to scroll mindlessly through Facebook at all times of the day. I never viewed it as a problem because it would be in down moments. I would open Facebook first thing when I woke up in the morning at 5 a.m. My 45 second resting period between sets at the gym would be occupied by a glance at Facebook. When I would walk to the restroom at work, I would check Facebook on my 30 second walk. Lunch break, Facebook. Get home from work, sit on the couch and scroll through Facebook. I only came to realize this once I had deleted the app and in these very brief down moments I would open my phone only to realize that the app I was going for by muscle memory alone, wasn't available. It's not that I even cared that much, I just simply forgot how to be bored.



#2: I never realized how much time I was thinking about my social media image. I first became aware of this because I would think of something I found funny and I would pull out my phone without even thinking about it, to post it on Facebook, only to realize that I didn't have that option. I realized that my own thoughts, in a weird way, needed validation. As if something was only funny if I got a certain number of likes or comments on a thought that was randomly in my head. That's absolutely bizarre and probably one of the biggest wake-up calls to come from my experiment.

#3: I never realized just how seriously everyone actually takes social media. I was recently in Chicago and a friend of friend approached me and asked why I hadn't accepted his friend request. I told him I hadn't been using Facebook much and I only check it on my laptop about once a week – which, in reality, has become virtually never. He told me that he thought that I didn't like him this whole time and that he had been mad at me because of something as miniscule as my not responding to a friend request. **[continued on page nine]**

We don't get to have the internalized insights of age, without aging.

#4: I never realized just how fake social media is. I mean, I always knew that social media was about making your life look way better than it actually is – only posting the most exciting moments, posting the perfect picture where you don't have a double chin and your biceps pop (because you strategically hold your drink in a way that you could inconspicuously flex). I was previously never aware of the brunches you'd attend with friends who would check everyone in so everyone could see how much fun you were having. But you'd look at that same group of friends at brunch and they'd be quiet the entire time with their heads in their phone. I was never bothered by the 17 pictures I'd have to take of someone until they got the right amount of lighting or arched their head the right way so they wouldn't look fat. I was unaware because I had been doing all of these things myself for years without thinking about them.



#5: Lastly, I never realized just how imperative social media has become in everyday life. I recently volunteered to attend a networking event where I would be representing Capital City Pride. I walked in a freezing cold snowstorm only to get there and have the concierge tell me that the event had been canceled due to the weather. When I asked where the announcement was and why I had not been informed, she told me that it was announced via Facebook on the event's page.



All-in-all, I learned that social media has definitely had negative consequences on my life. Not life ruining, by any means, but wasn't necessarily adding any real value that wasn't superficial. I don't necessarily think that social media is all bad, but I do think having access to it at all times has become a problem for a lot of people. Since I have had my brief hiatus, my concentration has improved; my actual friendships are more meaningful now that I have no idea what's going on in their lives until they tell me themselves; and I'm all around a more positive person.

Although it's extremely entertaining to hate-follow your tragic mess of a Trump-supporting cousin, it's even better not to pay any attention to such people, and go on living your best life without caring if people will "like" your every thought or action.

I lack patience for those who are plenty smart enough but insist on figuring out the right thing later for the sake of short-term advantage.

"I take scripture far too seriously to take it literally."

-- Theologian Karl Barth



Prince Harry: Brother/Soldier/Son

Written by Penny Junor

A Book Review by Steve Person

Penny Junor's 2014 biography of Prince Harry arrived on the scene long before Harry's recent engagement to American actress Meghan Markle, so nothing is said of the woman who will wed Harry on May 19 at St. George's Chapel in Windsor Castle. Still, Junor's book offers insights into the "Spare" in the "Heir and Spare" lingo when Princess Diana gave birth to her second son in 1984.

Being born into a royal family has its privileges and its drawbacks. For one thing, a person is somewhat restricted about career choices. While Harry's elder brother, William, chose to enter St. Andrew's University after attending Eton College in Windsor, Harry, after his stint at Eton, chose to enter Sandhurst, Britain's military college.

Harry's deployment to Iraq was ruined when the press leaked it. "Harry went boiling mad....The man who picked him out of the gutter was Ed Smyth-Osbourne. He said to Harry, 'You're coming to Afghanistan with me.'" Harry eventually served two deployments to that godforsaken country. He trained and became an excellent Apache helicopter pilot and flew under fire there.

When not involved with military maneuvers, Harry spent time in Lesotho in southern Africa. He worked assiduously for orphans in that tiny country where thousands of children became parentless because of the scourge of HIV/AIDS. Obviously, the work his mother did with such people rubbed off on her second son. He launched a charity entitled **Sentebale** that provides physical and emotional stability for the orphans of Lesotho.

INVICTUS GAMES

FOUNDATION

Likewise, Harry became involved with the plight of wounded soldiers. He traveled to the United States and attended the Wounded Warriors games in Colorado Springs. This experience led to the founding of the Invictus Games. "As soon as the government gave the Games the final go-ahead in January 2014, Harry left his job with the Army Air Corps to devote himself to the Games."

As stated above, this book came out before Meghan Markle. Junor spent a lot of speculation about the various female companions that Harry has had over the years; obviously, none of them worked out. When William and Catherine's third child is born this spring, Harry will drop to sixth in line for the throne, a decline that he welcomes. His Windsor wedding will not be a state occasion, but it will be reported every bit as such when it occurs.

My English friends are pleased to have an American join the Royal Family and are equally adamant that Trump NOT be invited to the wedding! Let's hope they prevail.

