

First Friday News & Views

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

June 2018

Volume 23

Issue 6

The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, June 1,
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,
May 30.



FFBC Website:

www.ffbciowa.org



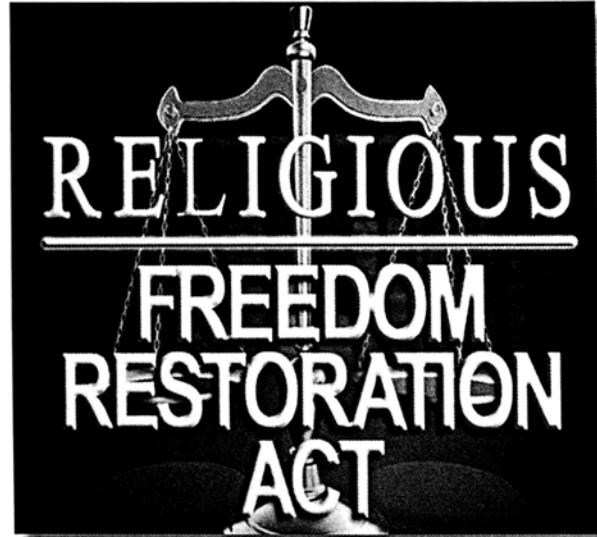
Religious "Liberty"

by Jonathan Wilson

One state after another has scurried to adopt some form of a so-called Religious Liberty Restoration Act. One piece of legislation so labeled has been adopted at the federal level. Most state statutes track the federal legislation that requires stricter judicial scrutiny and/or a compelling state interest to limit the right to discriminate based on religious beliefs. Most have been spawned by the desire of some to discriminate against gay and lesbian children of God in our secular society. All pander to the religious right to give hope to right-wing ideologues, at least briefly, that religious discrimination will be legally permissible. All are, or flirt with, being unconstitutional under the United States Constitution and virtually every state constitution.

Why you ask? Because freedom *of* and *from* religion have been constitutionally guaranteed since the founding of our nation, period. The U.S. Constitution and the state constitutions say, in essence, that everyone is entitled to believe whatever he or she wants in the context of religious conviction, but in our secular society -- in the public square -- no one gets to foist their religious beliefs on others or refuse to sell goods or services because the seller disapproves of some religious belief of prospective buyers. Religious zealots, no matter how fervently they cling to their religious beliefs, are not allowed on that basis to discriminate against their law-abiding fellow citizens in the provision of education, housing, employment, or public accommodations. This is not a difficult concept to understand, however difficult it may be for some few to stomach.

A frequent argument is that, absent such laws Jewish grocers could be required to sell pork sausage. Those who argue that are trying to sell a red herring that turns out to be unmitigated bologna. The current law is that, whatever the Jewish grocer happens to be selling, the grocer must sell to all comers, regardless of the buyer's religious beliefs. The law does not require the grocer to offer for sale something that the grocer doesn't want to stock for sale.



[continued on page two]

Another argument advanced by those who are "constitutionally-challenged," has to do with merchants whose wares involve artistic creativity -- the classic example being the religiously fanatic wedding cake baker who is reluctant to decorate a wedding cake for a gay couple because of their disapproval of gay marriage. If that were a legitimate basis for refusing service, there would be created an exception to our guarantee of religious freedom wide enough to drive a twelve-bottom plow through.

There's creativity in a wide range of activities: Teachers in K-12 schools and in college demonstrate creativity, or should. Lawyers -- at least the good ones -- routinely rely upon creativity for the sake of their clients and favorable outcomes in both civil and criminal representations. Tax advisors -- at least the good ones -- search creatively through the tax code for their clients' tax advantages.

Don't get me wrong. *Buyers* in the public square can lawfully discriminate on the basis of religion to their heart's content. *Voters*, for that matter, can lawfully discriminate when casting their vote. I know; I've personally experienced that lawful discrimination. *Senators* can get by with giving expression to their religious fanaticism, or condemnation of it, by withholding Senate confirmation of some gubernatorial appointment(s), the provision of Iowa Constitution Article I, Section 4, prohibiting any religious test as a qualification for any office, to the contrary notwithstanding. I know; I've personally experienced that unenforceable, unconstitutional discrimination.

The bottom line is this: if you are offering *anything* to others in the public square, for a price or otherwise, it must be available to anyone and everyone on an equal basis -- on the same terms and conditions -- regardless of the offeror's religious beliefs or religion-based misgivings over the beliefs of others.

We don't need any religious freedom restored beyond what's already in the U.S. and state constitutions -- such freedom has been there, in plain sight, for centuries.



June's Speaker:

Nate Monson

iowa
safe
schools



Our speaker in June will be Nate Monson, Executive Director of Iowa Safe Schools. You won't want to miss this, especially because this year's group of scholarship recipients and their families will be joining us. You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend!! Provide the name(s) of any anticipated guest(s) so we can have name tags for them at the registration desk.

FFBC



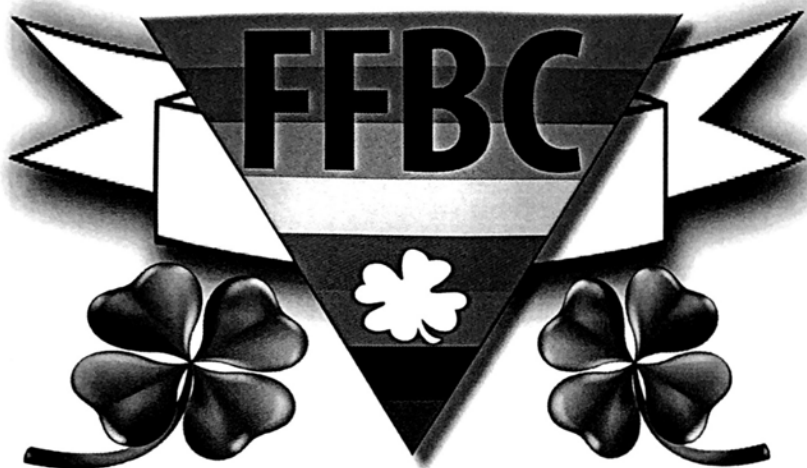
First Friday Breakfast Club Scholarships



FFBC awards annual scholarships to outstanding Iowa high seniors who fight homophobia and educate their schools and/or communities about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues. Academic excellence, extracurricular activities, and community involvement also factor into the awards. The scholarships are \$3,000 each. Eight scholarships will be awarded at our June meeting! Come meet our winners and their families on Friday, June 1.

Applicants must be Iowa residents and plan to pursue post-secondary education. There is no restriction on the type or location of the institution where post-secondary education is obtained. Scholarships are awarded without regard to sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, transgender status, race, religion, marital status or employment status of the prospective recipient.

Our Logo's 4-Leaf Clover



In 1620, Sir John Melton wrote: "If a man walking in the fields find any four-leaved grass, he shall, in a small while after, find some good thing."

LGBT people are like a four-leaf clover. We are perfectly natural and normal – not normative, mind you, but completely normal and authentic. A natural variant whether by nature or choice, it doesn't really matter. If by nature, we have no choice. We should be protected as with other unchosen characteristics. If by choice, it's no different than choosing to be Presbyterian or choosing not to be a fundamentalist bigot. That "choice" is supposed to be an exercise of constitutionally protected freedom.

We exist. Our minority status does not diminish our legitimacy, our authenticity, or our value. Each of us is like a four-leaf clover.

Mark Your Calendars!

FFBC Speakers Announced:



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



August:

Teree Caldwell-Johnson
(Board Chair, Des Moines Public Schools)

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



Briefs ✓ & Shorts:



Thanks to **Ryan Crane** for introducing our May speaker, Keith Snow, CEO of B2E, a data mining and targeted marketing firm. 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. *Thanks to all our contributors to the monthly newsletter!*

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 **June 11, 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.

Consider a **tax-deductible contribution** to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both. We are awarding eight scholarships this year.

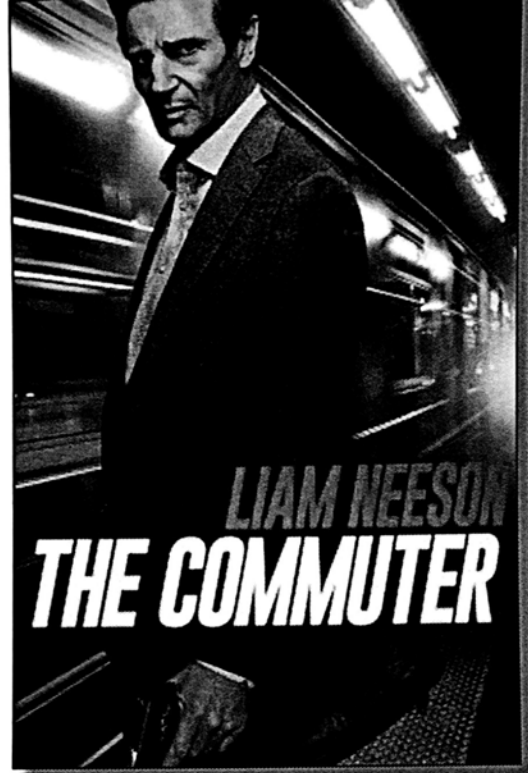


We're all going to die, and we can't take it with us. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details about legacy giving.

***Seconds count,
especially
when dieting.***

The Commuter

Movie Review by Mark Turnage



When you think of an action movie star, what do you think of? Young, ripped, and tough as nails, right? Liam Neeson has worked against type to create a niche in the action movie market—usually playing a seemingly average everyman with ‘a very particular set of skills’ that can go from fatherly to frighteningly intimidating on a dime (see *Taken* series, *Non-Stop*). You see a Liam Neeson action movie if you’re looking for something more down-to-earth, gritty—less special effects and more real-world stakes. Sadly, *The Commuter* takes the promising elements of *Strangers on a Train* and Liam Neeson action movies, and breaks down trying to hybridize them into captivating cinema.

The concept of *The Commuter* is certainly intriguing: ex-cop turned 9-5er Michael (Neeson) is unceremoniously laid off (without benefits) from his long-standing insurance job and encounters an enigmatic stranger (Vera Farmiga) on his daily train ride. The stranger offers Michael half a million dollars to kill someone on the train, then leaves—but not before warning him that he’s being watched, and so is his family. The “regulars” he chit-chats with on the train every day suddenly become suspects or confidants. When strangers he’s never met start giving him cryptic admonishment or encouragement, depending on how close he is to completing his goal, it’s when the film’s story is at its best: claustrophobic paranoia. When strangers begin to attack Michael because they’re both entrapped by the same omniscient conspiracy, it’s also a suspenseful, high point of the story.

With all the action surrounding it, you’d think the conspiracy itself would be more monolithic. But when the players and rationale of the conspiracy are revealed, it’s far too minimalist (and predictable) to justify the conspiracy’s level of power and the grip it has on its victims. On the plus side, the action sequences, while reliant on CGI more and more towards the latter half of the film, are clever and make the most of the train set. The obligatory train wreck that eventually must occur as the final set piece is also spectacular.

But let me tell you, nothing grinds my gears more as a writer than wrapping everything up in a neat little bow narratively—and when *The Commuter* wraps things up in its final scene, the ending feels utterly cheapened and trite, more like a morality tale than an action movie. *Every* character, no matter how minor, gets a resolution when they weren’t given the development to justify it. It feels like a writer for a kid’s TV

show stepped in. And, unfortunately, the ending is where *The Commuter* feels like a train wreck—one bad enough to ruin the film. Skip it—rent *Taken* or *Non-Stop* instead if you’re craving a better-structured action movie with Neeson as the hero.



Data Driven Marketing

by Bruce Carr

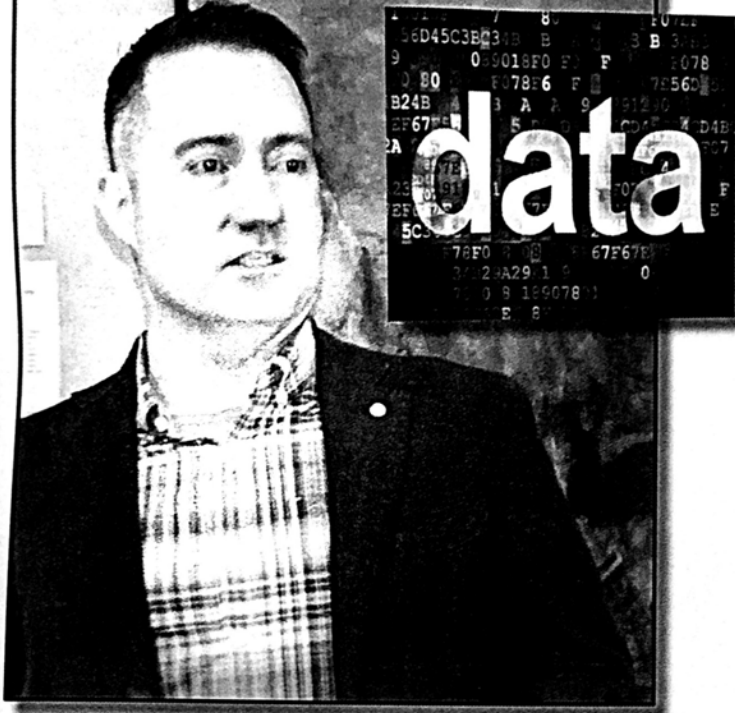


Photo by Gary Moore

Keith Snow grew up in northeast Iowa, joined the military and simultaneously attended Kirkwood Community College, studying computer science. He moved to Des Moines in 1989 to study computer languages at DMACC, and in 1991 joined Guide One Insurance as a systems analyst. By 1996 he had earned his BA in computer science management at Simpson College, and the following year was named manager of marketing database and Internet at Guide One. In 1999 he joined Strategic America as director of e-business and database marketing, where he developed his department's business plan for the sale and implementation of direct, database and Internet marketing solutions to both existing and prospective customers nationwide. By early 2003 he was ready to start his own company, B2E Data Marketing Inc., whose goal for fifteen years has been to organize, standardize, store, and enhance its customers' most valuable resource -- data.

During all this time, Keith Snow has also actively volunteered his and his company's resources in mentoring, and in serving as a board member and officer of a wide variety of agencies and organizations, including Heathy Birth Day, Inc., the Governors District Alliance of Grimes, Global Insurance Accelerator, Historic East Village, and the Stage West Theater Company. He can be reached at B2E Data Marketing, 307 East Court Street, Des Moines 50309, 515/282-4933 and www.b2edata.com.

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, May 4, 2018, was Keith Snow, president and data scientist of B2E Data Marketing, a firm he founded and has headed for fifteen years, since February 2003. Now located in the Des Moines East Village, B2E strives to simplify the data processes of its clients, turning their customer-data into intelligent and efficient marketing strategies.

Snow's talk and slide-show were eye-opening for most of us (not to mention appalling, to some), exposing as it did the enormous amount of intricately detailed information that is publicly and often freely available on almost every resident of the country. It is these items of personal data -- including income and net worth, education, class-identification, religious and political preferences, purchasing habits, and much, much more, totaling over 2,500 pieces of data per person. He said that his company can associate that data with its clients' transaction data, calendars, real-time weather reports, and other externals in order to evaluate the success rate, volume, repeat-business, geographic distribution etc. of its clients' customers and sales. Among the companies that B2E uses are Experian, Dun & Bradstreet, Geospatial Solutions (which, for example, calculates drive-times), Mosaic Solution (which helps with finding and entering new markets), and TRu Solutions (for social-media communications).

The lively Q&A which followed gave Snow a chance to emphasize the extraordinary attention his company gives to data-privacy, updating its anti-hacking programs daily. No single aspect of his business is more important than this, said Snow. *You can hear, or re-hear, a complete audio recording of Keith Snow's talk and the Q&A which followed by going to our Website, <ffbc Iowa.org>, and clicking on the "Speakers" tab.*

Trump gyrates over the TPP, first wanting out and then back in -- out/in/out/in. Maybe he thinks it's a kinky sexual thing and the acronym stands for Trumph and Peeing Prostitutes.

the boy toy season

Des Moines, Gays, & Dance Music

by Jordan Duesenberg

JUST DANCE

This last weekend I went to a warehouse dance party in Des Moines to listen to DJs and dance like an idiot until the early hours of the morning. For those that may not know, I am a big fan of disco, house, and techno music. My senior year of college I studied abroad in Berlin, Germany, and fell in love with the outrageous nightlife for which that city is infamous. Berlin is also known for its love affair with techno music and its clubs (Berghain, KitKatClub, Watergate, Sisyphos, etc.) where the LGBTQ community are not only accepted but heralded as the epitome of cool. In fact, attempting to get into Berghain, one of the most notoriously difficult clubs to get into in the world, it's a well-known fact that you're more likely to get in if you wear all black, you don't speak in line (and certainly not in English) and, most importantly, you give off the vibe that you're gay. This was my introduction to electronic dance music, and I quickly understood that the LGBTQ community was critically important to its prevalence.

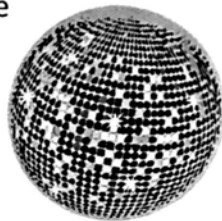
Within months of my return to the States, I came out of the closet. Berlin's acceptance of LGBTQ individuals, and my exposure to people proud to be themselves, was truly inspiring. It was incredible to be myself finally. However, I still craved that scene I grew accustomed to in Berlin, and I especially craved the music that fueled the experience. Unfortunately, every gay bar I went to in Iowa seemed to play only Top 40 pop music. Thankfully, over the years, I discovered scenes in both San Francisco and Chicago that reminded me a lot of Berlin. In San Francisco, it was at a Honey Soundsystem party, which is a gay collective of Bay Area DJs who play obscure disco, techno, house, Italo, and goth; and in Chicago, it was at a Wrigleyville bar called Smartbar, which mostly plays house music. In both cities the parties were mixed (gay and straight), the crowds were racially diverse, and freedom of expression (no matter who you are or how intense) was encouraged and celebrated. I was hooked!



Since these experiences, I have done everything in my power not to listen to as much disco, house, and techno that I can get my hands on, but also to learn as much of the history as possible. From disco came house, from house came techno. Before disco became a musical genre, it was essentially danceable soul tracks that disc jockeys would mix into one another so the music would never stop, which was popular among black and gay underground clubs in the early 70s. Eventually the record labels caught on and realized they could make more money by making songs for the dance floor instead of the radio, and thus disco was born. Of course, once disco went mainstream, the "Disco Sucks" movement eventually took place, culminating in the Disco Demolition Night in 1979, which led to disco going back underground to the black and gay clubs where it originated. DJs at disco clubs then started using more styles of music in their sets (due to disco not really getting made in the U.S. anymore), including European electronic music, Euro disco, jazz, hip-hop, new wave, rock, and pop. This was especially true in Chicago, the very city where the Disco Demolition Night occurred in the early 80s, where black gay clubs like The Warehouse played this new fusion of musical styles, eventually earning the name "house music" (named after the nightclub The Warehouse). DJs and producers from neighboring Detroit started fusing house music with more electronic sounds and technologies, and from there, Techno music was born. Both genres spread throughout the US and Europe like wildfire. In America, however, hip-hop started to become a bigger cultural force in the 90s, and soon house and techno became more associated with Europeans, even though the genres that started it all were mostly from queer men and women of color in the Midwest.

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Today electronic dance music is wildly popular in the States. Almost all the superstar big time DJs, however, are white European men. In the States, for some reason, it's common to call any type of electronic dance music "EDM," which stands for "Electronic Dance Music," even though there are many different types of genres that differ wildly from one another. Depending on who you talk to, EDM either represents all types of electronic dance music, or it is its own genre because it has its own particular sound and scene (I personally agree with the latter). This type of music is very popular at music festivals, known for their crazy onstage antics by the DJs, and instant gratifying loud bass-heavy noises. The crowds are typically very white, very young, very straight, and, mostly, middle to upper-middle class. Needless to say, I'm not a very big fan of the EDM scene. As a gay man, I do not feel welcome to be myself, and God forbid, dance with another guy at these events, even though a 19-year-old girl feels at perfect liberty to prance around in a Unicorn bikini at them -- which leads me back to the warehouse party I attended this last weekend.



Given how Des Moines does not really have a dance scene yet, I was excited to check out this party. The location was great and the music wasn't half bad (although it leaned a little too heavy on the EDM side). The only downside was that I'm pretty sure my friends and I were the only gay people there, which was obvious with some of the glares we kept getting when we would dance on one another (and, also, I didn't see anybody I knew). Luckily, the party emphasized that everyone is welcome and a few glares never turned into any rude comments or physical altercations.

Going forward, I'm excited to see Des Moines create its own scene. I can only hope that, as our city's dance scene continues to grow, we have more LGBTQ individuals, as well as racial minorities, participating in these events, given our deep connection to the origins of these genres of music.

Hospitality is an Iowa Value

by Iowa State Senator Matt McCoy



The recent announcement by US Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, to separate families that are detained at the border represents inhumane, anti-family public policy. This kind of policy is what one would expect from a despotic dictatorship, not the United States. It betrays our country's commitment to act with moral authority and welcome all those who seek a better life as Americans. Our current national climate has impacted the states in a variety of ways. The Republican-majority Iowa legislature recently passed a so-called sanctuary city bill, which is designed to federalize local law enforcement and require them to enforce immigration detainers.

This policy has been opposed by local law enforcement, Sheriff Bill McCarthy, and Des Moines Police Chief Dana Wingert. Law enforcement agencies throughout the state have been working to improve relationships between police and immigrant communities. They believe this policy detracts from local policing efforts, reinforces barriers between immigrant communities and police, and further stigmatizes a group of Iowans that aren't white.

Governor Kim Reynolds has signed this bill into law at a time when, by her own administration's projections, our current workforce needs 127,000 more Iowans **TODAY** to fill the jobs that are currently vacant. Clearly, Governor Reynolds is not serious about growing the Iowa economy. She has further demonstrated her intolerance for immigrants by asking Congressman Steve King to co-chair her election campaign. Congressman King has established himself as one of the most racist, xenophobic bigots in the United States Congress.



I am proud to have stood up against this sanctuary city bill, opposing the bill in committee as well as on the Senate floor. I have always stood with new Iowans and the immigrant communities that are working to make Iowa a more welcoming state. In my race for Polk County Supervisor, I've recently received the endorsement of the Asian and Latino Coalition, and I promise to continue supporting and advocating for the immigrant communities and for all new Iowans.

I encourage you to contact Governor Reynolds and Senators Ernst and Grassley about the policies that are designed to denigrate people. These communities have always made Iowa a more vibrant, welcoming place.

Mademoiselle: Coco Chanel and the Pulse of History

Written by Rhonda K. Garelick

A Book Review by Steve Person



Back in 1969, Broadway producer Frederick Brisson opened *Coco* at the Mark Hellinger Theatre in New York. The musical starred Katharine Hepburn as the world-famous fashion designer. She was a curious choice for the lead in a musical. Although a seasoned actor, she was no singer. Fortunately, Andre Previn wrote the music and Alan Jay Lerner the book and lyrics. Much like Rex Harrison did in *My Fair Lady*, Hepburn talked her way through the limited range songs. The musical turned out to be a dud, but Hepburn garnered rave reviews. At that time, I didn't know much about Chanel. In the 1950s, a reporter asked Marilyn Monroe what she wore to bed. Monroe replied, "Chanel No. 5." That was the extent of my knowledge about the French clothes designer. In August 1970, I went to New York and managed to get tickets to *Coco*, but Hepburn's contractual obligation was over, and the French actress Danielle Darrieux replaced her. Purportedly a musical biography, it turned out to be more fiction than fact. Chanel took great pains to obfuscate her history and personal life.

Author Rhonda K. Garelick looked beyond the dim background Chanel provided to the public and wrote a comprehensive biography of perhaps the most influential woman of the twentieth century. Timing is everything, and after a dismal childhood cloistered in a gray convent, Chanel spent her twenties as a sort of "kept" woman in a country chateau. There she met a rich and well-connected Englishman, Arthur Edward "Boy" Capel. The two became lovers, and Capel helped launch her career as a clothes designer. As Lerner wrote in the book of the musical *Coco*; Hepburn, as Chanel, says, "I stormed the corsets, cut open the laces, and freed women from the Victorian padded cell." Chanel's simply cut clothes made from fabrics that moved with a woman's body, rather than constraining it, became tremendously popular.

By the time of Capel's tragic and untimely end, Chanel had already opened her fashion house on the Rue Cambon in Paris. In addition to her success as a fashion designer, Chanel decided to introduce a new fragrance to sell along with the clothes in her shop. Enter Chanel No. 5. It made her more money than the dress business even though she owned only ten percent of the profits (a result of a business agreement with a wealthy Jewish investor).

The wealthier she became, the more right-wing her political views evolved. Despite her involvement with the Jewish investor who bankrolled Chanel No. 5, Mademoiselle succumbed to the growing fascist movements in Italy and Germany during the 1920s and 30s. Like many influential artists, politicians, and philosophers of the time, Jews became the scapegoat for France's, and ultimately Europe's, problems. Chanel closed her successful fashion house in 1939 and, when the Germans occupied Paris in 1940, she managed to keep her home in The Ritz where she entertained Nazi officers and conducted a love affair with Nazi officer Baron Von Dincklage. Was Chanel a collaborator or just a woman trying to deal with a tough situation? The jury is still out.

After the War, Chanel made her home in Switzerland for many years, leery of returning to Paris in fear of political retribution against her. She did return in the early 1950s, and that is where the musical *Coco* begins. In her early 70s, Chanel decides to reopen her fashion house in the face of criticism from new and influential designers such as Dior and Balenciaga. Her opening turns out to be a disaster, but the American department store buyers love her designs and save her business. Hers was quite a life!