

**FFBC**

First Friday News & Views

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

December 2018

Volume 23

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The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, December 7,
2018
7:00 a.m.



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



R.S.V.P.

JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com

or phone (515) 288-2500

or the website
by Wednesday,
December 5.



FFBC Website:
www.ffbciowa.org



Misguided Forgiveness

by Jonathan Wilson

The Roman Catholic bishops in the United States gathered recently with the announced intention of dealing with the sexual abuse scandals that have plagued the Catholic Church. Not that a single such meeting could erase the long history of abuse committed by priests or heal the wounds inflicted on the children of the faithful. It would have been a start. And, while most publicity about the scandal has been in the United States, the phenomenon is worldwide in scope and has been going on for literally centuries. Such criminal misconduct is not confined to the Catholic Church; instances of predatory clergy abusing their flock also happen in every Christian denomination. I don't know enough about other, non-Christian religions of the world to assess the situation with them, but I suspect that similar instances occur there as well.

There are reasons that the abuse has been particularly prevalent in the Catholic Church, reasons that have made the abuse almost inevitable – no, utterly and completely inevitable.

For starters, there's the celibacy thing. That policy ignores the nearly universal urge of human beings to express themselves through sexual intimacy. There aren't very many men who are asexual, so the policy necessarily staffs the ranks of the priesthood with sexually repressed men. Repression of our human nature is a prescription for maladjustment and trouble.

Because the priesthood was marketed as a position of distinction, the celibacy policy has disproportionately attracted closeted gay men seeking a distinguished career and refuge from the pressures to marry some nice, unsuspecting Catholic girl and producing grandchildren. Catholic families have typically been proud when a family member became a priest. A fledgling priest could feel good about a lifetime of service to others that ends in a secure, comfortable retirement.

[continued on page two]



SCANDAL



1

In every population cohort, gay or straight, there are some number of pedophiles. That's the unfortunate truth of the matter. Add alter boys to the mix by routinely involving them in the conduct of worship services, something that seems uniquely ingrained in the fabric of Catholic Church services, and the potential for trouble grows exponentially. Sexually repressed men + pedophiles + access to young boys + a huge power differential + reluctance of other adults (even parents) -- to question the conduct of a priest, and it's "Katie-bar-the-door."



Enter then the uniquely Catholic confessional, the ability to unburden your "sins" and be on-the-spot forgiven and completely absolved of your transgressions in return for expressed contrition and a few *Hail Marys* and a couple of *Our Fathers* thrown in for good measure. That's a pretty sweet deal for sinners, especially when it's sold with the full knowledge of all involved that, despite contrition and best intentions, every sinner will sin again. When it happens, get back to the confessional and repeat. And repeat. And repeat.

I actually blame Catholic priests for the popular misconception that being a gay man means that you are a pedophile. Pedophilia occurs most often between straight men and little girls. But consider the Catholic Church history. You have a pedophile priest who happens to be gay. He cannot control his urges and has ready access to alter boys. He abuses one or more of them. It somehow gets discovered. There are some upset relatives who complain to the bishop. The bishop calls in the errant priest. If the priest denies it, he still has to be removed from that parish in order to calm the controversy and keep the church coffers filled. If the priest admits it, we've got a "sin" on our hands and have to go through the whole contrition, absolution, and forgiveness exercise. The priest likewise has to be removed from the parish in order to calm the controversy and keep the church coffers filled. Whether the allegations are denied, or admitted and forgiven, the priest has to be moved for the sake of the church. If the latter, he can still be moved to another parish because of the forgiveness piece. And repeat. And repeat. The priest can transgress again and again from parish to parish. If a priest messes around with another priest, a nun, or the church organist, there might be talk, but no huge controversy. Something must be done though when the transgression involves alter boys and comes to light. Parishioners are left with the perception that same-sex attraction and pedophilia are synonymous. Thanks a lot pedophile gay priests. Not.

SIN

Sadly, the Pope gave a directive to the U.S. bishops -- during their meeting -- that they should not take any action on the subject, preferring to wait for a convocation he as called for next February. And we continue to wait for accountability -- not for the predator priests, the statute of limitations having elapsed for most of the known perpetrators -- but accountability of the Catholic Church for its misguided forgiveness that exacerbated the problem.



December's Speaker: **Reverend Debbie Griffin**



Our speaker in December will be Rev. Debbie Griffin, pastor of the Downtown Disciples Church. You won't want to miss this. 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.



**Christmas
Gift Suggestions:**
To your enemy, forgiveness.
To an opponent, tolerance.
To a friend, your heart.
To a customer, service.
**To all, charity. To every child,
a good example.**
To yourself, respect.

3 LGBTQ Musicians that Deserve the Hollywood Treatment



by Jordan Duesenberg

The blockbuster movie, *Bohemian Rhapsody*, about the band Queen, recently came out. Initially I was interested, as I like Queen, and it's notable that Freddie Mercury was bisexual. However, after reading about the film's troubled production (the director Bryan Singer was infamously fired) and then seeing the first trailer that was released which showed Mercury pursuing women but no indication that he also pursued men, I decided I'd wait to see the movie, if at all. I've talked to friends who saw the movie. Overall, they enjoyed it but did mention how the sexuality in the film is downplayed, and the movie does basically erase Mercury's bisexuality altogether, depicting him only interested in men after he comes out as bisexual to his then- girlfriend where there is actual proof that he continued to pursue women during this time as well in real life. I'm not surprised that a big Hollywood blockbuster didn't provide accurate LGBTQ representation but, nevertheless, disappointed. Luckily, there are many more iconic LGBTQ musicians from the past that Hollywood could always use for a movie in the future. Here are three LGBTQ musicians I'd love to see given the film treatment:



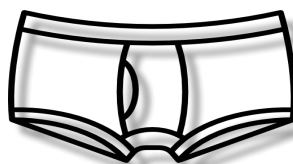
Sylvester

Sylvester was the "Queen of Disco" with the falsetto voice to kill, most famous for disco hits, "You Make Me Feel," and "Do Ya Wanna Funk?". Sylvester was often in drag, flamboyant, and fabulous, and lived a wild life in San Francisco in the height of the city's excesses. Originally, Sylvester joined the hippie drag theater-troupe The Cockettes before forming an unsuccessful rock group. It wasn't until Sylvester went solo and made disco and Hi-NRG albums that Sylvester was propelled to fame in the late 70s and early 80s. Unfortunately, Sylvester contracted AIDS and passed away in 1988. He became a notable HIV/AIDS activist before his death. He left all of his money to HIV/AIDS charities in San Francisco.

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Briefs & Shorts:



Thanks to **Scott Hartsook** for introducing our November speaker, Cindy Axne, candidate for Congress from the Third District of Iowa. Thanks to **Jordan Duesenberg** 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 **Gary Moore** and **Rick Miller** for their work on the CDs that we give to our speakers. *Thanks to all our contributors to the monthly newsletter!*

A special thank-you to those FFBC members and friends who have chosen to designate FFBC through the Donor Direct program of United Way. The contributions through United Way are tax deductible. Those who have chosen this means of supporting FFBC have gone to the trouble of completing their United Way campaign worksheet by designating FFBC as the beneficiary of their generosity. FFBC is an eligible recipient of such funding designations.

The next copy deadline for the FFBC newsletter will be **December 17, 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.

Don't Miss the
DEADLINE!

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 awarded eight scholarships this year. We've awarded more than **\$275,000** in scholarships to deserving Iowa high school students.



Tax Deductible
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I Was the Subject of a Political “Witch Hunt” and Matt Whitaker Directed It

By State Senator and Polk County Supervisor-Elect Matt McCoy

Trump’s interim pick for Attorney General was part of an investigation that was covered with partisan fingerprints.

On the morning of April 7, 2006, two FBI agents knocked on my door. They informed me that I was being investigated about issues related to alleged bribery and violation of the Hobbs Act. As I tried to recall what the Hobbs Act entailed (robbery and extortion, mostly), they prolonged their visit by pressing “play” on a tape recorder. I was shocked to hear a conversation I had had with my business colleague, Tom Vasquez.

The conversation detailed a dispute we had regarding my consulting with Vasquez about a business that sold monitoring systems for senior citizens in Iowa. The federal government believed that in my demanding payment for those services, and threatening to strike out on my own as a competitor, I had made what amounted to a threat to use the power of my senatorial office against him.

The FBI claimed this threat was extortion by an elected official. I explained how I had filed the required Senate financial disclosure forms, and that, as citizen legislators who work in the capital for less than one-third of the year, we have to have other employment, hence this dispute. They disagreed, arguing that my comments amounted to an attempt to coerce Vasquez. *The Des Moines Register* reported during my eventual trial that numerous Iowa officials had “denied threats by McCoy, and insisted that no single senator would have the power to influence purchasing decisions” by the State of Iowa.

This was the first I knew I was under federal scrutiny. The FBI paid Vasquez to record 12 hours of our conversations. They turned over the tapes to the grand jury. The jury returned a one-count indictment against me for attempted extortion under the Hobbs Act, which more specifically is a federal anti-racketeering law used in cases involving public corruption. It sets a low bar for conviction of public officials. The charge stemmed from the threat to form my own company. The FBI admitted to paying at least \$2,200 to Vasquez for clandestinely taping our conversations. If I were convicted, it could have meant a \$250,000 fine and 20 years imprisonment.



Matt Whitaker’s entire case was built on the word of Vasquez, the star witness, whose credibility was undermined by a litany of personal issues he acknowledged under oath. In cross-examination, Vasquez had amnesia. “I can’t recall,” and “I don’t remember,” were his responses to over 100 questions.

That the FBI paid Vasquez for his testimony was unheard of. The former editor of *The Des Moines Register’s* editorial page wrote: “Was McCoy’s prosecution a product of poor judgment, inexperience, misplaced zeal or partisan politicking? Perhaps some or all of the above.”

I was eventually acquitted after the jury deliberated for less than 25 minutes, according to the foreman.

Whitaker’s office clearly wanted to give the evangelical right in the Republican Party a trophy, and that trophy was me—one of the state’s most prominent young Democrats at the time. Whitaker is a social conservative who supported the Iowa Christian Alliance, the pre-eminent group in the state for like-minded conservatives. In 2014, he was executive director of the Foundation for Accountability and Civil Trust (FACT), a conservative watchdog organization which *Slate* described as a “Dark Money-Funded Clinton Antagonist ... [which] largely publicized what it described as ethical lapses by prominent Democrats and requested that government agencies and law enforcement investigate them.” **[continued on page five]**



WITCH HUNT


POLITICS



["I Was the Subject of a Political Witch Hunt" / continued from page four]

People should be very concerned with Whitaker's elevation to acting Attorney General of the United States. The Department of Justice is supposed to be blind to politics. Whitaker clearly is not.



Whitaker has attempted to establish his own career in Iowa politics. He lost a run for state treasurer in 2002, lost a Republican primary bid for the U.S. Senate in 2014, and was not selected for a seat on the Iowa Supreme Court despite angling for the job. It's hard to believe he could carry out the important job of United States Attorney General with a sense of fealty to the law and to the Constitution, rather than to the Republican Party or, more specifically, to Donald Trump.

The government's invasion of my privacy during the case Whitaker's office brought against me was hardly unusual for such an investigation but, considering my innocence and exculpation, it was appalling: I was followed, my conversations were recorded, and my financial records were seized. Family members, co-workers, legislative colleagues and acquaintances were questioned. My emails were read. The emails and financial records of a business colleague were subpoenaed. My reputation and future were damaged. The emotional stress took its toll on my physical and mental health. I lost both actual and potential income, along with my savings. When the D.O.J. wields its power in a partisan manner, it ruins lives. Whitaker almost ruined mine.

I left in debt, and with a shattered sense of security. Whitaker left, noting his "complete confidence in the jury system." Hopefully that confidence endures to this day, regardless of what such a jury might have to say about his new benefactor.



Joyeux Noël



Naughty or Nice?

Fahrenheit 451 (HBO)

Movie Review by Mark Turnage



Adapting a book to a film has its own unique challenges—sure, you might already have the plot built out, but editing the story down to a compelling structure while also capturing the book’s atmosphere is critical to the film’s success. Verbatim is rarely an option when a story is transferred from page to screen, yet unfortunately, despite the high-profile acting chops of Michael B. Jordan and Michael Shannon, the power of Ray Bradbury’s novel **Fahrenheit 451** gets lost in muddled character motivations, and director Ramin Bahrani leaving too much of its source material in the ashes.

Michael B. Jordan portrays Guy Montag, a “fireman” responsible for locating and burning all forms of books, art, and media not sanctioned by the totalitarian government, whose mass communications rely extensively on emojis live-broadcast on skyscrapers in a clumsy nod to modern-day text-speak. In this film adaptation, Montag is single and lives alone—for those who have read the Bradbury novel, his interactions with neighbors and his dynamic with his barely-there wife are crucial to him eventually questioning his masters. Not so in this version. Jordan’s Montag is a single workaholic who lives alone—a zealous “true believer” who is also a government poster boy. He’s so entrenched in his job that the only close friend he has is his boss, Captain Beatty (Shannon), a no-nonsense police chief whose gruff exterior belies his own admiration of Montag as his soon-to-be successor. But this social disconnect makes his initial confrontations with a rebel informant named Clarisse (Sofia Boutella) seem inauthentic in how quickly he becomes fascinated and willing to abandon his zealously pro-government worldviews in favor of hers. His character’s drive is a string of blurry memories of his father, a fireman who presumably died in the line of duty. But in the opening memory, his father hands him a book, and suddenly the mystery of his father’s death is gone, and so is the plot twist.

Beatty isn’t without his own demons too, as evidenced by the pen he keeps locked away. Writing utensils are banned, too, implying government-enforced illiteracy, yet Beatty uses his to write nihilistic quotes on cigarette papers before burning them, too. Both Beatty and Montag grow to loathe the government they serve, self-medicating on pills and booze to drown out bad memories and past regrets. Yet Beatty sees no purpose to his life outside servitude. It’d be film noir if there were actual stakes to Montag changing sides, but Beatty easily recasts him as a villain, hires his replacement, and is virtually unaffected by anything he does once he brands him a traitor. This is true until the finale, when they are alone, and Beatty allows himself to vent his rage at Montag’s betrayal.

Visually, the world Montag inhabits is not too far removed from ours, save for the oversized flamethrowers and black firetrucks prowling around suburban landscapes. One interesting component that is introduced but then pushed aside is a near-omniscient surveillance system that records everyone, Big Brother-style, even offering commentary on the emotional state of those it observes. That conceit alone has character-impacting potential, but here, it comes across as an unused plot device.

There’s a conceit in writing known as Chekhov’s Gun— “If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired. Otherwise don’t put it there.” The AI surveillance system is not the only “gun” introduced in this adaptation, to the point where the plot almost feels more like “Chekhov’s Disused Armory.”

Read the book instead.



Cindy Axne for Congress: And In Congress

by Bruce Carr



Photo by Gary Moore

Cindy Axne spent part of her childhood living on Des Moines' south side and attending Lovejoy Elementary School, before her family moved to West Des Moines. Her mother grew up on a farm in Warren County, and her father, also a southern Iowan, was a teacher for a time in Knoxville, but later went into the insurance field in Des Moines. Most of his career was spent at the Meredith Corporation, working at Better Homes and Gardens.

Axne graduated from the University of Iowa as a journalism major, and then moved to Chicago. There she worked in retail for a while, eventually running some of the larger stores on Michigan Avenue. In 2000 she went back to school at Northwestern University to earn an MBA in management and marketing, then joined the Chicago Tribune Media Group as head of leadership development. At the same time, she and her husband John started their own digital design business and, after they had their sons, they decided in 2005 that it was time to move back home to Iowa to be closer to family. Here Axne embarked on a decade-long career in state government, serving under governors Tom Vilsack and Chet Culver as a director in the departments of Administrative Services, Management, and Natural Resources. "My job was to make sure we spent taxpayer dollars transparently and efficiently, and as well as we could," she says. One of the biggest projects she helped to oversee in those years was the state's energy and environmental plan. Coordinating many state agencies, Axne worked to make Iowa an energy-independent state.

Cindy Axne lives with her husband John and their two teen-age sons in West Des Moines, where she is a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church and volunteers with Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly. As of January, she can be reached in care of the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington DC.

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, November 2, 2018, was Cindy Axne, at that time the Democratic candidate for Congress in Iowa's Third District. Four days later, the voters of the Third District and especially the voters of Polk County elected her to replace her chief opponent, two-term Republican incumbent, David Young (a previous FFBC speaker).

Although not previously well known to some in attendance, Axne was a clear favorite among us; still, when she asked at one point whether anyone had already voted, she seemed a little surprised when 99.5% of the attendees raised their hands. She spoke passionately and knowledgeably to our issues: affordable health care for all (and especially for those with pre-existing conditions), LGBT equality (she called it "standing up for what's right"), and civil, reasonable, moral policy and discourse ("our heart and soul is at risk," she urged). At one point she sounded like she was already in the House, citing the good times she'd been enjoying, sharing current and future strategy with similarly-positioned candidates – women AND men – all across the nation.

You can hear, or re-hear, a complete audio recording of Cindy Axne's talk and the Q&A following, by going to our Website, <ffbc-iowa.org>, and clicking on the "Speakers" tab.



MERRY CHRISTMAS



Our Trip to Orange City

by Paul Hengested and Tim Schreck



On October 19, sixteen members of the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus were in Orange City as guest performers in their 2nd annual Pride Celebration. With all the stories about book burnings and library cards we've been hearing, we thought you should know about our experience.

First and foremost, let's talk about the decision to participate in Orange City Pride. "Orange City!?!?!!" was the reaction most of us had to the invitation to sing. A few of the men in the Chorus grew up in northwest Iowa, "Steve King Kountry," and were quick to remind the rest of us why they left – it simply had not been a place for them to feel safe and open about their sexual orientation. Nonetheless, we all felt called to make this appearance as part of our mission. This gig was simply too important not to go.

The drive up was gorgeous! The sun was out, harvest was in full swing and we shared memories of our days as farm boys. In our travels there and back, we made several stops, meeting warm, friendly people, some of whom even celebrated with us as we shared the reason for our trip. Hmmm, maybe our preconceptions needed to be checked.

Arriving in Orange City, we landed at the Hampton Inn, where several rooms were provided by the local Pride committee, and festivities were getting started. This was the evening of "the book burning" episode and we also were met with a few individuals praying for our well-being and safe travels...at least that's the assumption we chose to make! A few of us were welcomed by a young man who had to leave right away. It was clear to us that the prospect of singing with a group of gay men was beyond his expectation at this time in his life. Humbling and reaffirming of our decision to be there.

We must say, we killed it! The crowd was ridiculously supportive, and the audience was invited to join us in a couple songs, including a "circle of love," holding hands. One of the chorus members reported that he saw a man in the audience sobbing, and you could feel the audience wanted more as our last number was introduced. It was then that we realized the true magnitude of what we in the Chorus were doing.

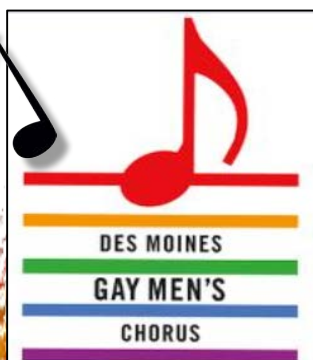
Being adults, we graciously accepted the offer for free adult beverages at the recently opened coffee shop downtown after the show. One of the owners explained to us that he and his partners strategically chose to open the shop downtown as the only safe space some of the local young people have to be their authentic selves. Gesturing to the outdoors, he commented that for some, it was just not great "out there," and for us to show that grown adults can live boldly and bravely – while making music, nonetheless – sets a positive example for people of the town, regardless of their age or orientation. He spoke with a simple passion that showed how much he cared for his community and the people in it; it was impossible not to wonder, "Who is thanking who here?" We hope to be invited back next year.

As our travels took us back to Des Moines through neighboring towns, we collectively commented on how moved we were by the weekend, and how utterly unexpected almost everything had been. We worried that we might have been characterized as "the gays shipped in from the big city" but, instead, were reminded of our humble roots. The biggest Pride celebrations today were once much smaller. We were reminded that we came from somewhere, that it's all about the people. Community. Belonging. When you take the hand of someone else, you are both stronger for it.

The notion of transformational resistance kept coming to mind. It is common to think of resistance as synonymous with protest (e.g., the Stonewall riots, the March on Washington, the Women's March of 2017). Yet, often, more transformative experiences occur out of public view. These small steps of bravery, of visibility, by us as singers, but even more so, by all those who attended, allow for a memorable moment. For some, they never thought they'd get to see the day. For others, they got to see their future – maybe for the first time. We think for ALL involved, the lasting momentum and light of this Orange City Pride weekend will burn for decades. That, my friends, makes it transformational.

Although separated by vast miles of cornfields, we are part of each other's fight to transform the world. We can't do what we do in Des Moines without Orange City.

For more information about the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus, go to www.dmgmc.org, there you will also find information about our performance schedule, or to support us in declaring the dignity and worth of all persons, through song.



SING

["3 LGBTQ Musicians that Deserve the Hollywood Treatment" / continued from page three]



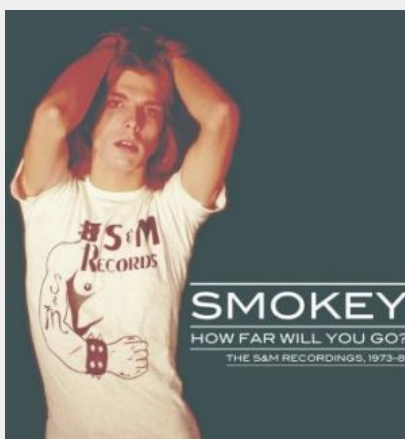
Dusty Springfield

Dusty Springfield was an iconic blue-eyed soul singer who made and produced pop hits mostly in the 60s & 70s. She is most famous for the song "Son of a Preacher Man," (which you may remember from Pulp Fiction when Vincent (John Travolta) first meets Mia (Uma Thurman)) and her album, *Dusty in Memphis*, which is considered by many to be one of the greatest albums of all time. Unfortunately Dusty had a hard life, one with mental illness, drug and alcohol addictions, and her fear of her homosexuality being found out and ruining her music career. She eventually became more open about her sexuality, and notably dated several women in the late 70s and 80s. She dated an actress, Teda Bracci, who she met at AA and later married in a wedding ceremony that was not legally recognized at the time. The two fought often, and one altercation in particular left both hospitalized requiring Dusty Springfield to have to get plastic surgery for her injuries.



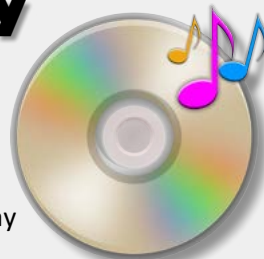
Smokey

Smokey is a name that not a lot of people will recognize and that's because the music industry did everything to halt Smokey's career, which actually worked until a compilation of the glam punk artist from the 70s was released in 2015 called *How Far Wil You Go?* Smokey started his career in Baltimore, where he used to hang out with the John Waters crowd, before moving to LA to try and take his music to the next level. He has songs about drag queens, leather bars, sex, and kink, in such songs as "Leather," "Miss Ray," and most infamously "P*ss Slave." Unfortunately, record label execs refused to put out such an in-your-face gay album. Smokey also claims that many artists stole his lyrics, his look, and songs, including Van Halen and David Bowie. Smokey eventually gave up on his career after roadblock after roadblock but, thanks to the internet, his music has now gained a cult following and renewed interest in the musician.



Comments:rand.com

CD Generosity



Those of you who attend our meetings know that we have traditionally given to the speaker a recording of the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus. We have recently replenished our supply. Gary Moore has been a terrific help by developing an FFBC-specific CD cover to remind the speakers where they received the CD. Rick Miller, in turn, developed a narrative that appears on the inside of the cover in the hope that the speakers can be further educated about the music by more than just song titles. You might be interested in reading what Rick wrote, which follows:

"Thank you for speaking to the First Friday Breakfast Club. In gratitude we present you with this recording of the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus. These Winter Concert selections provided by Director Dr. Rebecca Gruber represent the full range of choral experiences DMGMC is known for - from classical to jazz, Broadway to gospel, humorous to profound, and traditional to the latest in contemporary LGBBQ+ repertoire. Some highlights may be the haunting version of "Silent Night" or the deeply profound "Dee Shalom." You may be captivated by the equally funny versions of "Hawaiian Mele Kalikamaki" or the "Shoulda Been a North Pole Elf" from the Disney favorite *Frozen*. Also included is the chorus's version of "Black Christmas" which they originally heard the Seattle Men's Chorus sing at the 2012 GALA Festival in Denver where DMGMC also sang in front of hundreds of other choruses from around the world. Glee clubs are favorites to many and the chorus showcases several with "Masters of the Hall" and "Hanover Winter Song." Thematic songs from the heart always are center stage when they sing LGBTQ+ songs of hope and joy like "I Am In Need Of Music," "I Sing Out," and "It Get's Better." Several members of FFBC are also in the Chorus. As you enjoy the "Ukranian Alleluia" or the shimmering sounds of "Festival Gloria," remember your experience with the gay community as you educate us and others about your life and passions. Your presence makes a world of difference."

**Many thanks to
both Gary and Rick.**



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Fear and Fidelity: Two Books that Frighten and Forgive



Two Book Reviews by Steve Person

Fear: Trump in the White House by Bob Woodward is an aptly titled book. Even if only one-fourth of what Woodward reports in this book is true, we the people have reason to worry ourselves into anemia. Woodward, however, kept tapes and transcripts and minutely documented his sources for this revealing and scary look into the Trump presidency.

Of all the scenarios in the book, the most revealing, I believe, was when Tom Bossert, Trump's advisor for homeland security, stopped into the Oval Office to seek advice from Trump on how to respond to an upcoming television interview. Trump said to Bossert, "I want to watch the Masters," and proceeded to watch a golf tournament instead of dealing with threats of cyber terrorism with his expert in the field. Trump finally began to give advice to Bossert about how to handle the interview that would obfuscate anything about cyber security and instead concentrate on Trump's relationship with China's President Xi. It revealed yet again how unprepared Trump is for the most powerful office in the world.

Remember when Trump ran for president and stated that he would be too busy as president ever to play golf? The man is inept, inexperienced in the ways of government, insincere, insecure, and in my personal opinion, insane. At least the recent election will put somewhat of a damper on his reckless behavior but don't expect too much to be accomplished over the next two years. Read the book and judge for yourself.



Conversely, Penny Junor's ***The Duchess: Camilla Parker Bowles and the Love Affair That Rocked the Crown*** is an uplifting biography of a woman who became universally unpopular when Princess Diana was alive.

Camilla survived the press barrage on her during the 1990s by holing up in her country house with family and friends. She gardened, rode horses, and tried desperately to keep to herself. After the marriage of the Prince of Wales and Diana became broken beyond repair, Charles turned to his former girlfriend, and a love affair rekindled. After Diana's untimely death in 1997, Charles and his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, quietly began to help raise Camilla's standing with the British public. It took many years, but by 2005 the Prince and Camilla married with the approval of the entire royal family.

Junor plots the progress of enhancing the image of the Duchess of Cornwall (Camilla's title after her marriage to the Prince) and reveals the Duchess's sense of humor and how she is able to keep Charles in check when he sometimes becomes too intense about a subject that interests him. Camilla is much more at home with situations that allow her to work with people in small groups rather than posh royal events. Being the great granddaughter of Alice Keppel, Edward VII's mistress, must surely have helped Camilla with her prince and future king.

