



# First Friday News & Views

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



February 2021

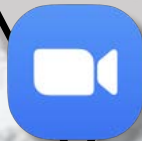
Volume 26

Issue 2

The next meeting  
is Friday,  
February 5,  
7:00 a.m.



February Meeting  
Location:  
**ZOOM!**



February Speaker:  
**Brian Bond**



FFBC Website  
[ffbcowa.org](http://ffbcowa.org)



## Pardon Me, Please

by Jonathan Wilson

PARDON

The politest among us readily say, "Pardon me, please," if we inadvertently step in front of another person, belch, or audibly pass gas. The most polite among us, that is. Doubtless, #45 has heard the expression; also it's doubtful that he has ever used the expression in any of those circumstances. I'm reminded of the video showing him shoving the Prime Minister of Montenegro out of his way to get to the front of a group of NATO leaders. Even lip reading, there was no, "Pardon me, please."

In the last few years, especially since the November 3 election, there has been talk of #45 purporting to grant a presidential pardon to himself. He has claimed unabashedly that he has that prerogative. By the time this is being read, we will know whether he has chosen that unprecedented act of "self-forgiveness." If he is being advised knowledgeably and wisely, he's being told at least four things that he would need to consider before purportedly granting himself a pardon.

First, it is highly questionable that such a pardon would be effective. "No one being above the law" is firmly engrained in, at least, the ideals of our Constitutional democracy. #45 has even said as much publicly – of course, that was when he was talking about Hillary Clinton. I've not heard him say similarly when talking about himself, his family, and other sycophants.

Second, purporting to grant a pardon, that is accepted, implies guilt. It implies a recognition – an admission, if you will – that wrongdoing has occurred. Without a crime being committed, there's no reason to grant or accept a pardon.

Third, a pardon by the President of the United States only absolves the recipient from criminal liability for *federal* crimes. The President cannot grant a pardon that would be effective against *state* crimes. Many of #45's actions before and after becoming President have been violations of *both* federal and state criminal laws. The New York Attorney General is already on his trail, and that trail could easily lead to a state-level trial, conviction, and imprisonment. Charges could range from tax evasion, bank fraud, mail fraud, racketeering, inciting to riot, to conspiracy to commit multiple state-level crimes. It seems unlikely that New York Governor Cuomo would pardon him. And, no presidential pardon forgives or protects against *civil*, as opposed to criminal, liability. God knows there are multiple, credible *civil* lawsuits already pending to which #45 will have to answer, pardon or no pardon. There's also the dissolution of marriage petition that will give us all a glimpse into what Melania was able to negotiate into her prenup as a condition to following #45 into the White House.



[continued on page 2]

Fourth, and most importantly, the granting and acceptance of a pardon means that the person pardoned can be examined *under oath* about the circumstances surrounding their criminal activity and that of others. Moreover, when examined, they cannot claim the protections of the Fifth Amendment that says that no one can be required to give testimony that would incriminate themselves criminally. If the person has been pardoned, they cannot incriminate themselves for the pardoned crime(s) – they cannot facilitate a criminal prosecution of themselves, because they have been absolved of criminal liability thanks to the pardon.

Let that soak in for a minute. No question would be off-limits about the actual, but pardoned, criminal activity and the conduct of others who were also involved. There would not be the opportunity to refuse to answer without risk of being in contempt of court and punished for that contempt, which can include imprisonment. Also, answering would be *under oath*, so a demonstrable falsehood could lead to unpardoned, felony criminal conduct. Whatever pardons accomplish, they do not absolve from *future crimes*.



Multiple times in my law practice I've had a client say what had been agreed to between the client and an opposing party, but "they can't prove it, because there was nothing in writing." My response has always been, "Oh yes, they can prove the agreement easily; they simply

have to ask you what had been agreed. You'll be under oath, so you will have to acknowledge the terms of the agreement, or commit the felony of perjury; and I will immediately ask the court to allow me to withdraw from representing you if you choose to commit the felony. I can't tell that you're lying, but I also can't continue to represent you."

The bottom line is that a pardon is *not* a get-out-of-jail-free card. The fact is that #45 being pardoned by his own act or by Vice President Pence as acting president, would not get #45 out of his current predicament. For that matter, #45 actually compromises his own self-interest with every pardon of others that he issues. Everyone who accepts a pardon from him will similarly be subject to being brought in for examination under oath and without the opportunity to invoke the Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination. Think Rudy Giuliani. Think Donald Jr. Think Jared Kushner. Think Ivanka Trump. If they were to accept a pardon, they will have to tell the truth or commit an unpardoned felony of perjury. The law will get to the truth. The wheels of justice grind slowly – frustratingly so – but they grind exceedingly fine.

While the Bible says that the truth will set you free, in this case, it could get #45 locked up. Presidents, of both parties, have historically granted pardons to people in the waning days of the presidency. This time is different. This time #45 is granting and/or considering pardons for individuals who could be knowledgeable of crimes in which #45 could be implicated personally before and after he became president. Think Roger Stone. Think Michael Flynn. Think Steve Bannon. Think all of those involved in the Trump organization. #45 needs to take care about what he asks for. You just might get it.

I say, pardon yourself and all the rest of them. Pardon them, please. A pardon is not an exoneration, and knowledgeable persons who accept a pardon can be compelled to "sing like canaries."

## Briefs & Shorts



Thanks to **David Cotton** for introducing **Eric Marcus**, our January speaker. Thanks to **David Cotton** as our technology guru and to **Nicholas Williams** for managing our website. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter editor. *Thanks to all our contributors to the newsletter!*

The next copy deadline for the FFBC newsletter will be **February 15, 2021**. 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.

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.



**United Way**

Our fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have raised over **\$400,000** for scholarships that are awarded to Iowa high school seniors who have done remarkable, courageous things to reduce homophobia and teach about LGBTQ issues in their schools and communities. Please consider a contribution on-line or by sending a check.

**Consider a tax-deductible contribution** to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax-exempt testamentary gift, or both. Our first legacy gift to the FFBC scholarship program came from **Cliff Paulsen** who passed away last year, to the tune of over **\$67,000!** Contact Jonathan Wilson for details or with any questions.





# Making Gay History

by Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, January 8, 2021, was Eric Marcus, founder and host of the award-winning podcast *Making Gay History*, who spoke to us via ZOOM from his home in Manhattan, New York. *Making Gay History*, which mines Marcus's decades-old audio archive of rare interviews (conducted for his oral history book of the same name about the LGBTQ civil rights movement) is intended to create and publicize intimate, personal portraits of both known and long-forgotten champions, heroes, and witnesses to history.

Eric Marcus is an engaging and entertaining conversationalist and collector, and his presentation to us consisted of anecdotes, photos, and recordings of some of those interviews that have been aired in his podcast episodes – including these, among others famous and not famous:

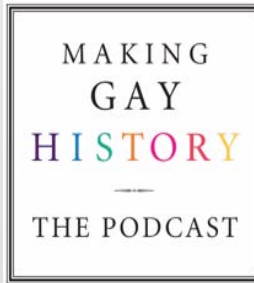
- Edythe Eyde (1921-2015) — a.k.a. Lisa Ben, a.k.a. Tigrina, was America's most lovably eccentric renaissance woman, a cabaret singer, sci-fi writer, illustrator, cat lover, and pioneer lesbian zine publisher who, when she was first asked, "Are you gay?" answered, "I try to be as happy as I can under the circumstances."
- Wendell Sayers (1904-1998) a much older cousin of Chicago Bears running back Gale Sayers, was the first black attorney employed in the State of Colorado's AG office. "I'll never forget saying goodbye to Wendell on the front steps of his house in 1990," says Marcus. "There was something he wanted to ask me and it was, 'Do you think it's too late for me to meet someone?' I knew from spending a few hours with Wendell how lonely he was, so I didn't tell him what I really thought. I said that I thought it was never too late. There was always the hope of meeting someone."
- Sylvia Rivera (1951-2002) was a drag queen who claimed to have sparked the Stonewall Inn Riots in the summer of 1969.
- Joyce Hunter (1939) is a Black/Jewish orphan from the Bronx, a PhD scientist, and a co-founder in 1985 of the Harvey Milk High School in New York.
- Perry Watkins (1948-1996) was a black serviceman who "checked the box" as homosexual when he was drafted in 1968 but was enlisted anyway – and continually reenlisted and promoted despite never hiding his orientation. Finally separated in 1984, he fought a series of lawsuits to get an honorable discharge, finally awarded to him in 1988 with full retirement benefits and \$135,000 in retroactive pay.
- Dear Abby (Pauline Phillips, 1918-2013) was the famous columnist and straight ally.
- Vito Russo (1946-1990) was an activist, historian, and author in 1981 of *The Celluloid Closet* about homosexuals and homosexuality in the movies.

A gifted historian and archivist, Eric Marcus obviously loves a good story and knows how to tell good stories well. He gave us a fun and joyful hour. **If you click on the Speakers tab at our website, <ffbciowa.org>, you can listen to a complete audio recording of Eric Marcus's remarks, and of the Q&A which followed.**

## Downloading *Making Gay History* Episodes

\* Subscribe to the podcast *Making Gay History* on your computer through iTunes. Search for the podcast in the iTunes store, then click "Subscribe," and access episodes in your "Library."

\* For tablet or smartphone, download a podcast app (e.g., Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, NPR One, Overcast, Pocket Casts, RadioPublic, Stitcher, Spotify, TuneIn). Search for *Making Gay History*.



January Speaker:  
Eric Marcus



David Cotton Introduces  
our January Speaker



Eric Marcus was born in New York City in 1958. He earned his B.A. in 1980 from Vassar College, where he majored in Urban Studies. He got a master's degree from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 1984, and another master's degree in real estate development in 2003, also from Columbia University. He has been an associate producer for *Good Morning America* and *CBS Morning News*, and has written for a range of publications including the *New York Times*, *TIME*, *Newsweek*, the *New York Daily News*, and the *New York Post*.

Marcus's writings are primarily of LGBT interest; between 1998 and 1993 he produced books with titles like *The Male Couple's Guide*; *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights*; and *Is It a Choice? Answers to Most Frequent Questions about Gay & Lesbian People*. In 1995 he published *Breaking the Surface*, the autobiography of gay Olympic diving champion Greg Louganis, which became a #1 *New York Times* bestseller, and two years later *Icebreaker: The Autobiography of U.S. Figure Skating Champion Rudy Galindo*. Marcus is also the author of *Why Suicide? Questions and Answers about Suicide, Suicide Prevention*, and *Coping with the Suicide of Someone You Know*, and from 2010 to 2014 he served on the board of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Marcus is the founder and host of the *Making Gay History* podcast, which brings LGBT history to life through the voices of the people who lived it, and he is co-producer of *Those Who Were There: Voices from the Holocaust*, a podcast drawn from the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University. He is the founder and chair of the Stonewall 50 Consortium, which brings together 240 nonprofits committed to producing programming, exhibitions, and educational materials related to LGBTQ history and culture, and he serves on the board of the American LGBTQ+ Museum. Eric Marcus lives in Manhattan with his partner, and he can be reached at [eric@ericmarcus.com](mailto:eric@ericmarcus.com).

# Trump's Last Gasp

by John Schmacker



The breach of our national Capitol on January 6<sup>th</sup> was not an insurrection, not a riot, not a protest. It was an attempted coup, a failed and hapless attempt to shut down our democracy. It was conducted and led by fascists and incited by Donald Trump, our president. Trump is delusional enough to believe that this attempt might have worked to his advantage and might have allowed him to cling to power. This move would have reduced America to the status of yet another dictatorship. The world is full of nations led by the strong men he so admires and seeks to emulate. But he has failed.

His coup has failed. He has damaged our country, but he has done more damage to himself and his cult. Twitter and Facebook have shut him out. Articles of Impeachment are being drawn up. Calls for his resignation are mounting. We've seen a flurry of White House resignations and a rising chorus of Republicans finally declaring, in gestures that cannot be called profiles in courage at this late date, that it was time for Trump to go. Trump has shot himself in the foot. We can hope that this cripples any hope he has for a political future.

The Capitol was breached by a mishmash of fascists impatient with democracy; by organized right-wing militia groups intolerant of all others; by evangelical Christians hoping for a fulfillment of prophesy; and by starry-eyed Trump cultists who believed him to be the protector of white supremacy, of an America that never was. They stormed the building. The worst of them did damage. Many of them, probably inside the Capitol for the first time in their lives, seemed content to stare in awe at the building itself, taking pictures and strolling around. Many of them expected Trump to be there with them because he told them so, but he wasn't there for them. He has never been there for anybody but himself.

This coup is a metaphor for Trump's incompetent presidency. The damage it caused will take a long time to repair, for sure. There was no organized plan, no policy, for what to do once inside the building, either the Capitol or the White House. Chaos and disruption seemed to be the point,

and it accomplished nothing except damage. We can be thankful that nobody in the Trump administration knew how to run a government, and that his loyal but leaderless minions did not know how to conduct a coup.

Authorities are still assessing the damage done to our Capitol, but accounts include broken glass, smashed doors and windows, defecation and urination on the carpets and walls, missing laptops and furniture, ransacked offices. All this physical damage will be repaired in short order. Assessing the damage done to our nation will take longer. America's standing as the world's oldest and strongest democracy has been tarnished, in full view of the rest of the world, and much to the delight of despots everywhere. Confederate flags flew in our shrine to freedom. They set up gallows. This was a would-be lynch mob. They searched for our congressional leaders. Lives of our elected officials were threatened on the job.

The mob that invaded the Capitol presented a sea of white faces. Indeed, the only black faces in evidence were those of the Capitol police officers, bravely trying to protect our shrine to democracy. The MAGA monogram on all those red hats is a place holder for MAWA (Make America White Again), the root cause of their grievance movement. White supremacy strolled unmolested, unchallenged, through our sacred halls. Those who had shouted, "Liberty! Liberty!" discovered that they were free to break into the Capitol. They were free to smash and ransack and threaten or, for some, free to just gawk at the building. They were then free to leave the building. White privilege at its darkest. In America, everything eventually seems to boil down to race.

That the Capitol Police were so underprepared, that their superior officers were nowhere present, even after plenty of warning by the media and from Trump's lips, leads to speculation that insiders enabled the invasion. In the world of Trump, this merits investigation.

After whatever commotion he plans for January 20<sup>th</sup>, Donald Trump can hole up at Mar-A-Loco, at least until the arrest warrants start arriving. We need to review our extradition treaties.



## COMING SOON TO A NEWSLETTER NEAR YOU!

The FFBC newsletter is going digital! The bad news is that, if you prefer a paper copy, you'll have to download it and print it yourself. The good news is that you'll get to see it on line in living color, or in color hard copy if you have a color printer. **IF** we have your email address, you will receive a monthly reminder when a new issue has been posted. You will be able to click a link to take you directly to the current issue. So, be sure we have an accurate email address for you so that you don't miss a notice or a monthly newsletter. As always, you're welcome to submit copy for inclusion in the newsletter.





## February Speaker

# Brian Bond



Brian Bond is a former Obama Administration official and LGBTQ advocate with an extensive background in constituency outreach and coalition bridge-building. Brian most recently served as the Coalitions Director for the Climate Action Campaign in Washington, D.C., working to protect clean air and promote action to limit climate change. Prior to that, he was the Deputy CEO for the 2016 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

During the Obama Administration, he served as Deputy Director for the White House Office of Public Engagement and primary liaison for the LGBTQ community, the first to serve in that role. After the successful re-election of President Obama in 2012, he moved to the Environmental Protection Agency to work on the Administration's climate initiatives as Associate Administrator for Public Engagement and Environmental Education. Prior to these roles, he served as the Executive Director of the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund and is credited with expanding the success of the organization and support for LGBTQ candidates during his six-year tenure, which began in 1997.

Brian is a Missouri native and has a degree in Public Administration from Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri.

You won't want to miss and, since the meeting is virtual, there's no reason why you should not be able to participate. You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend virtually – simply share the participation instructions!

## A Call for Volunteers

By Rick Miller

The FFBC speaker, Eric Marcus, was very informative and passionate about our historical legacy on Friday, January 7, 2021, and reminded us of our own stories and history. We all have stories to tell. There are many groups in Des Moines that are beginning to record these stories in many ways and formats. The Des Moines Pride Center is one of these places.



After the museum exhibit "Evolution of the Revolution: 50 Years Since Stonewall," interest piqued with Iowa Safe Schools, the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus, and ONE Iowa to gather material for these legacy projects. Rick Miller is the person on the Board of Directors at the Pride Center who is gathering local history and sharing it with the Library and Archives from Iowa City where a master's degree student is studying Iowa LGBT History. Presently they are working with the communities of Grinnell, Iowa City, Quad Cities, Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, and Des Moines. They hope to add more.

If you are interested and passionate about our local history, Rick would like to invite you to join him as he completes the inventory and labeling of the exhibit and returns to interviewing local activists and allies for a biography book. Half of the 70 bios have been interviewed and the final write-ups will conclude with a published manuscript for purchase.

If this is something for which you would like to use your time this year, please contact Rick Miller at 515-274-5518 or [erik2000dsm@aol.com](mailto:erik2000dsm@aol.com). Thanks!

**We have now witnessed for four years what happens when we entrust an actual bully with the presidential "bully pulpit."**

### February Virtual Meeting

There will be a virtual meeting using ZOOM in February. The announcement with the Zoom login information will be circulated on-line. Make sure we have your current email address so you don't miss out on future announcements. You can contact David Cotton ([Davidcotton@me.com](mailto:Davidcotton@me.com)) for help figuring out how to participate if you need any personal assistance.



zoom

# Bumpy Vaccine Rollout

by Supervisor Matt McCoy  
Polk County, 5<sup>th</sup> District

The Trump administration has royally screwed up the rollout of the vaccine. Upon writing this article, the United States has vaccinated 5.1 million people. The Trump Administration had said that more than 20 million would be vaccinated by the end of December 2020. We blew past that deadline without hardly anyone getting vaccinated. Pfizer informed the media the last week of December that production and distribution of the vaccine was completed, but the Trump Administration did not inform Pfizer of where to send the vaccine, so it sat on the warehouse floor in coolers. Iowa's share of the vaccine was reduced by 40% as a result of this negligence. Iowa's portion of the vaccine received was 110,000 doses of which Polk County received 19,250. Polk County currently has more than 20,000 qualified healthcare workers who meet the Iowa Infectious Disease Advisory Council's criteria for receiving the dosages first. You could say that all of Polk County's allocation would be used by just this group. There are also over 200 long-term care centers in the county that are in this first tier. We are using contracts with Hy-Vee and Medicap to distribute the vaccine, plus Polk County has provided a vaccine clinic. We hope to have the top tier, which are healthcare providers and those in long-term care centers, all vaccinated by the end of January.

One of the greatest mysteries that locally elected officials have is when we can expect additional vaccines from the state and federal government. The next group that will receive vaccinations after the top tier (Phase 1A) is



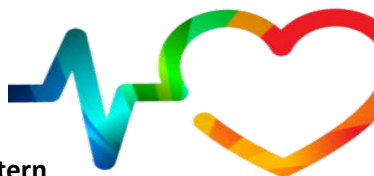
Phase 1B, which includes elderly Iowans aged 75 years and older as well as other essential workers. We anticipate this group to be eligible in early February, assuming we get more vaccines.

The hope is that a new administration will bring transparency and clarity into what is a huge black hole of misinformation. Clearly watching Governor Reynolds respond to related future shipments has done nothing to instill confidence in elected officials in having a clue as to when we may receive additional vaccines and in what quantity. The governor's office did indicate that they anticipate that most Iowans who are outside of essential medical workers, nursing home residents, and over the age of 75 will be vaccinated by mid to late 2021.

As additional information becomes available, I will share it with you. At this writing, 55 counties in Iowa have a positivity rate in excess of 15% on a 14-day average, which includes Polk County. The CDC considers anything above 10% to be uncontrolled community spread. As always, we're asking Iowans to be patient, to continue mitigation efforts like wearing a mask, social distancing, washing hands frequently, and avoiding large social gatherings. Now is the time to not let your guard down.

## A Word from One Iowa

By Madeline Rocha Smith



Mark your calendar and join us for the first **Eastern Iowa LGBTQ Health and Wellness Conference** on Friday, January 29th!

We're excited to partner with the University of Iowa College of Public Health and University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics to address and find equitable solutions to the health inequities and disparities that LGBTQ Iowans continue to experience in our state at this **virtual** half-day conference.

Healthcare providers and community members will hear from key experts, participate in interactive workshops, and collaborate with one another to cultivate safe and welcoming healthcare environments for LGBTQ Iowans throughout the state. We'll have breakout workshops on racism in the medical community, mental healthcare best practices for LGBTQ folks, and hear from a community panel about real stories of inequality in our healthcare system and collaborate with providers to find ways to do better.



Community tickets are pay what you can, and CME credit is available for healthcare professionals through the University of Iowa. **You can register on the One Iowa website.**



# Wonder Woman 1984

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage

*Wonder Woman 1984* opens with a young Diana competing in a grueling Themysciran relay—after losing her horse, she finds a shortcut, but at the cost of missing a checkpoint that disqualifies her from the race. Her mentor Antiope (Robin Wright) admonishes her for “cheating” and “taking the short path,” and that being heroic is only as good as the work you put in to get there. While the individual components of *Wonder Woman 1984* have high entertainment value, the film would be a more heroic sequel if it embraced the truth of its own message instead of taking narrative shortcuts.

Following the flashback on Themyscira, we find Diana/Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot) saving lives and stopping crimes in a bright and sunny 1984 Washington, DC. As a civilian, she works in Antiquities at the Smithsonian Museum, leading a professional but otherwise solitary life in a Watergate Complex apartment decorated with mementos of her fallen love, World War I pilot Steve Trevor (Chris Pine). Her geologist colleague Barbara Minerva (Kristin Wiig) leads a similar but less self-assured life, feeling weak and invisible, yet has enough heart to give fresh pizza to the homeless on her way home from work. After a mall heist reveals a front for black market ancient artifacts, the recovered items are sent to Diana and Barbara’s workplace, among them a cryptic citrine gemstone that appears to grant wishes when held. In pursuit of this “Dreamstone” (sorry, Sandman) is washed-up oil tycoon Maxwell Lord (Pedro Pascal), a gilded “greed is good” personality dedicated to perpetuating his own delusions of grandeur in the name of family pride. Hoping for a miracle, Diana makes her own wish—and so does a recently-assaulted Barbara. As Lord amasses phenomenal cosmic (and earthly) power and Steve returns to Diana’s life, the hidden costs of their own wishes become apparent, and Wonder Woman must find out how to stop Lord as her new friend Barbara becomes twisted into her enemy.

Kristin Wiig brings scene-stealing fury to her awkward-character repertoire as Barbara Minerva/Cheetah—both she and Diana have epic takedowns of the men who casually harass them (there are a lot of them), but it’s Barbara who sticks the most satisfying and relatable character moments. There are some fun set pieces too—the mall heist, the White House fight sequences, and the final confrontation between Wonder Woman and Cheetah are all what you’d expect out of a thrilling superhero movie. I’ll never get tired of watching Diana effortlessly shut down unwelcome male gazes, slide-kick some thug airborne, or seeing Barbara let the claws come out. Wiig’s wardrobe in this film is dressed to kill.

But not all the film’s punches land right. Pascal’s Lord is manic Hackman-style Lex Luthor energy wrapped in a prestige-obsessed immigrant poisoned by the American Dream. It should make him a relevant and compelling post-Trumpian villain, but the script doesn’t give his character enough dimension beyond “bad dad” and “greed personified,” and it blunts the film’s climax as a result. However, the film does well enough in portraying greed and lack of empathy as the true global supervillains. There are times the movie succeeds, then struggles to strike a balance between the tone of the sunnier and campier Christopher Reeve/Lynda Carter era of superhero films and the more cynical modern superhero pictures of today. Another example is the soundtrack’s preference of Hans Zimmer’s instrumentals over any 80s classics. The electric cello, trademark of 2017’s *Wonder Woman* badass moments, is conspicuously absent.

All this is critical nitpicking compared to the most serious issue I have with *Wonder Woman 1984*: the circumstances behind Steve’s resurrection. Without any spoilers, it’s meant to be quirky and romantic, but the way his return is presented isn’t worth the mental hoops it forces audiences to jump through, not to mention the ethical ones. At worst, it’s problematic; at best, it’s lazy writing. Chris Pine and Gal Gadot have the chemistry—the issue is the script. Steve showing up in his 1918 flight suit, perhaps smelling ominously of smoke, would have been a simpler (and safer) choice to bring him from where we left him in the original film into the world of *WW84*. There’s also a Hallmark-movie style conclusion that feels inserted and atonal. Why does Diana need to be so reliant on male companionship for happiness, especially when nearly all of the men depicted in the preceding movie were awful?



What any Wonder Woman movie needs to improve upon its predecessor is giving its audience more moments that let us see the world from Diana’s point-of-view, like when she learns what she’s capable of, empowers young women, or when she’s at her most vulnerable. These moments exist in *WW84*, but like the Dreamstone wishes, there’s a catch.

To borrow Diana’s final words, this movie is “so many things.” But if you’re a fan of superheroes and in need of a blockbuster, *Wonder Woman 1984* is enough to save the day.



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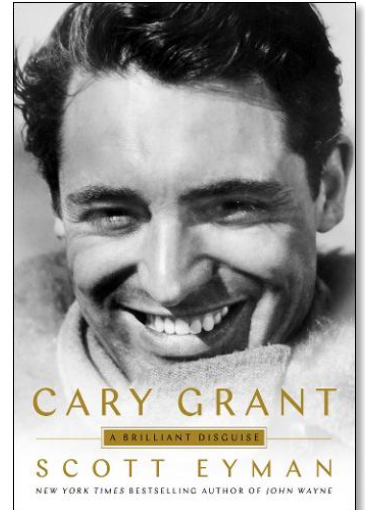
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*First Friday  
Breakfast Club, Inc.*

## Cary Grant: A Brilliant Disguise

by Scott Eyman

A Book Review by  
Steve Person



The handsome, suave, and talented movie actor known to the world as Cary Grant in reality lived a dual identity by his movie star name and his birth moniker, Archibald (Archie) Alexander Leach. Born in Bristol, England, in 1904, young Archie grew up in a household that at best could be referred to as chaotic. His father drank to excess, and his mother could be described as delicate, or maybe even distant. Archie's father, Elias, committed his wife to an asylum called Fishponds while Archie was away at school. When he returned home, aged 11, he asked where his mother was. His father obfuscated and replied she had gone to live at a seaside resort. Archie didn't question any further. Years later, when he discovered the truth, his trauma knew no bounds. His relationships with women suffered because of the strange and secretive life of his mother.

From an early age, Archie excelled in gymnastics, and at the age of 14, his father signed an agreement allowing Archie to join an English team of acrobats called the Prender Troupe, which performed at venues all across England. In 1921, when Archie was 17, the troupe traveled to the United States to play theaters in Cleveland, Ohio; St. Louis, Missouri; and Chicago, Illinois; among others. In 1925, Archie signed on with a new group of performers and actually played Des Moines in late September after an earlier stint in Davenport—(where, ironically, he died in 1986 while rehearsing his one-man show dedicated to talking about his acting career. He was 82 and suffered a massive stroke).

Eventually, the young Archie was discovered by Hollywood talent scouts and signed a contract with Paramount Studios. He changed his name from Archie Leach to Cary Grant. The name Cary came from one of his stage characters, and the name Grant, "was evidently picked out of a list of generic surnames." The rest, as the saying goes, is history. The handsome young actor initially appeared in small parts in forgettable movies. He met and lived with the actor Randolph Scott for eighteen years, but both men described their house sharing as just that, and nothing more.

Author Eyman chronicles Grant's rise to stardom from his early small parts to his blockbuster status in such films as *Notorious* and *Indiscreet* (both with Ingrid Bergman, one of his favorite leading ladies), *North By Northwest*, *Houseboat* (including a steamy affair with his costar, Sophia Loren), *Charade*, and *Father Goose*. Jack L. Warner offered Grant the lead as Professor Higgins in the film version of *My Fair Lady*. Grant told Warner, "There is only one actor who can play the role, and that's Rex Harrison. Furthermore, if he isn't in it, I won't go to see your picture." Grant's final film was *Walk, Don't Run*, a remake of 1943's *The More the Merrier*. Although his last film was not a huge hit, he knew it was time for him to go.

Grant married five times: Virginia Cherrill, Barbara Hutton, Betsy Drake, Dyan Cannon (who gave birth to Grant's only child, Jennifer), and Barbara Harris. In his retirement, Grant became spokesperson for Faberge cosmetics and enjoyed the perks that company provided. Also, late in his life and during his marriage to Dyan Cannon, Grant became a true believer in the use of LSD, originally a legal drug that he took under supervised conditions. He claimed the drug finally allowed him to get along with his two identities, his birth name and his professional one. It also brought perspective with his difficult relationship with his mother who lived to a ripe old age. *Cary Grant: A Brilliant Disguise* is worth the time it takes to read it, especially if you are interested in the Hollywood of the twentieth century.