



First Friday News & Views

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



February 2022

Volume 27

Issue 2

Next Meeting

February 4

7:00 a.m.



Meeting Location

**Online
Zoom**



February Speaker

**Edward
Kelly**



FFBC Website

ffbcowa.org



FFBC Membership Revisited

by Byron Huff, Board President

The definition of **inclusion** is the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure.

The original by-laws of FFBC, adopted on January 11, 1996, only referred to eligibility for membership to any "person." The by-laws were amended on March 5, 2004, after a membership vote which changed "person" to "gay or bisexual men."

At some point the board affirmed that a "man" would also include transgender men.

The FFBC board recently discussed who an FFBC member is, in part because we have had individuals pay for membership (meaning they paid in advance to attend in-person meetings) who are straight allies. The money paid for dues is only needed if we have an in-person meeting because they are needed to cover the physical breakfast (venue and food); that is why we do not require payment when the meetings are held via Zoom.

Membership dues previously included a copy of the newsletter that was physically mailed; times have changed for the better, allowing electronic distribution to anyone who wishes to be on our mailing list or visits our website. The efficiency of this means the newsletter has no cost other than the contributors' time writing articles and the editor who brilliantly makes it look amazing.

Historically, FFBC was meant to be a safe welcoming space where men could feel comfortable attending whether they were "out" or closeted. The idea was that a closeted person could remain in the closet and attend while learning from others how the coming-out process might work for them. While so much has improved allowing many to come out more easily, there is no federal protection that could prevent someone from being fired for being gay. Even with that protection, it is not difficult to make up a reason someone does not get hired or does not get that promotion. Beyond work, there is always the fear of losing family and friends. Lastly the stigma, created mostly by religious zealots, pointed at LGBTQ+ individuals pushes many people to stay closeted.

My feeling has been that anyone can attend an FFBC meeting as long as they are part of the LGBTQ+ community or one of its allies. The board will be discussing who is a "member" and what membership means as well as how we can be more **inclusive** by clarifying how those who are not gay, bi, or trans males can be part of FFBC.



**First Friday Breakfast Club will meet
virtually via Zoom in February.**



Supreme Court Rulings Should Be A Concern for LGBTQ+ Rights

by Ryan Crane, FFBC Vice President

With a case in front of the high court that will almost certainly roll back reproductive rights, and the recent announcement that they will hear a case this session on affirmative action, we in the LGBTQ community need to be very concerned about our own "day in court" and what might happen.

It may seem odd to consider the possibility of a backward step on our way to equality; after all, the right to marry was secured in 2015. It now seems increasingly plausible that a fundamentalist Christian business or other right-wing group could bring a case.

What to do? Nothing, really. Not in the near future, at least. "Packing the court" by adding more justices seems even more impossible than it might have several months back, considering all Senate Republicans (and, crucially, a couple of Democrats) refused to secure and lock in voting rights.

While I am usually a very optimistic and hopeful person, I am feeling decidedly dour about this. The one positive thing: their docket looks full for now, so we have another year to live without our rights being kicked around.



FFBC February Virtual Meeting

Due to the high positivity rate in Polk County of the omicron variant, 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) for help figuring out how to participate if you need any personal assistance.

zoom



Thanks to **Gary Moore** for introducing **Loren Olson**, our January speaker. Thanks to **David Cotton** for managing our website and to **Nicholas Williams** for managing all of our Microsoft IT infrastructure. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter editor. *Thank you to all our contributors to the newsletter!*

The **deadline** for the **March newsletter** will be **February 21**. If you have something on your mind to share, type it up and email it to Wade (wadecpetersen@gmail.com) by the copy deadline.

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

Thanks also to all those **Amazon shoppers** who designate FFBC as the beneficiary when shopping **smile.amazon.com**. Your shopping with



smile.amazon.com means that a small contribution to FFBC will be made with every purchase. Proverbial, found money.

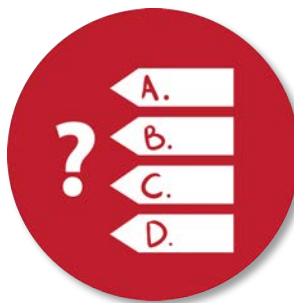
Our fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have raised over **\$450,000** for scholarships that are awarded to Iowa high school seniors who have done remarkable, courageous things to reduce homophobia and teach about LGBTQ issues in their schools and communities. Please consider a tax-deductible **contribution online** or by sending a check.

Please consider a **tax-exempt testamentary gift**. Our first legacy gift to the FFBC scholarship program came from **Cliff Paulsen** to the tune of over **\$67,000**! Contact **Byron Huff** for details or with questions.



What We Don't Know: A Work-Around

by Jonathan Wilson



I don't know very much. Oh, I know my name, my address, my family members, my partner's name, the name of the President of the United States, and what year it is. Basically, I know enough to claim testamentary capacity; if I were to sign a Last Will and Testament, I'm confident it would stand up to challenge.

If you were to look at my resume, you might think I know quite a bit, that I'm smart even. I graduated high in my class in high school, high in my class in college with a double major in English and history, and near the top of my class in law school.

With those credentials, how can I say I don't know very much, or question whether I'm smart?

The answer is simple; I've been very good at multiple choice tests, the testing format often used at every education level. I could read the material being tested, and based on that limited familiarity with the subject matter, I could pick the right answer out of typically four choices. It's actually pretty easy for you to eliminate as clearly wrong two of the four choices, and right there you have things reduced to a 50/50 chance of guessing the right answer. With those odds applied to every question, almost anyone with cursory familiarity with the subject matter will score at 50% just by guessing, which is customarily considered a passing grade. Throw in the use of a bell-shaped grading curve, and I was benefitted by classmates who hadn't bothered to read the material at all or had other test-taking challenges.

Understandably, I have carefully avoided participating in trivia games. Instinctively, I have followed the age-old advice: if people think you're smart, don't speak in a setting that will prove them wrong. Following that advice has worked to my advantage in my career and my personal life. Add to that the advent of the Internet, where a simple Google search can generate answers to factual questions across-the-board, and the advantage of people who know things is diminished to my benefit.

The moral of the story is that you should enhance your multiple-choice test-taking skills and hone your Google search capabilities.

It's certainly great that some people have a knack for retaining factual information and regurgitating it on command. More power to them. But, for those of us who lack that knack, multiple choice test-taking skills coupled with the Internet, provide a fairly effective work-around.

Google



In The Kitchen

with Brian Carlson



This Month's Recipe:

SPICY HONEYED SWEET POTATOES

This healthy vegetarian side dish is full of flavor. Kicked up with jalapeños and sweetened with honey, sweet potatoes are a great way to get plenty of fiber and nutrients into your diet on those chilly winter nights. Try them sprinkled with toasted sunflower or pumpkin seeds or a dollop of Greek yogurt.

Ingredients:

4 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into small cubes
1/2 large red onion, finely chopped
1-2 jalapeños, seeded and finely chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced
1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/2 cup honey
1 tbsp smoked paprika
1 tbsp chili powder
1/4 tsp cumin
2 tsp kosher salt
1 tsp ground pepper

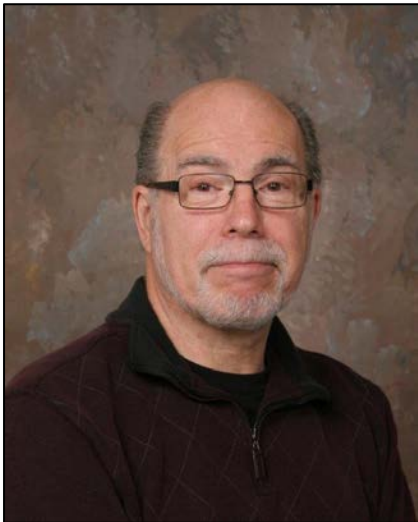


Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. In large bowl, mix sweet potatoes, onions, and jalapeños and set aside.
2. In medium bowl, whisk together remaining ingredients. Pour over sweet potatoes and mix well. Pour sweet potatoes onto large baking sheet and spread into single layer.
3. Roast for 25 minutes, turn potatoes and roast for 20 minutes more or until potatoes are soft and crispy edges form. Serves four as a side or two as a main dish.



February Speaker



Edward Kelly



Edward Kelly Jr., a former Vietnam veteran, served as a Pentecostal Evangelist in Iowa for 25 years and a pastor for six years. He is the author of *Journey into Love*, an account of his passage out of judgmental Fundamentalism. He has a B.A. in Business Management from Buena Vista University, a Master's in Theology from Franciscan University (Steubenville, Ohio) and an M.B.A. from Columbia Southern University. He lives in Red Oak, Iowa, with his wife, and he continues to write and speak for rights of the LGBTQ+ community. He is a member of the Spiritual Naturalist Society and NAACP.

10th Annual LGBTQ+ Health & Wellness Conference

by Maddie Rocha Smith

Join **One Iowa** at the 10th annual **LGBTQ Health & Wellness Conference** with Des Moines University on Saturday, February 19, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



For a decade, we have gathered healthcare professionals and community members together to learn how to make healthcare more equitable and inclusive for LGBTQ+ folks. **We offer "pay what you can" community registration – get your ticket today!**

This virtual all-day event will dive into LGBTQ affirming family planning, LGBTQ affirming sex-ed, mental health best practices, and more! CME credit is available for healthcare professionals.



Come celebrate 10 years of making LGBTQ healthcare more inclusive with us and grab your ticket on our website: oneiowa.org

one iowa



For more information, please contact Maddie Rocha Smith at Madeline@oneiowa.org.

Fitting In Is Not Belonging

by Gary Moore

Thirty members of the First Friday Breakfast Club (some from as far away as Fairfield) braved the bitter cold Iowa January morning to hear Dr. Loren Olson and enjoy each other's company for breakfast at Hoyt Sherman Place. David Cotton had Dr. Olson's slide presentation ready to roll, and Ryan Crane, FFBC Vice-President, filled in for Byron Huff in chairing the meeting.

In July it will have been five years since Dr. Olson last addressed FFBC. We were again fortunate to hear Loren's talk on "Fitting In Is Not Belonging" which is the second essay in his soon-to-be-released new book **No More Neckties, A Memoir in Essays**. Dr. Olson shared his vast experience from years in psychiatry and study in male sexuality.

Loren started the talk with two brief instances and their contrast. He first described a young man concerned that he had not yet had a wet dream. Olson connected this to a second experience concerning his openness with a client of 25 years. She had never shared that she had lesbian feelings until their final session, after Dr. Olson's book *Finally Out: Letting Go of Living Straight, A Psychiatrist's Own Story* had come out and gained publicity. Only when you are open to sharing does it allow others to also respond authentically.

Like many, Loren tells a story of growing up and wanting to be a good boy, wanting to be popular and well liked. Despite doing all that, there still lingered a feeling of being isolated/alone. To connect authentically, we must risk and be vulnerable, removing the last veil. For some, that may be too much information and they may fall by the wayside. As we grow older, we hopefully learn that we don't need the approval of everyone. The most important person we need approval from is ourselves and to be known as yourself.

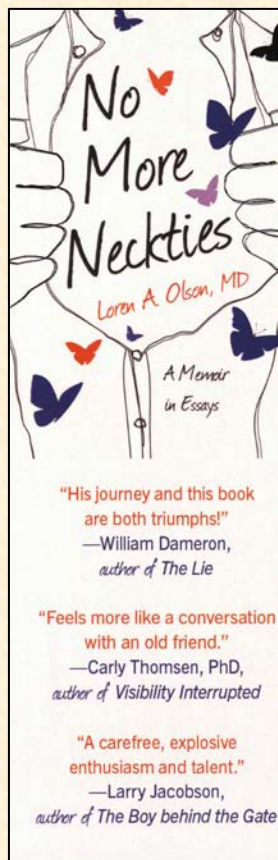
Loren went on to talk about the complicated world of sexual orientation and gender identity which also is influenced by perceptions and our knowledge. Not knowing certain options exist does not mean that they don't exist. Being a man lacks definition, and too often we are shoved into gender-conforming stereotypes which are based on local definitions. A metrosexual may be a refined artistic male in New York City or a sissy in Wakefield, Nebraska, and either one of them is but a small part of where your heart goes. The heart is where the magic resides which cannot be explained, measured or ignored in an authentic life. Attractions and behavior do not always agree.

Sex is complicated and involves more than where you or your partner deposit a climax. It involves emotional, physical, and sexual intimacy. It involves talking about hard stuff: the person they see and the person you know you to be. When you try to be who they want you to be, you sacrifice agency over your life.

Olson advises to stop fearing getting old. Stop believing that love is conditional on being good. Can you ever be good enough? We must start by loving ourselves unconditionally. If who you are is more than someone wants to know, then the best thing to say is "Fuck Off!" As we grow older, if we work at it, we come to understand that great sex does not require a world-class hard-on or the ability to shoot over our shoulder. Age allows us to talk about the hard stuff, and there is where we find our strength and our beauty. These are those life stories that change minds and bring us closer together.



January Speaker **Dr. Loren Olson**



Loren A. Olson, MD
www.LorenAOlson.com

Blog:
www.lorenaolson.com/ask-the-doc-3

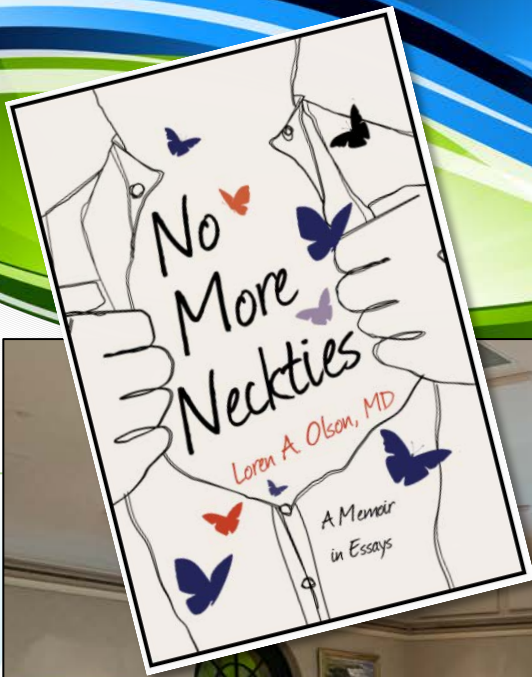
[f/LorenAOlsonMD](https://www.facebook.com/LorenAOlsonMD)

[in/in/LorenAOlsonMD](https://www.linkedin.com/in/LorenAOlsonMD)



January Meeting

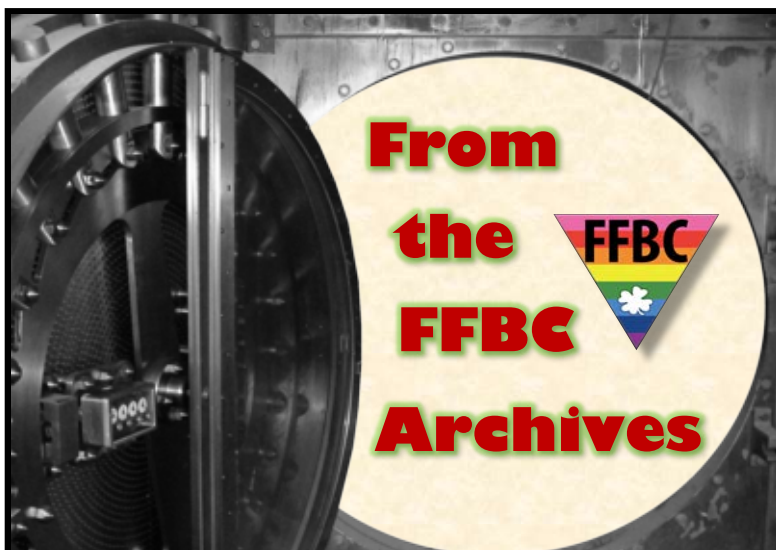
Photo Gallery



FFBC Board Member Gary Moore
Introduces the Speaker



Ryan Crane, FFBC Vice President,
Leads the Breakfast Club in January



5 Years Ago: February 2017

* In his article "Animal Farm Revisited," Jonathan Wilson relates the presidential election of Trump to the dystopian novel *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. "There is a certain, sad irony that the most qualified person to run for president in modern history -- a woman -- was defeated by a male chauvinist pig."

* Bruce Carr summarizes the January speaker, Bill Moulder, former Chief of Police for Des Moines. Moulder delivered a clear message to the breakfast group, "If you don't like what you see, quit bitchin' and start fixin'!"

* Steve Person reviewed *John Adams* by David McCullough.

10 Years Ago: February 2012

* Jonathan Wilson, in his article "Christian Cannibalism," discusses how Christians have been metaphorically eating each other ever since the Roman emperors stopped feeding them to the lions. Jonathan connects the current political climate to the rise of modern-day evangelical Christians.

* Senator Matt McCoy previews the 2012 legislative season by describing three opportunities to create jobs: cutting commercial property taxes, improving education, and finishing job creation legislation (passed in the state senate) that is held up in the House.

* Representative Liz Mathis' presentation at the January meeting was summarized by Bruce Carr. The prominent issue for many FFBC members is marriage rights for same-sex couples.

* Gary Kaufman reviews the movie *War Horse* from director Steven Spielberg.

15 Years Ago: February 2007

* Michael Thompson and Allen Vander Linden describe their "Adventure and Culture in South America, or Two Gay Men On Tour."

* "The Bible Tells Me So," by Jonathan Wilson, differentiates between the principle of the Bible condemning homosexual behavior but saying nothing about homosexuality. He describes how the Biblical writer also believed that the earth was flat and was the center of the universe. If the Biblical writer(s) could be wrong about this, what else could they be wrong about?

* Bruce Carr's article features the January guest speaker, Charlie Wittmack, the first Iowan to ever climb to the summit of Mt. Everest. "No pursuit is more important than the chasing of a dream."

* The movie *Apocalypto*, directed by Mel Gibson, is reviewed by Gary Kaufman.



Future Speakers

March 4
Mark Babcock
 Carillon Player at
 St. Paul's Episcopal Church DSM

April 1
David Miglin
 Broadlawns Board Member Who Visited
 Every Iowa Town

May 6
Eric Shepard
 Artistic Director & Conductor
 Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus

June 3
Becky Smith
 Executive Director
 Iowa Safe Schools

July 16
FFBC Party
 Home of FFBC Member,
 John Schmacker

August 5
Jerry Hatfield
 Climate Change

September 2
Cindy Axne
 U.S. House Representative

Low-Income Senior & Disabled Homeownership Protection Program

by Supervisor Matt McCoy, Polk County, 5th District



Yesterday, I was pleased to announced the boldest senior social safety net proposal ever offered in Polk County. The *Low-Income Senior & Disabled Homeownership Protection Program* will help keep low-income seniors and disabled individuals in their homes and help them pay for other critical everyday needs like groceries and medicine. These vulnerable seniors have been paying into the system for decades, and this program would help them live with dignity. Property tax cuts would come in the form of a rebate that covers Polk County's portion of the total property tax obligation for qualifying seniors and disabled residents.

Roughly 20,000 could qualify for this rebate and receive up to \$431 per year in a tax rebate. In order to qualify, the resident must be age 65 or older or permanently disabled from age 18-64 with a home assessment not exceeding \$125,000. Household income must not exceed 250% of the federal poverty guideline, which is \$32,200 for one, \$43,550 for two, \$54,900 for three, and \$66,250 for four.

"Since I became a Polk County Supervisor, I have heard from countless seniors and disabled residents on fixed incomes who fear continual property tax increases are making it harder and harder for them to stay in their homes." -- Matt McCoy

An example of how this program would work:

- \$125,000 home assessment
- \$62,813 taxable assessment
(54% rollback plus homestead credit)
- \$6.87 Polk County portion of tax liability per \$1,000 taxable valuation
- \$431 Polk County's portion of total tax obligation which would be rebated back to individuals to help cover other critical everyday needs like food, medicine, and utilities.



Polk County is an unenviable position to be flush with cash. We're currently going through the budget process, and there's roughly \$70 million above ongoing expenditures which the board is reviewing for various projects and initiatives. I believe this program should be priority #1. I will propose this program during budget deliberations over the next couple weeks. I look forward to working in a bipartisan way to get this passed. This is a matter of us targeting our tax cuts in progressive, directed relief to those most in need. I can't think of a more effective way to expand our senior social safety net.



Home by Duane Simolke

When I lie beside him,
His knee presses
Against the underside
Of my knee,
His hand presses
Against my chest,
As if holding me together.
If I wake,
And he isn't beside me,
I'll curl up
Like a frightened child,
Lost in the dark,
Afraid to move.
If I wake,
And he isn't beside me,
The thickest blanket
Won't keep me warm.
But I wake,
And find him
Beside me.
He holds me together.



Swan Song

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage

Where do you go when your community isn't what you remember anymore? Todd Stephens's ***Swan Song*** is a meditation on gay aging and mortality with enough campy punches to soften its emotional blows. Its queer culture commentary could use some more finesse, but its lead performance and character development are captivatingly fabulous.

Udo Kier plays real-life Sandusky, Ohio, queer icon Pat Pitsenbarger, former hairdresser, drag queen, and current nursing home resident in his mid-70s. We quickly get a sense of the monotony and solitude of Pat's residency, spent folding napkins, napping, and sneaking in More brand cigarettes while dreaming of his glory days as a drag queen. Pat's biggest passion, though, is styling hair. It's a craft he freely provides for an unkempt friend in the nursing home, who is moved to tears by Pat's talent and empathy. One day, he's approached by the attorney of recently-deceased former client Rita Parker Sloan (Linda Evans), whose will specified Pat as her hairdresser of choice for her funeral. "Bury her with bad hair," Pat sneers--there's clearly some history there. When his nursing home friend passes away suddenly, a grieving Pat has a change of heart, and chooses to journey across town to collect Rita's favorite beauty supplies and give her one final makeover.

It'd be easy to take a high-camp approach to this plot, and at times it flirts with the idea. Midway through the film, a broke Pat begs for \$20 from Rita's attorney, who reveals his less-than-rosy opinion of Pat's character in the process. Out of spite, Pat orders a glass of rosé at a restaurant, leaves the same \$20 as a "tip," then ditches the bill before shoplifting the remaining beauty supplies he needs. At one point, he hitchhikes across town with a cardboard sign reading "Free Beauty Tips." Yet sobering reminders of Pat's own mortality surround him, from the loss of his business to the life he shared with his deceased partner, David. Stephens doesn't pull emotional punches when it comes to these scenes. Udo Kier's performance is gut-wrenching when Pat visits his partner's headstone. In Rita's old in-home hospice room, Pat has a flashback of David in a similar bed dying of AIDS. Yet David's bittersweet presence in *Swan Song* goes beyond grief and loss and into the labors of love he's built and left behind: Italian marble tiles from their old home's demolished fountain, a giant flowerbed outside City Hall, and a handmade stage at a dying gay bar.

These reminders for Pat also reflect change in our own cultural institutions. When Pat returns to his old gay bar to find it sparsely patronized, he chats up a younger, millennial-looking bartender buried in a cell phone and names a laundry list of drag queens he's performed with there, none of which the bartender recognizes (including Pat himself). The bartender casually slides Pat a flier and tells him it's the bar's last night--the property was sold to "a young gay couple" who are converting it into a "straight gastro micro-brew pub." "But where will we dance?" Pat asks. The bartender shakes his head and shrugs with an indifferent smile. Later, Pat chats with his similarly-aged friend Eunice, who quips, "who needs a gay bar when you can hold hands at Applebee's?" and extols the amount of trade he gets from Grindr. Both men are awed seeing kids with gay parents walking along the beach. While both scenes seem dismissive of the contributions of gay bars past and present, and even a shade heteronormative by lionizing having kids, it does pose a fascinating question--does more queer visibility mean having less queer spaces? I believe *Swan Song*'s best response to this is in the character of David and his legacy--love, creativity, and kindness. When Pat embraces these fully, it's a beautiful look to see.

See *Swan Song* and grab the box of Kleenex, you're going to need it.



***Swan Song* (directed by Todd Stephens) is streaming on Hulu.**

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Murder on Mustique

by Anne
Glenconner

A Book Review by Steve Person

Anne Glenconner's international best selling book, *Lady in Waiting*, tells of her decades-long service as Princess Margaret's attendant in both official and private capacities. Glenconner's not-so-conventional husband bought the island of Mustique and turned it into a private retreat for the rich and famous. Princess Margaret spent lots of time there, especially when her marriage to Lord Snowdon fell apart.

This time around, Glenconner writes a perfect rendition of a thriller novel. The story is set in September 2002, a few months after Princess Margaret's death and funeral. Glenconner serves as her own main character under the moniker of Lady Blake. She is busily planning a twenty-first birthday party for Lily, her and her husband's ward whose mother disappeared from the island when Lily was just five years old. The party promises to be one of the most dazzling events in the short history of an island famous for its glittering residents and visitors.

Complications set in when a wealthy girl named Amanda Fortini is reported missing. Lady Blake and her well-to-do friends on the island try to help Mustique's only police officer, Solomon Nile, locate Amanda's whereabouts. To make matters worse, September is hurricane season, and a tropical storm is brewing and slowly heading for the island. The island's location is bordering the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the much calmer Caribbean Sea on the other.

Unbeknownst to the characters in the story, Amanda is killed—even before Chapter one—in the Prologue when she is run over by a speedboat as she swims in the calm sea. She and Lily are fast friends, and Lily is concerned about Amanda's disappearance. Lily's main passion in life is to help restore the coral reefs that once thrived around the island. As other characters on the island meet their untimely demise, the killer leaves pieces of dead coral as a sort of "calling card" at each victim's house. The dead coral pieces are inscribed with symbols of a local religion akin to voodoo.

Add to all this, a large luxury yacht is anchored off shore, its presence a matter of concern, especially for Solomon Nile. Nile's supervisor on the island of St. Lucia, a few miles away from Mustique, refuses Nile's request for a search warrant of the yacht, yet Nile is sure the yacht has something to do with the murders. Bodies begin to be discovered tied to the coral reefs, some in body bags, and some just weighted down to get them there.

Lily's party takes place even though the hurricane is approaching ever more closely. As she ends the party after midnight, Lady Blake is discovered missing. Finding her becomes problematic because the hurricane is now in full force with huge waves making any sort of rescue attempt nearly impossible.

Glenconner expertly weaves her tale of murder with suspects all around the island. The inevitable end makes for a surprising discovery of the murderer's identity. It's a very readable mystery, and I highly recommend it.

