



First Friday News & Views

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



October 2022

Volume 27

Issue 10

Next Meeting

October

7

7:00 a.m.



Meeting Location

Hoyt Sherman Place

15th & Woodland

Des Moines



October Speaker

Dana

Cardin



FFBC Website

ffbc-iowa.org



Supply and Demand

by Byron Huff, Board President

As I write this, I continue to heal from my accident on July 20th. My last appointment with the neurosurgeon left me free of the body brace, but he asked that I wear the neck brace whenever "out and about"; I hope my next appointment on October 10th will give me a full release from restrictions. My MRI to evaluate neck bleeding with my trauma doctor on September 21st has shown complete healing which is great news. If the blood vessels had not healed properly, I would have had to continue taking aspirin the rest of my life to prevent blood clots from forming which could have caused a stroke.

I would like to cover a few topics related to the economy and other topics that are top of mind as we approach the mid-term elections in November.

While I am not an economist, I have studied economics as part of my post-secondary education. The basics of economics and pricing relies on supply and demand which drive prices in a free market economy. Unfortunately or fortunately, there are many factors in the American economy that drive prices for most essential goods. When it comes to many items, which include fuel prices, international forces have an outsized impact on pricing and availability. Disruptions due to the pandemic and political unrest, including war and foreign policy, have all combined to cause price spikes that are mostly out of our control.

I will focus on the cost of energy because it has a domino effect on the cost of nearly everything we buy. Goods produced in the United States are impacted by fuel costs as delivery vehicles, trains, and airplanes are utilized to move those goods to their final destinations. Imported goods rely on additional transportation and logistics costs that ripple through our supply chain.

The pandemic slowed economic activity causing investment in energy production to slow or stop; the recovery happened very quickly, but energy production has lagged as investment has been slow to catch up. Additionally, the war in Ukraine along with sanctions on Russia have created severe shortages of energy causing prices to spike.

OPEC, which holds 80% of the world's known oil reserves, has been reluctant to increase production to pre-pandemic levels. Domestic producers and investors have been reluctant to expand capacity while uncertainty remains surrounding the course of domestic policy, the possibility of future COVID variants, and the potential for OPEC to increase production. OPEC has the lowest cost of production which could make domestic production unprofitable.



[continued on page 2]

["Supply and Demand" continued from page 1]

Oil supply companies (including gas stations) have used the higher prices to boost their profit margins; they have been able to do this without significantly lowering demand. Our market economy relies on the balance of supply and demand to drive pricing; until higher prices lower demand, companies will continue to reap big profits at the expense of the American consumer.

Countries in Europe have had higher energy costs and inflation than the United States. While this provides little solace to those adversely impacted, it does show it is not solely a domestic policy issue that could be solved by our elected officials.



The poster for the Spirit Awards 2022 features a purple and blue geometric background. At the top, it says "iowa safe schools" with a rainbow flag icon. The word "Spirit" is written in a large, white, cursive font, with "Awards" in a smaller, white, cursive font below it. Below this, it says "honoring LGBT+ youth, community leaders, and advocates". At the bottom, it says "Presented by" followed by the Amazon and Wells Fargo logos. A large, yellow, brush-stroke-like banner across the middle contains the text "bit.ly/SpiritAwards22". Below this banner, it says "Friday, Oct 7 - 6:00PM", "Capital Square Atrium", "400 Locust St", and "Des Moines".

FFBC Bylaws Change

At its September meeting, the FFBC Board of Directors voted to amend its bylaws to remove the requirement for having 12 board members to allowing a range of 9 to 12 board members.



Briefs & Shorts



Thanks to **Byron Huff** for introducing **Jamie Fitzgerald**, our September 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 **November newsletter** will be **October 24**. 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.



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.



Fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have raised over **\$475,000** 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.





Future Speakers

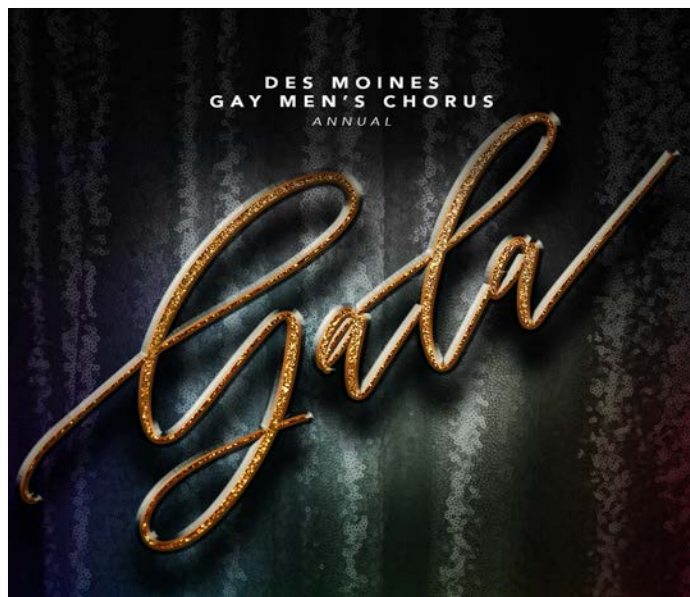
November 4: Mike Franken
Democratic Candidate for U.S. Senate

December 2:
Rev. Rushing Kimball
Plymouth UCC



January 6: Matt Sinovic
Executive Director of Progress Iowa

February 3: Rick Wagaman
Owner of HW CBD in West Des Moines



The **Annual DMGMC Gala** is the most significant fundraising event for the year for the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus. Your generosity helps us to meet our mission to be a community champion singing to promote harmony, ignite hearts, and move minds.

Please join us November 4, 2022, at The District Venue in Ankeny for dinner, live entertainment, and a silent auction. Individual tickets: \$125; Table (seats 12): \$1,000

More Information & Tickets:

www.dmgmc.org/annual-fundraiser

You Can't Outrun Your Genetics

by Michael L. Thompson

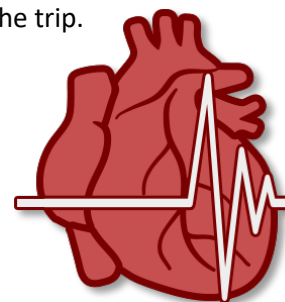


I have been a runner for 54 years, running daily and experiencing the good fortune of having few injuries. As I have aged, I have gradually decreased my running time and increased my exercising on an elliptical machine. For the past few years I have been running only one day a week--for ten miles--usually on Sunday. My vanity goal.

The past few years I have noticed a deep decline in my ability to get enough oxygen when running and on the elliptical. Thinking it was a sign of aging, I decided to push through it. I slowed my elliptical pace and brought my running pace to almost that of a fast walk. Often as I gasped for air, I thought of Jim Fixx, a runner whose book on *Running* became famous in the 1980s. Jim Fixx ironically died at 52 while running (from arterial sclerosis, which had clogged his three main coronary arteries). I often wondered if his condition was similar to my situation. However, I wasn't aware of any heart disease in my family and he was.

This August, Allen, my hubby, offered to treat his entire family to a weeklong bicycle ride in southern Ireland. I decided that I should get a medical opinion on my shortness of breath, just in case there was an issue I didn't know about. A day before we were to fly to Ireland, I had a stress test at Mercy Heart Center. The stress test resulted in an angiogram that afternoon. I wasn't sure what an angiogram even was. I was a bit annoyed at the extra time this procedure was taking since I had not even packed yet for the trip.

Allen and I were stunned when the angiogram nurse said, "You're not going on any bicycle trip to Ireland. You have an appointment with a cardiologist in two days. Your main coronary arteries are 95, 85, and 75% clogged," (just like Jim Fixx).



I had triple bypass surgery (open heart) September 8 and spent five nights in the hospital. I'm now home recovering and following my doctor's orders. The operation went well, and the Mercy staff were amazing. Nurse Allen is taking care of me at home. My goal is to build my strength back, to run again, to lift again, all with an updated ticker!

I am lucky to have discovered this condition before I became a casualty. I guess you can't outrun your genetics.



When Life Begins and Rights Begin

by Jonathan Wilson

With a recent article by Jill Watson (*Bloomfield Democrat* August 10, 2022), she entered into the debate over criminalizing abortion that I called for in my article on the topic (*Bloomfield Democrat* August 3, 2022). It was also published in the FFBC Newsletter. She is to be commended for doing so and for her civility in expressing her views on the subject. I don't intend to prolong the debate on each and every point I had made in my article, but I do want to comment on two things about her article.

Ms. Watson says that "[w]e all know that a pregnant woman is carrying a living baby." I, for one, take exception to that generalization. To support her generalization, Ms. Watson cites a 2017 statement by the American College of Pediatricians ("ACP") that "human life begins at conception – fertilization." Without a little research, many would be impressed with the legitimate sounding name of that organization. In fact, the ACP is an advocacy organization assembled to pursue this very topic. It is an outlier in the medical community with about 500 member pediatricians. It has been identified as a "hate group" by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The more credible organization to consider is the American Academy of Pediatrics ("AAP") with a membership of around 67,000 pediatricians. On September 2, 2021, the AAP joined with the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American College of Physicians, the American Osteopathic Association, and the American Psychiatric Association, in publishing a joint statement opposing a recent law adopted in Texas that severely restricts access to abortion in that state and "deputizes" private citizens to help enforce the prohibition. Collectively, those six organizations represent 600,000 physicians and medical students in opposition to any laws or regulations that interfere in the confidential relationship between patient and doctor. The statement was endorsed by 38 other credible healthcare organizations. For a copy of the joint statement and a complete list of those additional organizations, try Googling **Leading Physician Groups Oppose Texas Legislation That Threatens Access to Reproductive Patient Care**, including abortion, since that's the subject of the opposed legislation.



Ms. Watson was able to find 500 pediatricians in the ACP who are likeminded. Almost effortlessly, I have been able to find hundreds of thousands of physicians who disagree with them and Ms. Watson. The disagreement begs and leaves unanswered the strictly **legal** question about when life begins **for purposes of protecting human rights of a non-viable fetus**. Physicians' beliefs about when life begins cannot dictate the answers to legal questions. Physicians can be helpful; they can, for example, pretty much pinpoint when a female is capable of becoming pregnant, but that doesn't decide the legal age of consent for sexual intimacy.

The disagreement over when life begins begs the question about when exactly a fertilized ovum acquires legal recognition as a human being and gains legal protections. It begs the question about what those protections should be when weighed against the rights of a pregnant woman or girl. It begs the question about what our law-based policy should be in cases of rape; in cases of the rape and impregnation of a 10-year-old child; in cases of incest; in cases of incestuous rape; in cases of ectopic pregnancies; in cases of partial spontaneous abortion (partial miscarriage); in cases where an IUD is used (which prevents a fertilized ovum from attaching to the uterus wall); in cases where a woman uses the "morning after" pill; in cases where a woman of means travels to a jurisdiction where abortion is legal; in cases where a woman of limited means or for whatever other reason cannot travel to a jurisdiction where abortion is legal and, as a consequence, she uses a hanger to terminate a pregnancy; in cases where a woman attempts to use a hanger to terminate a pregnancy, botches it, and goes to an ER for help in saving her life; in cases of medical abortion (using the prescription medicines mifepristone and misoprostol that can be used to terminate a pregnancy until the ninth week of pregnancy); in cases where someone sends those meds to a woman in a state where abortion is illegal; or in cases where that happens and the recipient takes the medicines incorrectly, is then in distress with bleeding and cramps and goes to an ER for help in saving her life.

October Speaker **Dana Cardin**

KCCI
DES MOINES



Dana Cardin is a nationally award-winning local journalist who made his career telling stories about every day Iowans. He's a Sheldon, Iowa, native who developed his interest in photography and writing from his grandfather who ran a small town Iowa newspaper and his aunt who was an Iowa Master Publisher and Columnist.

Dana joined the military out of high school to become a Navy Journalist at the tail end of the Vietnam War. After the service, he went to Iowa State University and soon started working at KCCI as a student. He would work there for 40 years as both a reporter and the Assistant News Director before retiring at the end of last year. During those years at KCCI Dana told thousands of stories from hundreds of Iowa towns.

[“When Life Begins” continued from page 4]

If you believe that life begins for all purposes at conception – fertilization, try buying life insurance for an *in utero* fetus, or try claiming it as a deduction on your tax return, or try getting it a Social Security number.

This is a complicated subject with myriad, individual circumstances that will (or should) impact decisions that need to be made about the exercise of various aspects of individual reproductive rights. A one-size-fits-all legislative approach based on a dogmatic belief that life begins for all purposes at the moment of conception – fertilization, will lead to a multitude of public policy complications and will not be sustainable. It would be a serious example of government over-reach and infringement upon our rights, and particularly the rights of our sisters, our daughters, and our granddaughters to bodily autonomy. I harken back to the wise words of a Rabbi that life ends with our last breath and begins with our first breath. Within that framework the government should stay out of our doctors' offices beyond regulatory standards of quality care.



DSM Magazine 2022 LGBTQ+ Legacy Leader Awards



Photo from *DSM Magazine*



2022 Honorees:

(pictured above from left to right)



Dr. Pamela Duffy, Des Moines, retired associate professor, Des Moines University

Mark Kassis and **Terry Lowman**, Ames, retired restaurant owners

Jordan Selha, Des Moines, program manager, NuCara Staffing Services

Bruce Teague, Iowa City, mayor

Aiden Vasquez, Davenport, founder of the Aiden Vasquez Foundation

Dr. Rebecca Gruber (Ally Award), Des Moines,
former Artistic Director and Conductor of the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus

Over the years, Iowa's LGBTQ community has had a positive influence on our state. Representing a wide range of vocations and avocations, they have led with creativity, vigor and compassion, solving problems and helping build a state that we all can be proud to call home.

In tribute to such inspiring contributions, *dsm* magazine, One Iowa, and American Equity will celebrate the 4th annual LGBTQ Legacy Leader Awards on **October 19, 2022**, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Willow on Grand (6011 Grand Ave. in Des Moines). They will also recognize an ally of the LGBTQ community, someone whose contributions to equality and justice have helped ensure that gender and sexual orientation must not be stigmatized or marginalized in the culture of Iowa.

To register, go to dsmmagazine.com/lgbtq-legacyawards-2022/

Polk County Auditor Addresses FFBC

by Gary Moore



September Speaker Jamie Fitzgerald

At the September 2 meeting of the First Friday Breakfast Club (FFBC), members got a brief look into the Polk County Auditor and Commissioner of Elections Office. Byron Huff, FFBC's President introduced **Jamie Fitzgerald** who has served as both Auditor and Commissioner of Elections since 2007.

Mr. Fitzgerald manages a staff of 49 full-time employees in five departments. His office is responsible for paying all of Polk County's bills, keeping all Board of Supervisor meeting minutes, maintaining every property transaction, as well as overseeing all elections in Polk county including the records for over 300,000 registered voters.

With the November 2022 elections quickly approaching, Mr. Fitzgerald spent most of his time explaining the election law changes and how the law was changed since the 2020 election where the U.S. House District 2 race between Rita Hart and Mariannette Miller-Meeks was determined by **six** votes (Hart 196,958 to Miller-Meeks 196,964). Over one million votes were cast early, mostly by mail, with Democrats casting 75% of their votes early and Republicans casting 52% of their votes early.

In response to that election, the Iowa Republican-controlled legislature passed in 2020: SF 413, 29 pages containing 74 sections within six days, including public hearings, and without input from the State Association of County Auditors, those who would need to implement and have the greatest understanding of its impacts. This legislation would designate "inactive" 294,000 legally registered voters. That represents more than 13% of the state's 2.2 million registered voters.

Some of the greatest changes occurred in absentee ballot requirements and requests. It shortened the time an absentee ballot can be requested prior to the election by 50 days and presents auditors, campaigns, and others from pre-filling any information other than the date and type of election, and provided that any application for an absentee ballot must be physically received by the voter's county auditor no later than 5 P.M. on October 24, 2022.

Republican leadership has reduced the time from mailing ballots out in 2017 (40 days) to 2020 (down to 29 days) and now 2022 (down to 20 days), thus reducing auditors to four working days to mail and receive ballots. This has caused in the few city/school, and local elections that ballots could not be sent to them causing between 41% - 66% of those not receiving ballots did not vote.

Now ballots **MUST** be received in Election Office by 8 P.M. C.T. on election day. In the past, those ballots with postmarks and the required intelligent mail bar code counted, but **NO LONGER**. You can no longer have just anyone drop off your ballot at the auditor's office. Counties can have only one drop box that cannot open any sooner than 20 days before the election and must be closed at 8 P.M. on election night. Those boxes need recordable security as well as meet other requirements that auditors must ensure. It makes no difference if a county has a 10,000 population or 300,000. It only gets to have one drop box. There is one less hour of voting on Election Day, ending at 8 P.M. In Polk county, over 1,000 voters cast ballots between 8-9 P.M. (Writers note: The state's largest counties which are usually the most Democratic have an hour less to vote).

The security of your vote in Iowa has been ensured by post-election audits by the Iowa Secretary of State by randomly selecting a precinct in each county to be hand counted to ensure that the unofficial results are correct. Thus far, all 99 counties have been 100% accurate in the election reporting and audits.

The biggest concern for county and state auditors is misinformation. Intentional misleading and disinformation about the processes have effectively raised questions about the integrity of our voting systems, elections, officials, and neighbors. Calling for recounts and then more recounts after losing elections continues to add to the distrust, even though the recounts testify to the accuracy of American elections. Election deniers continue to erode confidence in our basic institutions which, for this writer, is one of my major concerns for the future of our democracy.

September Meeting Photo Gallery



Photos by
Gary Moore
& Wade
Petersen



September Meeting Photo Gallery



**FFBC President Byron Huff
Returns After Recovery
From His Accident and
Neck Injury**



Blue State Bailout Good for Reynolds and Her Fat-Cat Friends

by Supervisor Matt McCoy
Polk County, 5th District



A plan Governor Reynolds hailed as a Blue State Bailout has switched her view as she doles out hundreds of millions to her fat-cat friends. The Democratic-controlled Congress and Democratic President should have instead focused most of the money to local governments and schools. At a time when there's 28 Republican governors to 22 Democratic ones, Reynolds along with her cronies at the state helm were fast to criticize Democrats and President Biden for the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Hypocrisy ran rampant. They weren't shy on press releases, ribbon cuttings, and media interviews to take credit for the money they doled out. While some of the federal money Governor Reynolds handed out went to good causes, like childcare and eviction prevention which Polk County was fortunate to receive, she also gave away \$100 million to biofuels or millions to a Field of Dreams site or pumping hundreds of millions into the unemployment insurance trust fund that actually lowered the rates for businesses. Iowa businesses now have one of the lowest taxes for unemployment insurance in the nation. She pumped in \$728 million into the unemployment trust fund which accounted for 27% of Iowa's federal dollar allocation. She said businesses would see a reduction of 25% in unemployment taxes. It's a big bailout for her big business friends.

If you didn't get enough of her press releases, now she's hitting the airwaves with her racist and fear mongering tone that's unwelcoming to new Iowans all the while bashing Congress and President Biden, who handed her over \$2.7 billion to spend as she wishes. Talk about shoring up your political opportunities heading into your re-election. I hope that Congress and President Biden take a hard look at what they've done. So many Republican governors are up for re-election this year, and federal Democrats handed them all a big fat re-election present.



Knowing Yourself Through the Seasons

by Ryan Crane, FFBC Vice President



By far, my favorite time of year is **fall**. Colorful leaves, cooler weather, seasonal pastimes like college football and Halloween. So much to enjoy!

But this time of year, I often find myself wishing I had done more in the summertime... fireworks, fishing, getting a suntan, or even learning how to kayak or canoe. Guess what? I choose not to do those things in the moment, because I don't really enjoy them or have much interest in them.

No more of that! Join me in taking charge of your emotions and preferences! If you don't really want to do something, **don't do it**. Fear of missing out (or **FOMO** for short) can sometimes wax and wane as time passes. Most of us know what we like, and we don't really want to be bothered with the things we don't. I for one think that's OK.

So if someone really pushes for you to do something you don't like to do – like spending hours in the Iowa heat or waterskiing – know yourself, and say, “No, thanks.”





"Thank you so much for the scholarship money! I am truly so grateful for you and what you do, and I couldn't be more blessed to be a part of the cause."

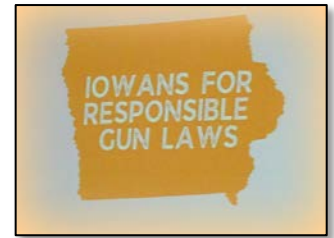
Elizabeth Boese

-- 2022 Scholarship Recipient



Measure One: The Reckless Gun Amendment

by Gary Moore



Greg Trumbo and I, along with a large crowd, attended the Interfaith Alliance's Crossroads gathering at Plymouth Congregational Church for their luncheon to listen to a panel on the upcoming November 8 election and Proposition One. "Vote No on the Reckless Gun Amendment" was the primary message. Too often such measures are ignored by the voting public. We cannot ignore this measure.

The fact that Iowa Republicans have passed open carry and permitless carry is not enough. They have twice passed a constitutional amendment and are now sending it to the general election for consideration of a proposed inclusion in our state constitution even more restrictive protection than the United States Constitution's Second Amendment.

The proposed amendment goes beyond the Second Amendment. It puts the right to possess and carry a gun without any infringement above the right to public safety and on a higher footing. The Reckless Gun Amendment could lead to the invalidation of any reasonable gun safety measures that keep Iowans safe.

The use of the phrase "restrictions of this right shall be subject to strict scrutiny" has legal significance many may not be familiar with. It will tie the hands of creating commonsense gun laws by future legislatures, as well as most certainly encourage the supporters of the NRA to challenge what common sense laws exist.

Without a **NO** vote, Iowa would join only a few states that have adopted this extreme approach, which would invite frivolous litigation, undermine decades of case law in the state courts, and put in jeopardy many moderate, commonsense gun laws. Those few states also have the highest rates of death caused by gun violence (Alabama, Alaska, Mississippi, and Arkansas). What a group for Iowa to join!

Even in the wake of rising gun violence over the past year, the Iowa Legislature has repealed lifesaving measures and seeks to make it even harder for commonsense gun laws to prevail in the state. Voting NO does not affect any laws that now exist nor does it affect the right to have and carry guns, but it will put Iowans at greater danger and reduce the possibility of fighting gun violence. Turn the ballot over and vote NO on November 8th.



Nope

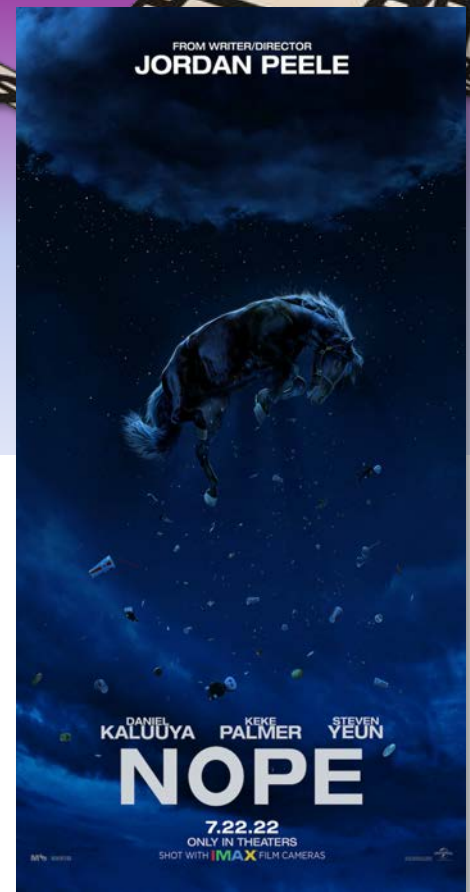
A Movie Review by Mark Turnage

As a director of horror films that are famous for both groundbreaking originality and incisive social commentary, Jordan Peele's movies have come to carry high critical expectations. His first two feature films (also reviewed in previous newsletters), *Get Out* and *Us*, explored subversive racism and classism through the eyes of Black characters using dark comedy, powerful metaphors, and of course, memorably scary moments. For Peele's third feature, *Nope*, a blending of horror, sci-fi, suspense and western, he departs from the themes of his previous works to explore a new subject: the moviemaking industry. *Nope* continues Peele's affinity for defamiliarizing audience expectations and delivers moments that are truly scary and otherworldly, but the narrative's commitment to its own metaphors and allegories makes its story a bit alien to decipher.

When their father is killed by a seemingly random nickel falling from the sky, two siblings--matter-of-fact ranchhand OJ Haywood (Daniel Kaluuya) and his fast-talking sister Emerald (a magnetic Keke Palmer), take over the struggling family business of renting horses for movie productions. Both trace their lineage to the Black jockey and stuntman depicted in nineteenth century photographer Eadweard Muybridge's series of a man on horseback, considered a forerunner in the development of film as a medium. But as Emerald points out in her sales pitch to the Hollywood studio, they can name Muybridge, but they can't name the Black jockey. Across the valley from the Haywood Ranch is Jupiter's Claim, a successful Wild-West themed tourist trap run by Jupe (Steven Yeun), a former 90s child actor who survived a vicious chimpanzee attack on live TV, but uses the notoriety of that incident to generate income and attention for his business as an adult. After OJ witnesses a runaway Haywood horse sucked up into the sky one night by something big, fast, silent, and elliptical, Emerald convinces him of the fame and money involved in capturing a UFO convincingly on film, and brings on ambivalent techie Angel (Brandon Perea) along with famous cinematographer Antlers Holst (Michael Wincott) to assist. But Jupe is already way ahead of them—at everyone's own peril.

Does the film's commitment to its symbolism and metaphors make *Nope* any less scary? Well, yep and nope. The UFO in *Nope* functions something like the shark in *Jaws* if the objective wasn't to kill the shark, but to make money off it. Peele lets the UFO be elusive and ominous for most of the first and second acts, but its ultimate reveal as a threat is both disturbing and iconic. The difference is how the characters approach the UFO's unpredictability: with caution and expertise, or as a spectacle and capitalistic by-product. Neither side is without casualties. Some victims of the UFO (notably referred to by one character as "The Viewers" and at several points filmed like a giant eye) even willingly sacrifice themselves simply because they're awestruck. While Peele never gives away the explicit connection between the UFO and what it means, this reviewer proposes that it's meant to be representative of *us*, *the audience*, and our greed for consuming media.

The film opens with the Bible verse Nahum 3:6—"And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a spectacle." It's meant to conjure ominous but tempting feelings about the modern pursuit of entertainment in general. But is making a movie really as simple as a tug-of-war between technical expertise and showmanship? Of course not. Peele is aiming for both. It's the spectacle and the technical expertise that makes it worth seeing.



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Publication



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The Palace Papers

by Tina Brown

A Book
Review by
Steve Person



When I was a child in the 1950s and early 60s, my mother always took great interest in pointing out to me photographs in the newspaper of the gargantuan piles of luggage that accompanied the annual pilgrimage of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor in their Atlantic crossings to the United States. My knowledge of the British Royal Family was, it is easy to say, limited at best. In those days I didn't know that the Duke of Windsor was at one time King Edward VIII or that he had abdicated in order to marry the American divorcee, Wallis Simpson. It just didn't have any impact on my young life. As I grew up and learned so much more through both schooled education and self taught learning, my knowledge of the British Royal Family accrued considerably.

So, what does this have to do with Tina Brown's book about the current members of the British Royal Family? Her vast knowledge and connections to the Crown exhibit themselves in this fascinating behind-the-scenes look into a family fractured by illicit sexual escapades, poorly timed publicity stunts, and some downright stupid actions by a family that is just as screwed up as was that of King George V and Queen Mary in the early twentieth century. If someone I know were ever to tell me that he or she would like to marry into the British Royal Family, I would immediately give them a copy of *The Palace Papers*. This book would dissuade any levelheaded individual from ever wanting to do so. That doesn't mean that certain members of that exalted clan are all bad. Far from it. Queen Elizabeth II has for seventy years acted as the ideal head of state for the United Kingdom and her dominions beyond the seas. Her children, however, have made her dual role as Queen and as Mother difficult at times to negotiate. Ultimately, her role as Keeper of the Crown wins out even over her own family. Not an easy task for anyone. Her sense of duty is unchallenged.

Tina Brown's book is divided into two parts. The initial chapters deal with the "Diana Problem." With her marriage to a prince who didn't love her, to the loud rows between them, and to the ever-present specter of Camilla Parker-Bowles, Brown uncovers lots of new information that some readers may find shocking. Part Two highlights the similarities and differences between the two sons of Charles and Diana: William, the heir apparent, and Harry, "the spare." Such defined roles present problems for even the most well balanced individuals. Add to that the deplorable behaviors of the British tabloid press, and that two very impressionable young boys had to deal with the untimely death of their mother in a car crash in a Paris tunnel, and a recipe for difficult lives emerges.

Besides the Queen, the family members who earn Brown's respect are Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall; the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge (a.k.a. William and Kate); and to a limited extent, Prince Charles. Princess Anne has performed her royal duties with little theatricality, and Prince Edward and Sophie are two staunch supporters of the Queen. These individuals have kept to their roles in The Firm and brushed aside petty comments from an ever-intrusive press and public. That's not to say they haven't made grievous mistakes from time to time, but they've risen above them and learned from their errors.

It's a fascinating book for this time in the history of the British Royal Family—a good read!