



First Friday News & Views



Monthly Newsletter of the First Friday Breakfast Club, Inc.

December 2022 / Volume 27 / Issue 12

Next Meeting

December 2
7:00 a.m.



Location

Hoyt Sherman Place
15th & Woodland
Des Moines



Speaker

Rev. Rushing
Kimball



Website

ffbc Iowa.org



Whose Home for the Holidays?

by Byron Huff, Board President



I want to start off this month's newsletter with the following announcement: **Historic Change!** The FFBC Board of Directors voted (in two consecutive board meetings) unanimously to add "allies" to our bylaws defining who can be a member. Gay, straight, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, and more are **all welcome** as long as they support our mission to reduce prejudice and homophobia. **Spread the word and join us at Hoyt Sherman or via Zoom on the first Friday of each month!**

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving and you were able to gather with family and/or friends to celebrate. Many of us will now focus on preparing for Christmas and the traditions and new experiences that come with that.

As many of you have also experienced, my **holiday traditions** have changed and evolved over the years. When I was young and living at home, my family would gather for a large meal and exchange of gifts. After leaving home for college and life, I would return home for similar gatherings, but the timing likely did not land on December 25th or have me home for my birthday on December 28th.



When I got engaged, the decision of where Christmas would be was difficult because my parents were on a farm south of Winterset and her parents lived in Davenport. We were engaged for a few years, but ended because I was still in school and she was anxious to get married. Fortunately for me, I had some doubts about being married to her and likely had concerns about my sexuality; this was in my early 20s and I did not come out (partially i.e. mainly friends) until 30.

Jim and I met in 1995 when I was 34 years old and had just moved back to Des Moines after four years in Cedar Falls and five years in Cedar Rapids. I had been out to my sister, but had not done so with my parents or grandparents. Jim maintained his townhouse in Ankeny but had essentially moved into my home in West Des Moines. One day when we were not home, my parents stopped by for a surprise visit; they had the entry code for my garage so they stayed to wait for me to come home. There were flowers in the kitchen with a card and a book laying nearby with the title of, something like, how to come out to your family or parents; I don't recall the exact book title, but you get the gist of where this went. That was my coming out to my mother, but my father either ignored or chose to ignore the clues.

[continued on page 2]

["Whose Home for the Holidays?" continued from page 1]

In 1997, I moved to New Orleans taking most of Jim's possessions along since the move was being paid by my new employer; Jim wanted to stay in Ankeny to prepare his home for sale. It took six months for Jim to come down, but we did get together several times during that period. We spent Thanksgiving in New Orleans, but for Christmas I recall loading up the car for a long road trip to Iowa. While back, we stayed at a friend's home in Johnston while going to our respective Christmas gatherings separately.


In 1998, we moved to Chicago which was much closer, but still a long drive. When we drove back for the holidays, we continued to stay with our friend and separate for holiday gatherings. One year we decided to host Thanksgiving in Chicago and invited our families (Jim has three married sisters with children). I believe all of them made the journey; some siblings staying with us and our parents at a nearby hotel. I recall my mom on the phone (excited) asking my dad if they would make the trip; he did not know Jim and I had been together five years at this point. Needless to say it was a great time for the entire family and I felt it was a beneficial bonding experience with Jim and me as a couple.

In 2003, we moved back to Des Moines and closer to our families. We purchased a large home that allowed us to host family and friends. We would typically host Mother's Day and Thanksgiving accommodating up to 30 people for sit-down dinners. As Jim's nieces and nephews started to get married, the numbers we hosted started to decline to a more reasonable 15 or so.


For Christmas, Jim and I have been going to his parents' home as they all gathered for a late breakfast of egg casserole and lots of other goodies. We spend most of the day typically leaving in late afternoon after gifts were opened and we played games and watched Christmas movies. Jim and I would plan to meet my parents and sister at my sister's home which was 1/4 mile from my parents where she had carved out five acres to build a house; the day we meet is a weekend closest to Christmas.

As Jim and I downsized in 2019 to a downtown loft, we are continuing to evolve how the holidays are handled. Christmas has not changed, but Thanksgiving poses challenges. We hosted our parents and siblings with their spouses (no nieces and nephews who are now married with children) last year and tried to plan that this year. Two of his sisters were planning to have Thanksgiving with their children's families as they have continued to grow. No matter how many come, I am sure Jim will make way too much food and pies! Every person does not need their own pie after 20 pounds of turkey and 20 pounds of potatoes! You can tell we have talked (argued...and I lost) about this.

Whatever your holiday plans, I am sure they have evolved over time as changes occur with your family and friends. Try to relish the time with loved ones because you will someday wish you had spent more time with them. With age comes reflection; try to have few regrets.




Briefs & Shorts




Thanks to **John Schmacker** for introducing **Mike Franken**, our November 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 **January 2023 newsletter** will be **December 26**. 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.



The Grassley Gambit

by Jonathan Wilson

The race for Grassley's long-held seat in the U.S. Senate was, somewhat surprisingly (but not really) close. I was pretty sure of the likely outcome of the U.S. Senate election in Iowa. The polling suggested that it was going to be VERY close; perhaps a matter of voter turnout. It's never been that close for Grassley's re-election bids in the past. Heck, I've voted for the guy more than once. He used to be different from what he has become and, in the past, I always considered him a worthy, well-intentioned balance to the more "liberal" and also well-intentioned Tom Harkin. Grassley and Ernst don't represent anything that suggests balance or good intentions. They seem locked in a contest to see who can get further to the right and less well-intentioned than Genghis Khan.

The *Register* headline says that most likely voters have "concern" about Grassley's age. And they should. He's now 89, has been in the U.S. Senate for 42 years so far, and has won another six-year term that, if completed, would put him at a probably-senile 95. One has to wonder what more it is that he thinks he'll be able to accomplish for his Iowa constituents in another six years that has apparently eluded him for the past 42 years, both in the minority and the majority, with Democratic and Republican administrations. The answer is: NOTHING. In my estimation, accomplishing something more for his Iowa constituents is not his objective in seeking re-election.

I predict that he has no present intention of completing the term. Mark my words (although, being right on this is nothing that I hope for), he doesn't plan to complete another term, thanks to death *or* RESIGNATION. His actual plan is more likely the latter, but either one will work for the singular purpose he has in mind.



GAMBIT!



Here's the deal. In Iowa, the Grassley name has become an iconic, political asset. He's been elected in state-wide elections SEVEN times. That is one valuable political asset, pure and simple. If Grassley were to choose not to seek re-election (as Harkin chose), that asset would go away – vanish into thin air. But, it just so happens that U.S. Senator Grassley has an Iowa State Senator grandson, Patrick Grassley. Patrick has been in elective office since 2007. To think that he has no ambitions for other, "higher" office would be beyond politically naïve – it would be utter stupidity. Chuck Grassley would, understandably, like to preserve that asset and pass it along to his grandson. Chuck Grassley's chances of re-election this year are better than his grandson's chances of election to the U.S. Senate would be without that name ID. Solution? Cash in one more time, get re-elected to an eighth six-year term and then, when most advantageous to his grandson, resign. Finding a plausible excuse for resigning would be child's play. That would enable a Republican Iowa governor to appoint the grandson as the replacement, and allow him to run for election (re-election) as an incumbent. If Chuck Grassley were to die mid-term – same outcome. There's no downside for Chuck or Patrick.

The U.S. Senate election was not about what Chuck Grassley can further do for his Iowa constituents; it was about him capitalizing on a huge political asset, passing that along to another Grassley generation, and establishing a Grassley dynasty.

I swear, that's the Grassley gambit. I'd be flabbergasted if that hasn't been openly discussed over the Grassley Thanksgiving dinner, and elsewhere, for quite some time.

I admit, if I were in Chuck Grassley's situation, I'd probably be inclined to run the same gambit for the benefit of a family member uniquely positioned to receive and cash in on the gift. Make no mistake; it will be a familial, dynastic benefit. It will NOT be for the benefit of the citizens of Iowa. No downside to Chuck and Patrick Grassley, but no articulated upside for the people of Iowa.

December Speaker

Rushing Kimball

Native to Orlando, Florida, **Rushing Kimball** now calls Des Moines, Iowa, home to serve as the Associate Pastor at Plymouth Church.

Graduating from the University of North Florida with his bachelor's degree in International Studies, he continued his education at Candler School of Theology at Emory University where he received his Master of Divinity with a certificate in religious education in May 2020.

Currently a candidate for ordination in the United Methodist Church, Rushing is excited to be in ministry with Plymouth Church where he hopes to preach and teach God's love in a world that struggles to practice love.

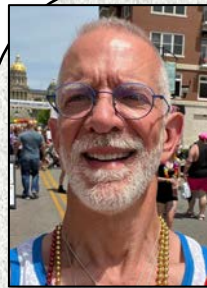
In his spare time, Rushing enjoys spending time outside, reading non-fiction books, musical theater, and trying new food!



Urban Dictionary: "Gay Christmas"

"Gay Christmas" is just another name for Halloween. Lots of LGBTQ+ folk have a special connection to this holiday because it's one day a year where you can dress up, and there are no boundaries. It also has the cheerful giving Spirit of Christmas. Everyone - even kids - can show up to a stranger's house and will be greeted with smiles and candy.

MERRY CHRISTMAS



FFBC Vice President **David Cotton** Interviewed On *Vulnerable Man* Podcast



David Cotton, was recently a guest on *The Vulnerable Man* podcast.

David shares his story related to being a vulnerable man, where he sees vulnerability as a strength and not a weakness. He also touches on his coming-out journey.

The Vulnerable Man Podcast, by Christopher Veal
<https://vulnerableman.libsyn.com/the-vulnerable-man-ep056-david-cotton>



Show Notes: David is a father, a gay man, a retired Air Force Brigadier General and former Senior Executive with the Department of Defense, and he's also a coach. Our conversation dives into his coming out at age 59, the value of men's circles, the importance of reaching out if you are struggling, removing the masks we wear, and his relationship with his adult children.

An Opportunity Missed

by Gary Moore

*First Friday Breakfast Club, for their November 4th gathering, had the opportunity to hear and meet **Admiral Michael Franken** who was running for Senate from the State of Iowa. With the election occurring a few days later, I decided to defer sending in my article until after the election November 8th. It is difficult for those of us impressed by Admiral Franklin's command of world and national issues framed by so many years on the national and international stage, to be defeated in his attempt to share that experience. After trying to decide how to describe his time with FFBC that Friday morning, I have decided instead to share the gracious introduction of Admiral Franklin by longtime FFBC member **John Schmacker**.*

The first time I ever met an admiral, I was a sailor on USS Oriskany, an aircraft carrier. She was the flagship for a carrier division operating in the Gulf of Tonkin. The flag officer, who was rarely on board, was Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., whose son, the future senator, lay captive in the Hanoi Hilton.

My watch station meant that I spent several hours every day on the bridge manning the ship's helm. Yes, with my 20/800+ vision, I was steering the damn ship.

Once, in the middle of the night, and in heavy seas, after climbing ladders and stepping through hatches on my way to the bridge, the ship pitched in the water. I lost my balance and bumped hard into a Chief Petty Officer approaching me from the other direction, almost knocking him off his feet. At least I thought it was a Chief. Under the red lights, I didn't see the stars on his collar until I got way too close. I apologized, and the admiral was friendly about it. This man, with incredible power and responsibility, was human enough to joke about it. E3 meets O10. We both moved on.

The next admiral I met was Michael Franken. He has also held incredible power and responsibilities over his 40 years of defending our democracy. But he will likely relate to you as the friendly Iowa farm boy that he is. Mike Franken grew up in Lebanon. Not the country, but a little town in now deep-red northwest Iowa. His Navy career took him to far-flung places around the world, but his story is pure Iowan. The son of a school teacher and a dad who owned a machine shop, he was the youngest of nine children. That alone marks him as a courageous fighter. I barely survived growing up with just two sisters.

As a young man, Mike worked in his father's machine shop. He also worked as a hired farm hand, and by age 20 had completed a three-year stint working at a slaughterhouse in Sioux Center.

He earned his engineering degree from the University of Nebraska, and a Masters in physics from the Naval Postgraduate School. So you may note that he is a scientist.

Michael Franken has dedicated his life to serving our country. He has served on ships at sea and at the Pentagon. He was the only voice on a team of military advisers to oppose George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq. He served under President Barack Obama and oversaw numerous successful missions to protect our country, including leading U.S. forces in Africa to fight terrorists and pirates. The man has been there, he's done more than you can imagine. Check out his Wikipedia entry sometime.

Flag-ranked military officers are a rare breed. They understand leadership, courage, and loyalty to our constitution. We are lucky to have this officer and gentleman running for the senate to replace the calcifying Chuck Grassley.

When Michael Franken joins the Senate, he will be the most senior military person to ever serve in that august body, and we will have a senator we can trust to always put country over party, and people over politics.

And by the way, next Tuesday is Election Day, but it is also his birthday.

Michael Franken gives us hope for the future of this country. Please welcome him.

Unfortunately, the electorate was not as welcoming.

John Schmacker | Introduction for Michael Franken, FFBC, November 4, 2022



November Speaker

Mike Franken



November Meeting Photo Gallery



Photos by Wade Petersen
& Ken Hanson

November Meeting

Photo Gallery



Photos by
Wade
Petersen
& Ken Hanson





2022 Community Betterment Grants



The Polk County Community Betterment Grant Program was designed to provide financial support to non-profit organizations that provide cultural, recreational, educational, and human needs services to our citizens. There was a promise for greater transparency regarding these grants. The list below are grants distributed in 2022 that were supported by Supervisor Matt McCoy.

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Award</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Award</u>	<u>Date</u>
Roosevelt High School PTA Senior Party	\$6,000	3/15/22	Civic Music Association	\$7,000	5/31/22
Lincoln High School Senior After Prom	\$6,000	3/15/22	Iowa Latino Community Center	\$6,000	5/31/22
Raheema community and learning center	\$7,500	3/15/22	The Riders Club Football	\$10,000	6/7/22
Valley After Prom	\$5,000	3/15/22	Willkie House	\$9,000	6/7/22
Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus	\$7,500	3/29/22	YMCA of Greater Des Moines	\$9,000	6/7/22
First Friday Breakfast Club	\$5,000	3/29/22	City of West Des Moines Parks and Recreation	\$4,000	6/7/22
Watrous Heights Neighborhood Association	\$3,000	4/12/22	Beacon of Life	\$5,000	6/14/22
Iowa Radio Reading Info Service for the Blind	\$7,500	4/12/22	Joppa	\$8,000	6/14/22
Des Moines Downtown Neighborhood Association	\$5,000	4/12/22	Des Moines Public Library Foundation	\$5,000	6/14/22
DMPS - Central Campus Marine Biology	\$5,500	4/26/22	Clive Parks and Recreation	\$5,000	6/21/22
Waterbury Neighborhood Association	\$5,000	4/26/22	StageWest Theatre	\$2,500	6/21/22
Des Moines Performing Arts	\$10,000	4/26/22	Latinx Immigrants of Iowa	\$9,680	6/28/22
WDMCS Student Scholarship Fund	\$3,000	4/26/22	Waveland Woods Neighborhood Association	\$1,000	7/5/22
Clive Community Services	\$9,000	5/3/22	Raising Readers in the Heartland	\$3,500	7/19/22
ChildServe Foundation	\$10,000	5/3/22	Taste of the Junction	\$3,500	7/19/22
Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa	\$9,500	5/3/22	Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden	\$5,000	7/26/22
Capital City Pride	\$10,000	5/3/22	Ballet Des Moines	\$5,000	8/16/22
Clive Community Foundation	\$5,000	5/3/22	Girls Rock Des Moines	\$9,000	8/16/22
Queer Youth Resource Center	\$3,500	5/17/22	Blank Park Zoo Foundation	\$5,850.70	8/16/22
Greenwood Elementary School PTA	\$9,500	5/17/22	WDMCS Foundation	\$2,500	8/30/22
Ingersoll Grand Municipal Improvement District	\$7,500	5/17/22	St. Vincent de Paul	\$10,000	8/30/22
Nutrition 4 Young Children	\$6,000	5/17/22	Build Lincoln Higher Booster Football	\$7,000	9/13/22
City Sounds: The Des Moines Public Piano Project	\$10,000	5/17/22	Build Lincoln Higher Booster Mens Basketball	\$7,000	9/27/22
Greater Des Moines Music Coalition	\$10,000	5/31/22	Build Lincoln Higher Booster Womens Basketball	\$6,000	10/18/22
Des Moines Community Playhouse	\$10,000	5/31/22			

Grant funds are not derived from levied taxes, but rather lease proceeds from Prairie Meadows Racetrack & Casino.



2022 Community Development Grants



The Polk County Community Development Grant Program supports a limited number of large-scale projects within Polk County with funding typically in the range of \$10,000 to \$100,000. There was a promise for greater transparency regarding these grants. The list below are grants distributed in 2022 that were supported by Supervisor Matt McCoy.

\$150,000

DSM Community Playhouse - 9/27/22
Upgrade & expand children's theatre

\$105,960

Eddie Davis Community Center - 9/13/2022
Roof replacement

\$100,000

WDSM Community Foundation - 4/12/2022
Raccoon River Pedestrian Bridge

Blank Park Zoo Foundation - 7/19/22
Pathway project - reconstruct pathways in the zoo, making them safer and more accessible for guests

Science Center of Iowa - 8/16/2022
Repairs for parking ramp associated with Science Center of Iowa

Clive Community Foundation - 8/30/2022
Greenbelt landing project

Dorothy's House - 10/18/2022
Assist with purchase & renovation of a six-plex building in Des Moines that will provide both transitional & crisis housing for survivors of human trafficking, exploitation, and prostitution

\$99,999

Broadlawns Medical Center Foundation - 5/24/2022
A new 3D mammography system

\$94,866

Project Iowa - 11/1/2022
Technology upgrades & relocation for career readiness

\$92,474.39

Wallace Centers of Iowa - 9/13/2022
Repairs & improvements to historic Wallace House

\$50,000

Goodwill Industries of Central Iowa- 3/29/2022
New equipment to expand salvage process & Sustainability Program

\$40,000

Roosevelt High School - 6/14/2022
New dugouts for Roughrider Baseball Team

\$14,007

American Legion Hispanic Post 731 - 4/5/2022
Upgrades to building & environment, chairs & tables



The LGBTQ+ Christmas Survival Guide

Reprinted from LGBT Foundation | December 2018 | James Harris

Christmas is many things, but one thing it should not be is unhappy. For those who are fortunate, Christmas is built on a secure foundation of warm, pleasant memories, each year as inviting as the one before it...but for many the occasion and its associations are less positive. Either way, here's some advice that you might find useful.

Love wrapped up: Thoughtful gifts help remind us what we mean to each other; a hand-made token of a shared memory, something bought but transformed by personal touch, or something practical that shows you care about their needs. Not all presents must be crafted from toilet roll tubes and homemade glue...one small gift will do. You might find the one you put a bit of yourself into is the one you most enjoy giving, the one they most remember getting from you.

Be yourself: Don't feel you can't be open about who you are in case you 'spoil' Christmas; this predicament is forced upon us, not brought on ourselves. There's a point when censoring what we say or monitoring how we dress/behaves causes us so much misery, our own needs take priority over keeping the peace. If the festive period provides a **safe** opportunity to express what you've been holding in for so long, let it out; under such pressure it's not your problem to worry about upsetting things. Plus, you might find your announcement/rant/award-winning LGBT rights speech clears the air and ends up *saving* Christmas.

Festive Activities: If conversation risks leading to interrogation (e.g. "so why aren't you married/why haven't you got a boyfriend/girlfriend yet?"), silly Christmas games can be a useful distraction. Watch TV and chat about it. Go for a short stroll (hopefully with the crisp crunch of fresh snow underfoot.) These activities are still sociable, and act as a buffer, allowing you to interact indirectly, easing the pressure of direct communication.

Forced Family Bonding: Your relationships with family may be strained due to not being out, or being out but not accepted, therefore you may be reluctant to spend time with them...but unable to avoid it. For many this is only mildly uncomfortable. Although, it can also be an opportunity to put our differences aside and have fun together, to reach each other while defenses are down; Christmas is a time for forgiveness after all, when we're given permission to pause, play and put on hold. However, if reconciliation is too big a Christmas miracle to hope for, or a temporary truce isn't an option, minimizing family interaction to avoid conflict may be the wisest approach.

Friends are the family we choose: You may need to spend Christmas Dinner with friends, a friend's family, or others in a similar situation; it may not be ideal, but it's better than spending Christmas alone or in unsupportive company. Family may be fundamental to Christmas, but family can be found in friends and those who share our experiences, just as much as relatives.

Lonely this Christmas: Older members of the LGBTQ+ community are significantly more likely to be isolated and struggle with depression. Dark evenings and early nights can lower mood, many people/services are less available, and the *perception* that other people's Christmases are 'better', can make us feel worse. If you know someone who might be vulnerable to feeling abandoned and neglected, consider paying a passing visit to ask how their day is going; a small gesture reassuring them they've not been forgotten, goes a long way.

Embrace your inner Grinch: Don't be pressured into making a big deal out of Christmas if you don't want to. As long as you don't deliberately or unnecessarily sour the mood for others, and you're not robbing yourself of what would otherwise be a joyful experience, be as grumpy, unsociable or bitter as you like! Don't force yourself to feel festive, but keep your door open to the Christmas spirit just in case it chooses to visit. And remember, much of what makes Christmas special is achievable throughout the season or even the rest of the year, so don't feel you've missed out if it doesn't go as well as you wished.

Ho ho host from Hell: Hosting Christmas Dinner doesn't mean you get the only say in how Christmas is done. The host's main job is to make people feel comfortable and ensure their guests are free to enjoy themselves; it isn't a special Christmas edition of *Come Dine with Me* (the film crew in your kitchen is purely coincidental.)





LGBTQ WORKPLACE CULTURE SUMMIT



Virtual Events Continue

December 7, 14

Join national and local speakers at the **6th Annual LGBTQ Workplace Culture Summit** to discuss LGBTQ community fundamentals, allyship in the workplace, creating or maintaining an Employee Resource Group, inclusive LGBTQ workplace policies, and a legislative workshop on how to fight against anti-LGBTQ bills in a workplace.

This event is for everyone in the workforce looking to be more inclusive. Some sessions will have advanced and beginner tracks for folks joining us for the first time and those who have attended the event in the past to expand on what they've learned. **Explore the sessions and buy tickets at oneiowa.org.**

Session #3

DEI Employee Resource Group Best Practices - December 7th / 2-4 p.m.

Session #4

Inclusive LGBTQ Workplace Policies & Legislative Workshop
December 14th / 2-4 p.m.

Tickets this year are packaged and not sold individually. All sessions grant you access to all four event sessions (you can choose to attend all or only a few) but you will need to purchase the package regardless.



Future Speakers



January 6:

Matt Sinovic

Executive Director of Progress Iowa

February 3:

Rick Wagaman

Owner of HW CBD in West Des Moines

March 3:

Mark Stringer

Executive Director of ACLU

April 7:

Kevin Schneider

Polk County Sheriff



Black Panther: Wakanda Forever

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage



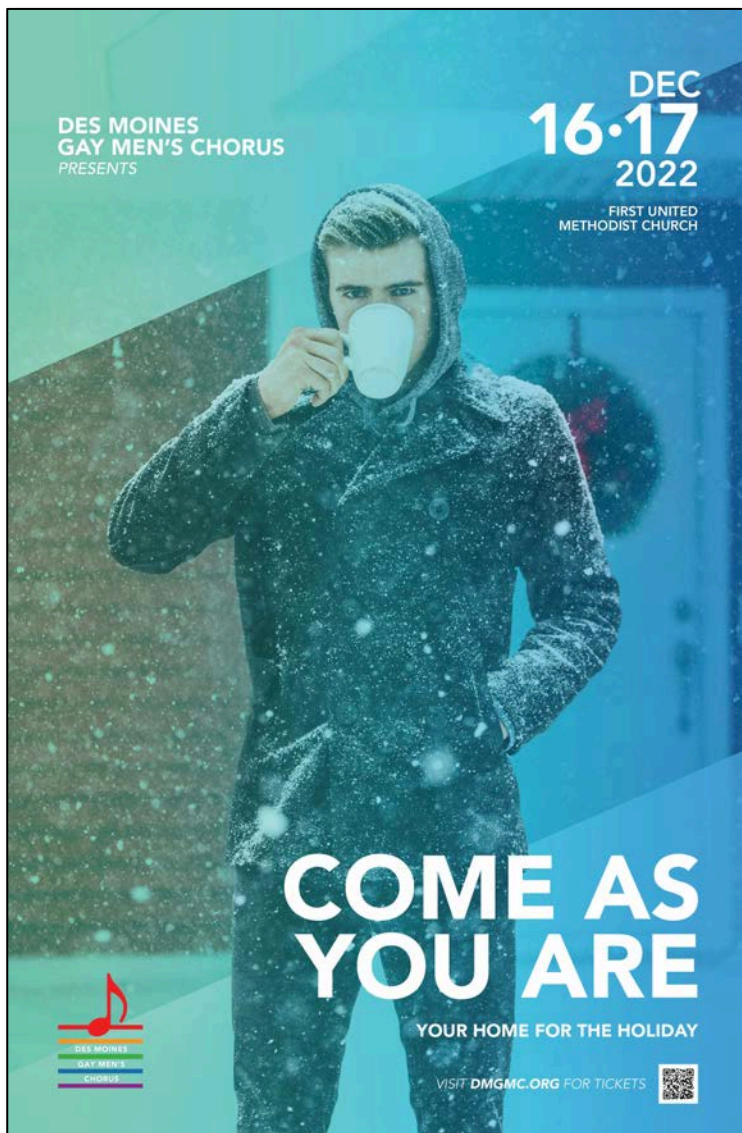
Director Ryan Coogler's 2018 film *Black Panther*--also reviewed by this author and starring the late Chadwick Boseman in the title role--was a bold and revolutionary vision of an African technological superpower whose leader's wisdom, nobility, and charisma made him as much of the film's spirit as its setting. Coogler's sequel, *Wakanda Forever*, shoulders the immense weight of both paying tribute to Boseman and moving the Marvel franchise forward in an interesting direction. While its obligation to further the Marvel universe slows down its narrative, *Wakanda Forever* is a reverent dedication to Boseman, and a thoughtful examination of grief and righteous anger in the wake of loss.

Shuri (Letitia Wright), princess of Wakanda and tech prodigy, grieves the loss of her brother T'Challa (Chadwick Boseman), former ruler of Wakanda and the nation's protector as Black Panther, from natural causes. Her mother, Queen Ramonda (Angela Bassett), assumes the throne as nations from around the world pressure Wakanda for their precious national resource vibranium, a metal with world-changing defense applications. Shuri, skeptical of Ramonda's spirituality and belief that a Black Panther successor is needed, carries on through her faith in science and technology. Elsewhere, a CIA expedition with a one-of-a-kind vibranium detector is attacked by a group of underwater-dwelling superhumans armored in the same metal. Their ruler, Namor (Tenoch Huerta Mejia), confronts Ramonda and Shuri, blaming T'Challa for igniting the vibranium arms race and risking his empire's discovery by the surface world. Namor demands Wakanda find and deliver the young inventor of the vibranium detector to be executed, or his nation of Talokan will attack Wakanda, then the rest of the surface world.

Similar to the villain of the previous Black Panther film, Namor is an antagonist informed by a history of colonization and persecution of his people. He mirrors the leader/protector role that T'Challa filled in the previous film and is as equally devoted to his subjects as he is familiar with their trials; Shuri's grief is colored with anger at her family's losses and a desire to avenge them, allowing her and Namor to share dangerous but convincing emotional common ground. Ironically, Namor also embodies the destructive nature of colonialism by willingly risking the people of other nations to "protect" (read: expand) his empire. Some of the most fascinating dialogues in the movie are between Shuri and Namor as they unpack the effects of real-world imperialism on their respective cultures.

Wakanda Forever covers a lot of territory in two hours and forty minutes, and balancing between its dense plot, its own action sequences, and the sensitivity of its subject matter would be a nearly impossible task for anyone but Coogler's direction. The story beats dedicated to Boseman and recuperating from the loss of a family member are pitch-perfect in respect and tone and fit organically with the film's themes of inheritance, grief, and healing after loss, but when sandwiched between action sequences and plot bridges hinting at the next Marvel movie, sometimes the film's pacing can be exhausting. Wright and Bassett's performances capture the intensity and pain of moving through personal loss, and Huerta's Namor conveys a bitter sadness at the treatment of his people—it's a somber but vibrant and ultimately empowering atmosphere enhanced by costume designer Ruth Carter, who brings to life the cultures of both Wakanda and Talokan with her intricately accessorized wardrobes. Ludwig Goransson's score inspired by both African tribal music and *Tron* also lends power to the film's themes of tradition and futurism.

Wakanda Forever may be a long watch, but its message of allowing oneself the space to grieve and eventually evolve is more timely and important than ever.



Season Tickets & Individual Winter Concert Tickets



on sale at dmgmc.org

BUY NOW AND SAVE!

SEASON TICKETS \$60
\$15 SAVINGS OVER INDIVIDUAL TICKETS

INDIVIDUAL TICKETS \$25

AT-THE-DOOR TICKETS \$30

The holiday concert (sometimes referred to as the solstice concert) is a DMGMC tradition that continues to grow and evolve. Join us and 'Come As You Are' while we bring you beautiful music to warm your heart and create a feeling of home this holiday season.

Board of Directors Letter Campaign Preparations

Several FFBC Board Members met on Saturday, November 19, to prepare the annual "Ask Letter" for mailing.

This request for donations is a main source of funding for our educational scholarships each season, and **100%** of all donations will go toward scholarships!

We hope that, when you receive your letter in the mail, you will consider donating to FFBC.



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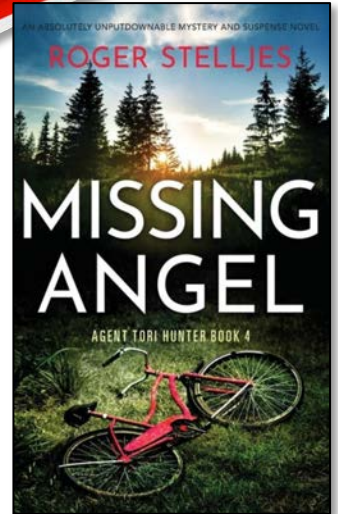
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Missing Angel

by Roger Stelljes

A Book
Review by
Steve Person



As if my esteem for Roger Stelljes hadn't already been established as a writer of thrillers, my regard for him became even higher with this note before even getting to the first chapter: "I don't know that I have many Ukrainian fans, but the people of Ukraine have one in me. Your indomitable will to fight for your country, for your freedom, is awe-inspiring. Godspeed." That speaks volumes about the quality of this man as a human being and of his care for those who are downtrodden by a Russian maniac by the name of Putin. The statement has no relation to the story that follows.

Stelljes sets most of his books in Minnesota and other midwestern states including Iowa. This is the fourth book in the Tori Hunter series. Hunter is a former FBI agent who specialized in missing children when she worked for the agency in New York. Her subsequent resignation from the agency and move back to Manchester Bay, Minnesota, was fraught with personal sadness and trepidation. Her job with the FBI made her one of the top agents in the area of finding missing children, but it was a life with few personal satisfactions. Explained in the first book in this series, *Silenced Girls*, Hunter initially felt alienated from her hometown. Her twin sister had been abducted when they were teenagers and was never found. Shortly after the abduction, her town sheriff father of Manchester Bay died suddenly leaving Tori with a double blank space in her existence.

Once she decided to stay in Manchester Bay, she eventually became involved with Will Braddock of the Shepherd County Sheriff's Department. Over the course of the next two thrillers, *The Winter Girls* and *The Hidden Girl*, Hunter finally agrees to move in with Braddock and his son, Quinn. Braddock's wife died of cancer six years previously, and he's been a single parent ever since.

Twelve-year-old Isabella Farner is abducted while bicycling home after school with her friends including Braddock's son, Quinn. A jogger dressed in black wrests Isabella from her friends and Quinn tries to stop him. Quinn is injured with a concussion and can't give too much information about the abduction. Isabella's parents, Sam and Luciana, are well-to-do members of the Manchester Bay community. Her mother is a pediatrician and her father a successful investment businessman. Luciana's brother, George Santo, owns a number of successful pizza parlors both in Manchester Bay and other nearby communities. He and his sister are very close, and Santo is always welcomed into Sam and Luciana's home.

As with all good thrillers, dark secrets emerge along with unexplained murders of people who may or may not be associated with Isabella's kidnapping. This is a book hard to put down with its many plot twists and cliffhangers. I highly recommend it.