



First Friday News & Views

Monthly Newsletter of the First Friday Breakfast Club, Inc.

January 2023 / Volume 28 / Issue 1

Next Meeting

January 6
7:00 a.m.



Location

Hoyt Sherman Place
15th & Woodland
Des Moines



Speaker

Matt
Sinovic



Website

ffbc Iowa.org



A Change For the Better

by Byron Huff, Board President



I want to start this month's newsletter with the following announcement: **Historic Event! First Friday Breakfast Club welcomes Deb Madison-Levi to our Board of Directors as the first female in our 26-year history!** This follows last month's historic announcement that FFBC voted to add "allies" to our bylaws defining who can become a member.

Deb actually has a long history knowing and working with FFBC founder Jonathan Wilson. They met the summer of 1981 when she was working at the Davis, Hockenberg, Wine, Brown, Koehn & Shors Law Firm as Executive Assistant to Senior Law Partner, A. Arthur Davis. I asked Deb for a short bio which I thought was so good I didn't change a thing:

Deb serves as Chief of Staff for Affiliates Management Company, the wholly-owned holding company of the Iowa Credit Union League. In this role, she supports the CEO and manages governance. Deb, a multipotentialite, has enjoyed more than, ahem, 40 years supporting executives in government, law, non-profits, aviation, construction, banking, healthcare and hospitality. She currently serves on the boards of the Downtown DSM Neighborhood Association, Iowa CareGivers; and, has previously served the boards of Simpson College Alumni and the Child & Family Policy Center. Deb graduated magna cum laude with her communications degree from Simpson College. She is the proud owner of a vintage ice cream bike, always eager to share joy and community connection.

I have to admit I had to look up *multipotentialite*!

Multipotentiality is an educational and psychological term referring to the ability and preference of a person, particularly one of strong intellectual or artistic curiosity, to excel in two or more different fields. It can also refer to an individual whose interests span multiple fields or areas, rather than being strong in just one.

The above does describe Deb very well as she seems to know everyone having worked with a wide variety of companies most often as executive assistant to someone important. Those companies include law, construction, catering, several non-profits, and the State of Iowa. She seems to know everyone which I believe is attributed to her sparkling personality!



[continued on page 2]



I have gotten to know Deb most recently as Jim and I moved to CityLofts in 2019; Deb and Patrick (her husband of 20 years) left a gift card to Bubba under our door welcoming us to the building. Deb does work for the Iowa Credit Union League, and my husband is CEO of Des Moines Metro Credit Union and on the board of the Iowa Credit Union Foundation so there is some connection, but the gesture made us feel so welcome.

When the board discussed various candidates who may be interested in joining the board, Deb was on that short list with a resounding affirmative from Jonathan. One criteria is regular attendance at our breakfast meetings; Deb purchased the full year option and shows up to nearly every meeting. She is the first female to purchase a full year membership so it seems fitting we make her the first female on our board. If you have not met Deb, make a point of saying "hi" ~ you could be sucked into a rewarding conversation!

**** We are also excited to welcome **Jim Flansburg** to the FFBC Board of Directors. I will have an opportunity to introduce Jim in next month's newsletter.*



Briefs & Shorts



Thanks to **Rick Miller** for introducing **Rev. Rushing Kimball**, our December 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 **February 2023 newsletter** will be **January 23**. 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.



Mixed Martial Arts – A Metaphor

by Jonathan Wilson

Occasionally, I watch Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) on television. MMA brings together in a ring two closely matched fighters – today’s version of Roman gladiators. The idea is to have them fight three to five rounds of five minutes each. Other than strikes to the genitals or pokes to the eyes of the opponent, pretty much anything goes. There’s a referee there to “enforce” those limitations. Fighters can box, kick from head-to-toe with their bare feet, or wrestle. Each fighter is basically trying to beat the opponent into submission. It can be very bloody. I don’t actually enjoy watching MMA; I’m a passivist. But my partner does enjoy watching MMA, so I watch with him. He owes me.

Recently, we spent about two hours in a single evening watching one match after another. We must have watched six to eight matches. Before the evening was over, I began to notice an intriguing pattern in virtually every bout. To begin, the fighters would meet in the middle of the ring, respectfully touch fists and, at the referee’s signal, go at it. There follows a barrage of punching, kicking, and wrestling until five minutes expires with a buzzer, the referee separates the two fighters, and they go to opposite sides of the ring for a very brief break. That’s followed by another round begun similarly, with a respectful touching of their gloves in center ring.

Then, at the end of the final round, the referee announces the winner, determined by the loser’s submission, or a decision by a majority of three judges. But get this: after it’s all over and the winner is announced, the fighters – consistently – would hug each other before returning to their separate support staff members. More often than not, the fighters were hugging while covered with the blood of one or both of them. It is a brutal sport, but it has rules; those rules are enforced by an impartial referee, and the fighters show respect for the rules, the referee, *and each other*.



Therein lies a fitting metaphor for how elections should be conducted in a vibrant democracy. It is similarly obvious in both contexts that the opponents want to win and avoid losing. Their respective supporters want the same thing. The same is true in politics. The candidates each want to win, avoid losing, and that’s what their supporters want as well. The loss is disappointing.

In the recent past (the 2020 presidential election and the 2022 mid-terms), however, some GOP, losing combatants did not show respect to the winner when the contest was over. They did not show respect for the democratic process. They did not show respect for the rules that govern the contest. They did not show respect for the referees (Secretaries of State) and judges. They did not graciously accept the disappointing outcome.

Examples include, obviously, the unsuccessful GOP candidate for governor of Arizona (Kari Lake) who has refused to concede the race, and the twice-impeached former president of the United States who went so far as to call for abolishing the rules and regulations that govern the conduct of democratic elections -- even including the suspension of provisions in the U.S.

Constitution – in order to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election.

I can’t imagine the MMA fighters doing something comparable after an MMA fight. Frankly, they’d likely be banned from future fights, and they should be. Some in the GOP could, and should, learn some lessons about respect from MMA fighters. They need to grow up.

Our democracy would be the better for it.





Matt Sinovic



Matt Sinovic is the **Executive Director of Progress Iowa**, a position he has held since the spring of 2012. He grew up in Kansas and worked on political campaigns and for the Kansas Democratic Party before moving to Iowa. Since becoming the first Executive Director of Progress Iowa, a statewide issue advocacy organization, their organization has grown into an online network of more than 65,000 across the state, the largest of its kind in Iowa. They have organized and trained Iowans to speak out and tell their personal stories about how public policy impacts their lives, and worked in coalition to secure policy victories across the state. He is proudest of the work that does not include public recognition of Progress Iowa, but instead empowers activists and grassroots organizations to thrive. Matt lives in Urbandale with his wife Stephanie, a senior advancement officer at Drake University, and their two sons who are objectively the cutest kids in Iowa, if not the entire Midwest.

President Biden Signs Gay Marriage Bill at White House Ceremony

The new law is intended to protect gay marriages if the Supreme Court ever reverses *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the 2015 decision that legalized same-sex marriages. The new law also protects interracial marriages. **“Congress has restored a measure of security to millions of marriages and families. They have also provided hope and dignity to millions of young people across this country who can grow up knowing that their government will recognize and respect the families they build,”** said Biden.

Lawmakers drafted compromise legislation designed to take care of conservative concerns about religious liberty, such as ensuring that churches could still refuse to perform gay marriages. Additionally, states are not required to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples but will be required to recognize marriages conducted elsewhere in the country. A majority of Republicans in Congress still voted against the legislation (**Chuck Grassley**). However, enough supported it to sidestep a filibuster in the Senate and ensure its passage (**Joni Ernst**).



“Today is a good day -- a day America takes a vital step toward equality, toward liberty and justice, not just for some but for everyone. To creating a nation where decency, dignity and love are recognized, honored and protected.”

(President Joe Biden / 12.13.22)

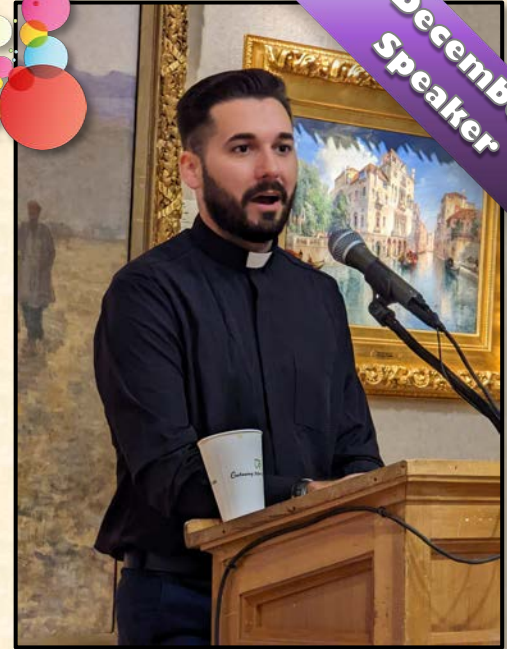
A Journey of Faith

by Gary Moore

This morning the First Friday Breakfast Club (FFBC) had the opportunity to listen to a dedicated young man who has felt a calling since his adolescent years. **Pastor Rushing Kimball**, Associate Pastor at Plymouth Congregational Church, was our speaker. He noted that he would be talking about his faith story, his calling story, and his coming out story while growing up in Orlando, Florida.

Rushing came from a religious family where his father was from a Southern Baptist background and his mother was from the conservative Church of Christ. He attended private Christian Schools for most of his primary education. At 14 he picked out of a list of local churches the United Methodist Church to explore further his understanding of Christian dogma.

This began a long and complex journey for the young man who knew he wanted to serve others and lead others in and through their Christian belief. With a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies focusing on cultural interaction, religion, and the international economy and a Graduate of Candler School of Theology - Emory University with a Masters in Divinity with a certificate in Religious Education, Rushing knew that it was not time yet to search for a Methodist Church in the Florida area Methodist communities. Instead, he applied for a residency program sponsored by Plymouth Congregational Church in Des Moines for newly graduated seminarians.



December
Speaker

December Speaker

Rushing Kimball



Plymouth represented an opportunity to serve in a church that had over 30 years of experience being an accepting and affirming congregation. A church that served as a refuge for those exploring their faith. A ministry of inclusion where all could feel safe.

Rev. Kimball spoke of his long desire to return to the area he grew up in and to the Methodist Church but needing to gather his strength for what he knows will be a journey for many local congregations in central Florida. As late as 2019/2022, he did not feel he would have the support of his church in the Florida jurisdiction but now feels that change is happening with new bishops in parts of the Methodist church. The time is quickly approaching when he would like to return to central Florida and provide leadership in a better understanding of Scripture and what he believes it really says.

During the question and answer period, a question about Christian Nationalism and its possible threat to our secular democracy brought this response. Rev. Kimball suggested what may be needed is a discussion on what a Christian Nationalist really means. Maybe what is needed is a better understanding of scripture and what Christ taught. He wondered if maybe a discussion of the appropriateness of the American Flag in a sanctuary may be enlightening.

December Meeting Photo Gallery



Photos by Ken Hanson
& Wade Petersen

Rick Miller and Reverend Rushing Kimball

December Meeting Photo Gallery



President Byron Huff



Rick Miller introduces the December speaker, Rev. Rushing Kimball

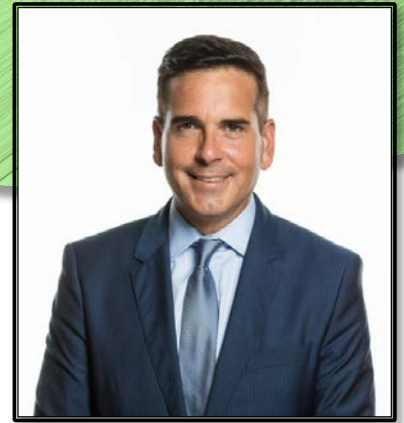
Photos by Ken Hanson
& Wade Petersen



Progress and Setbacks

**by Supervisor Matt McCoy
Polk County, 5th District**

In early December, I attended the 2022 International LGBTQ Leaders Conference in Washington, D.C., hosted by the Victory Fund. I attend this conference annually, and this year was ever more exciting to hear the record number of LGBTQ+ candidates winning in the 2022 general election. Despite these successes, we reflect on a year where 19 anti-transgender bills were introduced in the Iowa Legislature earlier this year and a total of 207 were introduced nationally in state legislatures. By comparison, only 60 anti-transgender bills were introduced nationally in 2021. Make no mistake about it, they are moving to attack transgender kids by drafting bills that prevent participation in sports, kids' healthcare, curriculum bans, parental rights, bathroom bills, and physical education locker rooms. The consequences of this would result in even higher suicide rates among this population.



This is what we can do about it. We need to fight myths regarding “grooming” which has now become an epidemic in school board meetings across the country where LGBTQ+ parents and kids are being accused of unspeakable behavior. All students deserve our protection. Students deserve access to libraries which actively stock LGBTQ+ books that are currently being attacked in school and library board meetings across the country. We need to show up and communicate that America is a country of freedom of speech, thoughts, and ideas. Freedom ends when politicians block books, ideas, and thoughts.

History is about the truth and that includes our collective queer lived experiences and that book bans are what really is inappropriate for kids. Currently, we have Proud Boys showing up at drag queen shows, brunches, and story hours. Our call to action is now, and it's going to require the LGBTQ+ community showing up, speaking up, and demanding that this full-frontal assault on our transgender kids ends. While we celebrate some victories in November, we need to refocus efforts to next fall where school board races will be on the ballot. Quite frankly we need candidates to run for school board. If exponential increases in anti-transgender bills introduced in 2022 is any indicator, we will see the fight at the forefront of 2023 school board races.



Thanks to Brad Holland and Joe Raetz, the Ascendant Wealth Management sponsorship helps FFBC to cover its website hosting costs, as well as its website e-commerce technology which allows for online scholarship donations and dues payments.



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THANKS BRAD & JOE !

Ring Out, Wild Bells

Alfred, Lord Tennyson



Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light;
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more,
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.



LGBTQ Affordable Housing in Des Moines

by Don Jones



I turn 70 next year. With a souring economy, inflation, and caregiving for a close friend of 47 years and his passing, it has made me think about a lack of affordable housing and income inequality in our city for LGBTQ people. What I have found and been confronted by is amazing and confusing.

In Houston (where I spent time with my partner), they opened Law Harrington, a place for 55+ senior LGBTQ and straight people. The spark that started the project was a chance ten-minute conversation with the lesbian mayor of Houston who became interested and involved enough to start the ball rolling along with a councilman from the Third Ward. You might be thinking, "Why the councilman?" Funding from the federal government program required a partnership to first gain access. Out of the \$26.5 million needed to build Law Harrington, approximately 25 million came from the federal government. Building an LGBTQ facility is possible with funding and a desire to have it done.

We have all experienced the cost of inflation for the last couple of years with groceries, gas, and rising rates on houses/apartments, etc. Not all LGBTQ people in the Des Moines area are financially equal. So what can we do to help current and future LGBTQ seniors in the Des Moines area? We can work together to build LGBTQ affordable housing that will give people a chance to live a more secure life and have a decent place to live.

Last June, I spent time talking to LGBTQ organizations and people when we had PrideFest in Des Moines. I found that many were not interested because their organizations are not structured to take on a project of this magnitude. Recently, I read in the media that trips are being taken to Washington, D.C., to the White House to celebrate the Respect for Marriage Act with funds donated from an LGBTQ charitable organization. That money could be better used or spent for helping people who suffer from income inequality and put towards affordable housing too. Even contacting Polk County Supervisors resulted in a dead end.

First Friday Breakfast Club uses money to support LGBTQ students to continue their education. There is nothing in Des Moines to improve LGBTQ seniors' lives. What can and should we do about it? "No plan" is not an option; we need action now, not later.

Currently, I have found about 26 affordable housing projects for seniors in other cities for the LGBTQ working class and families. These seniors feel more secure, are better able to take care of themselves financially, and do not feel isolated. Can we do the same in the LGBTQ community in Des Moines? **Is Des Moines ready for something like this?** The ball is in your court.

Future Speakers

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

June 2:

Zach Wahls

Iowa Senate Democratic Leader

"We can rest easy tonight because our families are validated and because now we're allowed to love who we love."

(Cyndi Lauper, who sang at the White House signing of the Respect for Marriage Act)



Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery

A Netflix Movie Review by Mark Turnage

A running joke among my friends is my appreciation for summer staples as a form of escapism from severe winter weather: spicy margaritas, palm-tree scented candles, or an occasional stop at a tiki bar, to name a few. For those who need a vibrant, summery cinematic palette cleanser from holiday-themed romances, look no further than Rian Johnson's *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery*. Though its charismatic private eye sometimes takes a backseat to the rest of its ensemble cast, *Glass Onion*'s exotic set pieces, character performances, and streamlined plot make it a stylish, campy, and concise follow up to its predecessor.

The convenience with writing a murder mystery is that its sequels usually progress as an anthology, with the famed detective as a centerpiece and a revolving cast of equally memorable characters who are also all suspects. When the close friends of a billionaire tech guru (Edward Norton) are invited to his island mansion for a posh murder mystery party, the game ends up with a few uninvited guests, including master detective Benoit Blanc (Daniel Craig), and a real murder on its hands. Of course, everyone on the island has a motive—some more comic and socially incisive than others, such as Kathryn Hahn's sellout liberal governor, or Dave Bautista's men's-rights Twitch streamer. But this murder mystery is far from stuffy—its design screams bright, sunny, and tropical. Daniel Craig's gay Southern detective, Benoit Blanc, is the detective centerpiece, this time adorned in linen rompers with bold patterns befitting the setting of a Greek private island. Befitting the roles of a billionaire's friend circle, everyone is also a fashionista in this film (when you're a *Clue* character, you've got to be), and kudos to Jenny Eagan for such vibrant and character-informed costume design. While it keeps its campy tone most of the film (a welcome approach to a film explicitly set during the COVID-19 pandemic), the mystery itself has enough satisfying twists and comedic turns to keep you intrigued and guessing.

Yet compared to its predecessor *Knives Out*, Blanc takes more of a backseat role in favor of its ensemble cast—a bold decision I somewhat disagree with given its extended twist, another staple of Rian Johnson's films. Blanc still gets his great deduction moments, often as the comedic high points of the film, but its Janelle Monae who's the real scene stealer in this sequel. Johnson's script is punchy and plays with the detective formula, but the timing of the twist functions as a review of the first half of the film, and when the twist is explained and revealed fully, there's no more reveals to be had. Johnson's resolution of the plot does have some compelling social commentary about justice among the rich and famous, though—something relevant to consider in the age of the social media demagogue.

The suspects' motives are also jabs at internet/tech culture, fads and booms—Kate Hudson's repeatedly "canceled" Twitter celebrity is especially hilarious and so is Edward Norton's faux-hippie tech guru—but I do wish there were more charismatic moments given to both Kathryn Hahn and Leslie Odom, Jr.'s characters, especially given their acting range. There's also the question of chemistry among the rest of the ensemble cast—there could be more snark and shade in the sun. But this reviewer also suspects that some character-building was sacrificed in favor of an easier-to-follow, faster-paced mystery, especially considering the back-and-forth progression of the mystery in *Knives Out* compared to *Glass Onion*.

Glass Onion is a campier, sunnier, and splashier follow-up mystery, and even though there's a little less Benoit Blanc this go-around, it's still a fun and often satirical mystery. See it streaming on Netflix this winter.



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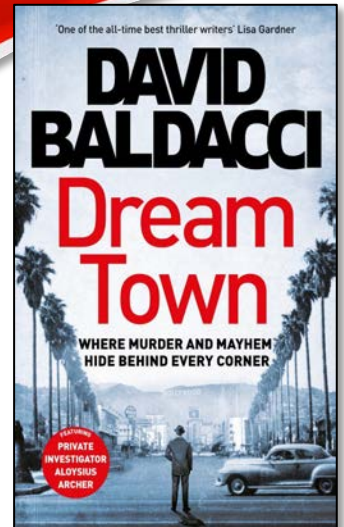
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Dream Town

by David Baldacci

A Book
Review by
Steve Person



Dream Town is the third installment of Baldacci's mid-twentieth thriller with the lead character of Aloysius Archer. Archer, a World War II veteran, arrives in Hollywood on New Year's Eve, 1952, and squires his actress and potential love interest, Liberty Callahan, to a nightclub where they intend to bring in 1953 with appropriate fanfare. Callahan introduces Archer to one of her Hollywood connections, one Eleanor Lamb, a down-on-her-luck screenwriter—or is she? Once Lamb discovers Archer's occupation as a private eye, she asks him to investigate the strange goings on at her Malibu home complete with menacing phone calls and a blue automobile lurking outside her house.

When Archer arrives at Lamb's house, he discovers a dead body but no Eleanor Lamb. She is missing. But where? As he rifles through her desk, he finds a number of matchbooks from an establishment in Chinatown called The Jade. It is one of the more sinister "businesses" in that particular part of Los Angeles. Once inside, he discovers that strangers who enter are not welcome, but he also sees a famous Hollywood actress, Samantha Lourdes, disembark from her Rolls Royce and enter with no problem whatsoever. Archer manages to sneak into the inner sanctum of this lair of secrets but is discovered. His encounter there with a man named Paley leaves Paley with injuries from Archer's superior fighting skills, but Paley successfully manages to stab Archer. Bleeding, Archer bursts into the star's Rolls as she is pulling away from The Jade. Her chauffeur drops him off at his car parked a few streets away.

And thus the ensuing events take Archer to the seamier gambling meccas of Las Vegas, to the Hollywood mansions of important movie moguls and producers and their even more influential wives, and ultimately to luxurious homes at Lake Tahoe. All in search of Eleanor Lamb. One suspicious aspect of Lamb's Malibu home concerns her neighbors who ostensibly are spending a month in Paris. The ever-curious Archer breaks into these neighbors' garage and finds curiosities that eventually explain that strange patch of out-of-place and discolored lawn in these people's otherwise meticulously kept back yard. Hmmm. Whatever could explain that?

The bodies pile up, the excitement builds, and secrets that most thought would never be discovered become apparent as they do in most of Baldacci's stories. He does a bang-up job of reproducing the atmosphere of 1953 America and Hollywood in particular. His research most certainly serves him well with this adventure. He is one of this genre's most successful writers. If you like a good thriller, this one is for you.

