



First Friday

News & Views



Monthly Newsletter of the First Friday Breakfast Club, Inc.

August 2023 / Volume 28 / Issue 8

Next Meeting

August 4
7:00 a.m.



Location

Hoyt Sherman
15th & Woodland
Des Moines



August Speaker

Kendra
Weston



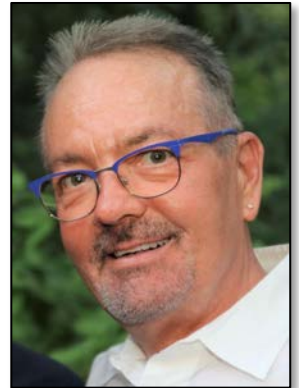
Website

ffbc Iowa.org



A Republican Dictatorship?

by Byron Huff, Board President



If you missed the FFBC Donor Appreciation Party on July 15, you missed a fabulous time! Beautiful weather and John Schmacker's amazing backyard made for a spectacular evening as you will read about in this month's newsletter article by Gary Moore. Thank you to all who attended because you made it very special!

Be sure to visit our website where we continually update our upcoming speakers and mark your calendar to join us! As with the donor party, it is those who attend that make it special.

I just read a frightening article, that is backed up by facts, laying out a plan of the Republican Party to move to a dictatorship by centralizing power in the Oval Office by **“increasing the president's authority over every part of the federal government that now operates, by either law or tradition, with any measure of independence from political interference by the White House.”**

There is much more detail into how the planned takeover will work, but you can see the groundwork has already begun with the conservative Supreme Court and appointing other lifetime federal judges who they believe will support them. Taking over state governments who will install people who will support a takeover is also key (they control elections). Installing a majority in the House and Senate is likely a piece of the check and balance (legislative, judicial, and executive) that would need to occur.

The answer to this craziness is to vote and vote against anyone who spews unfounded conspiracy theories; check the facts from multiple sources because all news outlets likely have some bias, but some are way better than others. Reinstating the Fairness Doctrine and applying it to all news reporting would go a long way toward educating the public.

Getting rid of dark money, which has proliferated since Citizen's United was overturned in 2010, would also mean we can all understand who is funding campaigns; this would help us understand their motives (i.e. oil companies promoting a candidate who will be against climate initiatives that reduce using their products).

Better ethics rules for our legislators and the Supreme Court would prevent self-interest voting and becoming wealthy because of that power. An example being it should be illegal for Joe Manchin to hold up climate legislation that cuts coal production of which he is invested (Manchin helped found and was president of Enersystems, a coal brokerage company his family owned and operates).

The Trump tax cuts did more to grow the United States' deficit than any spending put forth by the Biden administration. Republicans rail against tax increases when we really should be reversing tax cuts for the top one percent that will help reduce disparities of income and wealth that have grown significantly since the Reagan tax cuts in the 1980s and were exacerbated by the latest cuts.

I am likely preaching to the choir, but sometimes it helps to be reminded that we are in a fragile democracy that can be subject to so many forces that seek to subvert the premise of equity and equality for all.

“Children tell us all the time that finding books that reflect their experiences and answer questions they would never ask adults is lifesaving for them.”



Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom and executive director of the Freedom to Read Foundation

New Iowa law: Any book or other material that has "descriptions or visual depictions" of a sex act between two or more people will no longer be considered age-appropriate, and it must be removed from Iowa school libraries and classrooms (exemptions for religious books and those used for human growth and development).



1200 University Avenue | Des Moines, IA 50314
(515) 248-1595 | M-TH: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. / F: 9 - 1:00

What started as a coalition of dedicated volunteers in **1987** is now part of a community health center with a host of services to support and empower people living with HIV and those vulnerable to HIV.

Our goal is to provide confidential, free or low cost services to help people living with HIV move through the stages of HIV medical care. From the time of diagnosis, our staff help patients connect to care, access resources that will help them achieve the best possible health outcomes and overcome obstacles that many stand in their way to a long and happy life. We also focus on prevention, providing outreach and access to the most effective tools to prevent HIV infection.

The resources available include a prevention testing and educational outreach program, HIV and primary medical care, dental care, case management, mental health services including support groups, medication management, and assistance with health insurance and prescription coverage.

Donate: phctheproject.org/donate/

Together we can create a brighter future for all those affected by HIV/AIDS!



Thanks to **John Schmacker** for hosting our **July Donor Appreciation and Member Party**. Thanks to **David Cotton** for managing our website, to **Nicholas Williams** for managing our Microsoft IT infrastructure, and to **David Wilfahrt** for managing FFBC's finances. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter editor. *Thank you to all our contributors to the FFBC newsletter!*

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



Fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have awarded over **\$450,000** for scholarships 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.



A special thank-you to those FFBC members and friends who have chosen to designate FFBC through the **Donor Direct** program of **United Way**. Contributions through United Way are tax deductible. Those who have chosen this means of supporting FFBC have gone to the trouble of completing their United Way campaign worksheet by designating FFBC as the beneficiary of their generosity. FFBC is an eligible recipient of such funding designations.



United Way

CAPITAL CITY PRIDE

RAINBOW SAFARI

THURSDAY, AUGUST 10
5:30-9 PM
 BLANK PARK ZOO
 \$10 ADULTS 13+ | \$5 CHILDREN 12 & UNDER

All tickets sold by Capital City Pride. Tickets are transferable but are non-refundable. All ticket proceeds go directly to Capital City Pride. Please bring a copy of your tickets for admission to Rainbow Safari.

Join **Capital City Pride** for an evening of wild family adventures at Blank Park Zoo! **Rainbow Safari** returns on **Thursday, August 10, 2023**.

Explore the zoo's animal exhibits while enjoying the beautiful zoo grounds. From 5:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M., there will be free and unlimited train and carousel rides, as well as face painting and temporary tattoos. The Capital City Pride team will be selling CCP Merchandise throughout the evening at the Pavilion. *Ten percent of all proceeds will be donated to the Blank Park Zoo Tiger Conservation Campaign.*

Please note:

- All tickets are sold by Capital City Pride.
- Tickets are transferable but non-refundable.
- All ticket proceeds directly support Capital City Pride.
- Remember to bring a copy of your tickets for admission to Rainbow Safari.

“There’s no right or wrong way to be gay. No right or wrong way to come out. It’s your journey, do it the way you wanna do it.”

-- Tan France, *Queer Eye & Next in Fashion*



Future Speakers

September 1:
C.J. Petersen
 Executive Assistant to
 State Auditor Rob Sand

October 6:
**“Coming Out”
 Panel Discussion**
 * More Details on Page 11

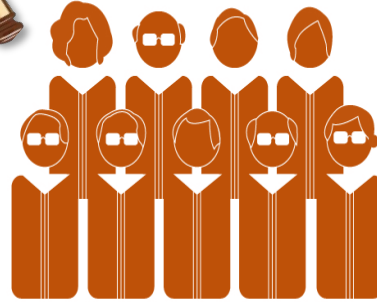
December 1:
Rev. Gregory Neal
 Gay Pastor of Grace United
 Methodist Church, DSM

hello,
AUGUST



Nibble, Nibble, Nibble

by Jonathan Wilson



I have been an attorney for over 50 years and am admitted to practice in Iowa and before the U.S. Supreme Court. Currently, the U.S. Supreme Court's reputation among the American people is at an all-time low. Polls indicate that only about 30% of the American people have confidence in the integrity of the Court. That is partly because of some unpopular decisions, such as the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, but there have always been controversial, unpopular decisions of the Court, so I don't think that is the variable that explains the low esteem with which the super majority of Americans hold of the Court. Rather, I think that the explanation lies partly with the recent disclosure of unadmitted accounts of individual justices receiving lavish "gifts" from people who want to cultivate justices that share their partisan ideological values, along with the growing understanding that the justices are not accountable to anyone for their conduct. The justices enjoy lifetime appointments, subject only to "good behavior." In theory, a justice (or any other federal judge) can be removed from office by impeachment initiated in the U.S. House of Representatives and conviction in the U.S. Senate. In the entire history of the United States, however, no Supreme Court Justice has ever been removed from office in this way. Individual justices are not even accountable to their colleagues on the Court, including even the Chief Justice.

It has been rightly said that anyone who is not accountable to anyone for their conduct, should not be trusted by anyone.

It is apparent to anyone who has been paying attention that the U.S. Supreme Court has become more ideologically partisan. That is not as it should be, whether it is perceived conservative justices or perceived liberal justices. That phenomenon is only attributable, in part, to the financial "cultivation" of selected justices and the justices' lack of accountability. There is also another compelling but little recognized reason for the increased partisanship of the Court.

In the past, Senate confirmation of a Supreme Court justice's appointment required a 2/3 majority vote in the Senate (the same majority as required for removal by an impeachment conviction). Under the "leadership" of Mitch McConnell, the requirement for Senate confirmation was reduced from 2/3 of the senators to a simple majority. If someone could get 51 affirmative votes in the Senate, their appointment to the Supreme Court would be confirmed. Given the partisan divide that currently exists in the U.S.

electorate and in the U.S. Senate, that change opened the door for more partisan appointees to be confirmed to a lifetime appointment on the Court that is essentially impossible to do anything about when they are "cultivated" by generous partisans.

The story is told about a good shepherd who had 100 sheep. One of the sheep gets lost and the shepherd leaves the 99 and goes in search of the lost one, and returns it to the flock. Most hear that story and take away a lesson about what makes the shepherd a "good shepherd." That's a legitimate take-away from the story. But, there's another take-away, equally important, especially in the context of our increasingly partisan Supreme Court. The lost sheep didn't just run off and get lost; it nibbled its way, munching away on available grass until it finally raised its head and realized that it was separated from the flock and lost.

The unaccountability of Supreme Court justices when they are financially "cultivated" by partisans [nibble, nibble], the virtual impossibility of removing them from office by a closely divided U.S. Senate [nibble, nibble], and the simple majority required for confirmation to their lifetime appointment [nibble, nibble], have, in combination, brought us to this unenviable point that falls far short of the ideal of a reasoned, centrist, balanced judicial system overseen by a Supreme Court from which there is no appeal.

There is a solution. The U.S. Constitution does not specify the number of justices on the Supreme Court, and that number has changed from time to time in our history. It would be relatively straightforward to expand the number of justices in order to achieve a more partisan balance, and thereafter return to the requirement of a 2/3 Senate majority vote for further appointments. Then have the Supreme Court function like our U.S. Courts of Appeal, where appeals are initially decided by a randomly selected panel of justices (fewer than the full court). Neither partisans, nor their attorneys, would know which justices will be on that initial panel. As in the Courts of Appeal, further appeal to the full Court – while possible – would be rare. Partisanship on the Court would almost certainly be reduced.



August Speaker



Kendra Weston

Kendra Weston received their bachelor of arts degree in Political Science and Spanish with Honors from Central College in 2012. She earned her juris doctor degree from the University of Nebraska College of Law in 2016. Kendra has always been drawn to the public interest arena. Their desire to have a career in the nonprofit world was solidified when they served as an AmeriCorps VISTA after undergraduate studies. As a student attorney, she worked on family-based immigration law and post-graduation, she represented children in their parents' custody and divorce cases. Kendra was a founding board member for the LGBTQ Youth Center (in Cedar Rapids, Iowa). It was during this time that Kendra began to look for more ways to serve the LGBTQ community. And thus, **Lavender Legal Center** was born to provide hope and resilience for LGBTQ Iowans. In their spare time, Kendra enjoys spending time with her wife and daughter, working on their old home, and antiques.



2008 FFBC Scholar Update



My name is **Briana McGeough**, and I was an **FFBC Scholarship Recipient in 2008**. I met a couple of FFBC representatives at the 2023 Iowa Safe Schools Governor's Conference, who requested that I send an email update about what I've been up to since receiving the scholarship.

I attended Brown University and graduated with a B.A. in Sociology and Gender & Sexuality Studies. In college, my favorite extracurricular activity was facilitating a support group for students who were questioning their sexual orientations and gender identities. After graduating, I served two terms as an AmeriCorps VISTA, working for a non-profit organization that helped people to start socially responsible businesses.

Afterwards, I attended graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley, where I earned my MSW and PhD in Social Welfare. I specialized in offering mental health services to members of the LGBTQ community and researching approaches to improve the mental health services that LGBTQ people receive. One of my most impactful graduate school experiences was offering therapy to clients at Alliance Health Project, a mental health clinic in San Francisco that was among the first clinics to specialize in offering mental health support to LGBTQ individuals and people living with HIV.

I am currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Kansas in the School of Social Welfare and Director of the Center for LGBTQ+ Research & Advocacy. I continue to research mental health interventions for LGBTQ folks, chair the annual LGBTQ Research Symposium, and participate in political advocacy to promote equity for LGBTQ people. This past year, I offered testimony against anti-transgender bills in Kansas.

I'm beyond grateful for the support I received from the FFBC, which helped me to pursue my educational goals. My parents and I often look back fondly at the FFBC Awards Ceremony and reflect on how welcoming the members of the FFBC were to our family. Thank you!



I'm Gay, I'm Proud, but I'm Tired

by Tim Schreck

Let's start right there... I am a proud, recently retired, and extremely fortunate gay man. In many ways I could have never dreamed the blessed life I have been lucky to live. And yet, today, while I am truly Proud, I'm not feeling very celebratory about Pride. I'm just really tired. Mostly, I'm tired of Iowa.

I grew up in western Iowa and attended Catholic schools all twelve years before college. I was called a homo by my basketball coach in eighth grade, and faggot more than once in my Catholic high school. Many reading this might remember a time when that was "just what kids did," you know, back when America was great. But for a kid who was not ready to face his true self back then, well, those words still sting today. I had many thoughts of suicide, but my family and extended family had already experienced some tragic losses, and I didn't want to put my parents through anything like that again. In 1978, I went off to UNI and started to drink, a LOT. I met some of my most treasured friends in college, but there were multiple blackout nights and failed dates with wonderful women. There was one time, summer of '81, when several party-people collectively announced they were bi-sexual, and I kept telling myself, "If my friend Clark says it, so will I." Well, it took Clark a few more years to accept himself as gay, so I shoved that thought way deep down again, and drank some more.

I graduated from college in 1982, and I started my professional career in Cedar Rapids, still drinking a lot, but now also driving home drunk to be alone with my thoughts. By 1984, I knew I had to leave Iowa and find a community where I could start over. I landed a pretty awesome job in the Twin Cities. Still anxious, instead of seeking out a gay community, I found a Catholic church choir -- wonderful people, lovely progressive community, and excellent place to remain deeply closeted. The moment I knew I had to face myself was a two-parter...after a Christmas party, my best female friend in the choir asked me if she and I would ever get married, and I told her I thought I was gay. (This came up after she and I shared a hotel

I wrote this article the afternoon of June 2, 2023.

That morning I helped present at the FFBC celebration of our 2023 scholars, and I went home in a fantastic mood. Very soon I became mired in the realities of Iowa politics and beyond for the queer community. I decided to start writing my thoughts, and what you read below is what poured out. It helped me immensely to put my thoughts in writing, and I hope you can find the helpful parts in this for yourself. I hope to see you all at Pride 2024!

room in Kansas City for a friend's wedding -- she in her bra and panties, me flipping through magazines, possibly a mix of *GQ* and *Vogue*). A couple weeks later was New Year's Eve, and I rented a hotel room with a bunch of straight friends to celebrate the New Year. I brought my own bottle of gin, drank 2/3 of it, passed out in the closet with shoes for a pillow, and woke up again before midnight. And then drank some more. I can still feel the hangover, just thinking about that night. I started my New Year with a voice message from the choir friend, basically telling me I needed to get my S**t together because she could not sit around waiting for me. And thankfully, I did.

While I met a few gay men in Minnesota (the first one through a personals ad in the back of the "alternative newspaper"), I never felt ready to join that community, not there. My news was well-received by most of the church choir members (who probably already knew), but I needed to break away again. And through the divine providence of my god (who LOVES the queer community, by the way) and the guidance of a couple of supportive high school friends, in 1990 I ended up in New York City, living with my college friend Clark. I can say that he absolutely saved my life, and he gave me the space to finally, FINALLY, be my true self. It took me about two days to know I was in the right place, and I lived in that amazing, demanding city for six years (in my opinion, when NYC WAS great!). I found a lovely gay Catholic community, and once again I was singing at church. Clark introduced me to a gay volleyball league which has provided some of my most treasured memories. I was also called a faggot again and had beer bottles thrown at me for holding a boyfriend's hands. The absolute worst of the AIDS crisis was fading, but still raging, and I was blessed to hold a few loved ones in my arms the nights before they died. And I experienced Gay Pride.

My first Pride parade was in 1990, three months after landing in NYC. Clark and a few of his friends (see UNI story above) had all moved to NYC and were a really fun group,



so I joined the Pride Parade with them. Every year, at 1:00 P.M., the Parade stops for a Minute of Silence in honor and memory of those who have died from AIDS. It was a chilling moment every year, but that first year, we happened to stop immediately in front of St Patrick's Cathedral, and it was beautiful, except for...about a half block away were the devout Christians screaming, SCREAMING, "God Hates Fags! AIDS is God's Punishment! You'll all Burn in Hell!" That was my introduction to Gay Pride, and it set in me a sense that I was in the battle now, that we truly were fighting for our lives. I regret that I never developed the level of courage some around me displayed, but I was in it at the level I could, with my community.

In 1996 I moved to California (invited by the Minnesota friend I met through the personals ad), first to San Jose where I sorta went back into the closet, then in 1998 up to San Francisco, and opened those Golden Gates! I was drinking a lot less, got myself a fabulous home, and found my community through volunteer work with several AIDS service organizations. I don't think I could have been much happier during much of that time in San Francisco. And Gay Pride became more of a celebration, a true community event acknowledging that there was still work to be done for true equality, but the SF community was WITH our community. One day I was working at my non-profit job when the Director bounced into my office saying, "Iowa just passed gay marriage!" To which I smugly replied, "We've got some good folks back there; Iowa has quietly been a leader on social issues for a long time." And that stuck with me -- I was proud of my gay community AND I was proud of Iowa.

[continued on Page 7]

["I'm Gay, I'm Proud, but I'm Tired" continued from Page 6]

Time passed and in 2012, I decided I was done with big city life, but not quite ready to return to the homeland. So I moved to the ever so fabulous land of Santa Fe, which is even MORE fabulous if you don't have to have a job! Unfortunately, that wasn't me. Once again, new friends helped me find my community and I'll be heading there in a couple months for a visit. It's a uniquely beautiful piece of the universe, yet after about six months, I was pretty sure Santa Fe was not the spot. My mother died in 2013, and I felt the call of family. In early 2014, I found myself back in Iowa. I was happy to be closer to my birth-family, but missing my family of choice. And, not well-informed on the updated political state of the state. Again, I've created so many happy memories since coming back, and experienced wonderful family reconnections that would not have happened had I not moved back. This past June, I was honored to participate in a celebration of 14 amazing, brave, and fabulous queer high school graduates who have bravely made a difference in their schools and communities. It was magical!

But now, after nine years, I am really tired of Iowa. I know that some of the fatigue comes from unresolved childhood stuff having grown up here – I've been "the gay guy" in the office, I dread being the only one without kid/grandkid stories, and I absolutely hate feeling "welcome, too" at gatherings. Whether real or not, I still hear the whispers I heard 50 years ago, I still catch myself dreading that I might look or act too obviously gay. Ugh.

But I'm REALLY tired of the new stuff, or the new old stuff. Thanks to recent legislation, I once again feel unsafe in my home state, where everyone can carry a gun almost anywhere. I'm very concerned for any child who has felt emboldened in recent years to fully be themselves. I feel anxiety for each transgender child who KNOWS his or her true self, facing a governor crying crocodile tears while begging us to understand how difficult this is for her, and the pain she feels while shoving them back to the ground, condemning them to future violence and isolation. A governor who relied on the impassioned pleas of non-Iowans, vs. sitting down with parents, medical providers, and the kids themselves to LEARN about what it means to be trans, and to look in the eyes of a child who is finally their true self. I am tired of a church that mandates how their parishioners and teachers must suppress LGBTQ kids, while pocketing tax money of LGBTQ adults. I am tired of small groups of parents defining what every child will, and will not, get to experience through reading, I am tired of educated, trained teachers and librarians being put to the stake for doing the very job we entrust them to do. And I'm tired of the "mine is bigger than yours" attitude that seems to come with every oversized pickup truck, and every loud-mouthed bigot who hides behind their god because we gays have "forced them to deny their religious beliefs." I'm also tired of living in a place where the only lives that truly seem to matter are white straight Christian lives, men first.

And one more thing...I'm tired of the idea that the LGBTQ and queer commu-



nities are exclusively responsible for the celebration and fight for Gay Pride and trans rights! In 2023, it's not just us anymore. It's every person who thinks we're so fun and funny in the workplace. It's people who have a queer sibling, child, close friend or even a character they love on TV. It's the company lead who sees the value that LGBTQ staff members bring. It's church members who don't agree with religion-based oppression. It's every person who tells us their vote was "tied to one issue, not all that other stuff." It's the people who tell us they love us, while still voting for people who harm us. You're in this too folks...where are you?

I'm sure there's more, but I'm tired. I thought we'd been through all of this years ago...now I am finally seeing what "making America great again" means. So, I truly hope for a happy Pride, and silently, pray to my loving god for a safe Pride. I applaud the members of the queer community (and allies) who recognize how important the fight has become again. But, this year, I won't be part of the fight, I did that 30 years ago, in a land and time that seems very far away, in every way, from Iowa. This year I'm leaving it to the next generation, and the folks who still have some fight in them. Next year, like so many LGBTQ adults, or parents of queer or trans kids, I can't even be sure I will still live in the great state of Iowa. I doubt I will want to.



"So I think the category of businesses that will be able to claim free speech rights against anti-discrimination laws is not at all clear. But it's not small. There's going to be a relatively large range of businesses who can lay claim to free speech rights against anti-discrimination laws."

-- Elizabeth Sepper, a University of Texas law professor and expert on public accommodations laws, reacting on the Supreme Court ruling in favor of a Christian web designer in Colorado

Donor/Member Party

Photo Gallery



FFBC Recognizes 2023 Scholarship Donors

On Saturday night, July 15, the First Friday Breakfast Club enjoyed the gardens of **John Schmacker** to thank members and our special donors to the FFBC Scholarship Fund. Drinks and food added to the celebration. It was good to see Councilman Carl Voss, Christie Vilsack, Trudy Hurd, and many other donors and allies who helped make 2023 a record-breaking year that allowed FFBC to recognize **14 scholars** from across the state with **\$3,000 each**.

Approximately **50** people attended the event which gave FFBC members a chance to meet some of our allies and donors. For those new to FFBC, it was perhaps the first time they had the opportunity to enjoy John Schmacker's gardens that he has so beautifully created over 40 years. That along with his unique art collection is always a joy to experience.

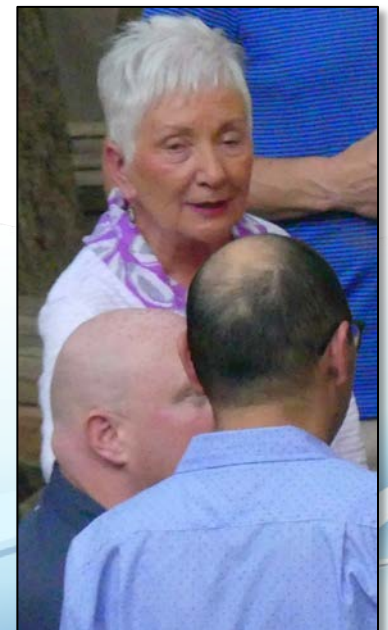
We thank John for his years of support for FFBC; he has etched a firm place in FFBC's history and the gay community.

-- Gary Moore



Photos by Gary Moore

Donor/Member Party Photo Gallery



Photos by
Gary Moore

30 Years Ago: The Flood of '93

by Gary Moore

On July 11, 1993, the Raccoon River crested at 26.7 feet, 14.7 feet above flood stage and flooded Des Moines Water Works' Fleur Drive Treatment Plant. The plant shut down, and residents were without water service for 11 days and drinkable water for 18 days.



The Flood of 1993 and the Blazing Saddle

In 1993 when the city of Des Moines lost its water service for 11 days and drinking water for 18, I was working as a bartender at the Blazing Saddle, one of the city's oldest bars in the East Village. There was fear the water might invade parts of the East Village, but that never happened. The Saddle had a reputation for being open 365 days a year. Holidays were for family, and the bar's owner back then always had food to share on the holidays; it was a safe place for a community that was often shunned and threatened. The Saddle would not let a little inconvenience of no drinking water, no water to flush toilets, and no water for our ice machines keep us from opening our doors.

All glassware was put away and plastic cups secured, and ice was bought in. In the restrooms it was posted "If yellow let it mellow" and "If brown, flush it down." A rain barrel outside the back door next to the restrooms had a bucket alongside to flush the toilet when it was necessary. Initially, there were problems with electricity so Christmas lights were strung over the bar to provide the minimal light needed for night opening. Hand sanitizer helped keep the bartender's hands hygienic.

Camp Dodge back then had its own water supply and housed one of the world's largest pools along with showers to go with the pool. Built in 1922, the pool was 350 feet by 150 feet and took nearly three million gallons to fill. I remember the showers at the swimming pool at Camp Dodge due to the flood in Des Moines were opened to the public 24 hours each day for those needing to bathe. After closing the bar at 2:00 a.m., I would drive to Camp Dodge to use the shower when there were fewer people around. Oh, it felt so good to feel the water, something we had taken for granted prior to just a few days before the Flood of 1993 would affect so many lives.

With the bar family and friendship, the Blazing Saddle hardly missed a beat and its reputation of being open 365 days a year continued.

FFBC Membership

FFBC membership is open to men who self-identify as gay, bisexual, or transgender, and their allies. We welcome all guests, regardless of sexual orientation or gender. Meetings are held the first Friday of every month from 7:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. at Hoyt Sherman Place in Des Moines. The following membership and guest rates help us cover our food and facility costs.

In-Person Meeting Rates (Members & Guests)

Annual Rate: \$180
(12 consecutive meetings)

Quarterly Rate: \$48
(3 consecutive meetings)

Month-by-Month: \$18

First Time or One-Time Attendee: \$15

Full-time Student: \$8

There is no charge to attend via Zoom.

Payment Options

Cash or check at the meeting

Credit card prior to the meeting at www.ffbcia.org; visit the Membership tab

Meeting Schedule

6:30 a.m. - Doors open

6:45 a.m. - Breakfast service begins

7:00 a.m. - Meeting begins



“Talk It Up / Lock It Up” Gun Safety Campaign



by Supervisor Matt McCoy
Polk County, 1st District



Polk County has embarked on a new campaign to talk about **gun safety and violence prevention**. One of the strategies is a 30 second TV ad focused on unloading your guns and keeping them locked up. This is in partnership with the Polk County Health Department and our community hospitals. While simply talking about the importance of gun safety in the home, it’s important to remember that despite parents believing they have a hidden, loaded gun in the home, when questioned, most children know where the gun is and most children have handled a loaded gun when their parents are not home. *A child is more likely to die of accidental handling of a firearm than any other gun-related death for children.* This is an issue on which we should unite the left and right, and we should pledge to do all we can to prevent accidental gun deaths in the home as a result of careless storage of firearms. Click this link to see the thirty second TV ad featuring Polk County Health Department Director Helen Eddy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJZybSqnK98>.

“Maybe we can stop trying so hard to understand the gorgeous mystery of sexuality. Instead, we can just listen to ourselves and each other with curiosity and love, and without fear. We can just let people be who they are, and we can believe that the freer each person is, the better we all are.”

— Glennon Doyle

FFBC Plans for October Meeting “Coming Out” Panel

by David Cotton

On October 6, at the regular meeting of First Friday Breakfast Club, our “speaker” will be a **panel** about Coming Out, moderated by David Cotton, FFBC Vice President. Since 1988, October 11 of each year has been recognized as **National Coming Out Day**, marking the anniversary of the second major National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, which took place in 1987. If you have a unique story or perspective you’d like to share, or know of someone who does, please contact David Cotton at david.cotton@ffbciova.org for consideration as a panel member.



OCTOBER 11

The Flash

A Film Review by Mark Turnage

I know, I know: “Mark, another superhero review when *BARBIE* and *OPPENHEIMER* are in theaters??” Here’s the thing: I don’t have to do much to convince you to see *Barbie* or *Oppenheimer*. They’re part of a watershed cinematic moment that’s reviving ‘going to the movies’ again by word of mouth and pre-release publicity alone (I’m seeing both after publication deadline as a double feature—and reviewing them, of course!). But part of the joy I have for reviewing is also theorizing why a major movie bombed beyond “it’s just a bad movie”—with Andy Muschietti’s *The Flash*, uneven and extensive CGI, an over-reliance on nostalgia, and comedy soured by Ezra Miller’s off-screen behavior make an otherwise enjoyable movie cringeworthy. The movie’s central theme is acceptance of one’s own tragedies and failings as integral to one’s character, yet like its protagonist, *The Flash* is its own worst enemy at being committed to its message.

If you could change the past to save the people you love from harm, would you (and live with the consequences)? Barry Allen (Ezra Miller) is the titular hero with super-speed and newly-acquired time travel, grappling with that question and his father’s wrongful imprisonment for his mother’s murder. Feeling like “the janitor of the Justice League” and torn by his inability to help his father’s trial case, Barry travels back in time against the warnings of his teammates and prevents his mother’s death. Winding up in 2013 after encountering a villainous speedster, Barry is relieved to see his family intact, but meets his younger, more annoying and impulsive self (also played by Miller) in his place. In present Barry’s attempts to “save” what he believes is the past, a world crisis arrives necessitating the full power of the Justice League—but the only heroes the Barrys can find are an alternate, older Bruce Wayne (Michael Keaton) retired from crimefighting, and an imprisoned and weakened Supergirl (Sasha Calle). Bruce explains to present Barry that he’s not simply in “the past,” but on an alternate timeline as a result of his actions, and after some initial reluctance, agrees to help.

The storyline of *The Flash* is stuffed into its 2.5 hour runtime (my superhero movie pet peeve--move & end quickly), but there’s good character development between Barry and his younger self, and between present Barry and his mom (Maribel Verdu, easily one of the film’s most heartfelt performances). Miller and the script sometimes paint younger Barry as too cartoony and spastic, but the character moments that inform present Barry about his own immaturity and his relationship to his parents are thoughtful. It’s a pleasure to see Michael Keaton in any performance and a delight to see him in the Batsuit again—but a bit of that magic is lost with him just repeating the one-liners he made classic in 1989’s *Batman*, or even with sequences of Barry “rediscovering” the Batmobile or the Batcave (both with their ’89 aesthetics, of course) with limited use other than window dressing. However, the combat sequences with Keaton (or his stunt double) shine. Sasha Calle’s performance as a steely Woman of Steel is sadly all too brief, and it’s another instance of DC “fridging” a promising hero into a less than super ending.

The Flash captures the bright and campy tone of the Donner Superman films in its humor, but unfortunately, much of that humor is colored by Miller’s legal problems outside the screen, including erratic public behavior and endangering minors. This is underscored in the film’s opening sequence, which has Miller’s character rescuing babies and a therapy dog from cartoon-level hazards, all in CGI. You could argue it’s camp, but it comes off as intensely awkward. *The Flash*’s most cringeworthy moments result not from story beats but from uneven CGI standards, especially in the effects-heavy third act. It’s especially sad given how long this film was in development and how incredible other CGI effects in the same film, like the Flash’s suit or any scene with the two Barrys, looks. It reeks of rushed or underfunded technical production in this area (an underpaid field as is) and it distracts from the story when the suspension of disbelief is snipped by AI-generated actors in uncanny valley territory. *The Flash* also provokes some uncomfortable questions: is live action the best medium for translating a character as sci-fi as the Flash? Are computer graphics engineers paid sustainably? And where does AI begin and acting/actors/actresses end?

The Flash appeals heavily to nostalgic cameos and computer-generated effects for traction instead of relying on its own lighthearted tone and character development to sell the story. Ben Affleck’s last appearance as Bruce Wayne has him tell Barry, “Our scars make us who we are.” With *The Flash*, its scars make it a warning for future superhero movies.



Board of Directors

David Cotton Gene Larson
Jim Flansburg Deb Madison-Levi
Ken Hanson Wade Petersen
Brad Holland Joe Raetz
Byron Huff David Wilfahrt
Scott Kuknyo Phil Williams

Jonathan Wilson (Emeritus)

Contact Us At: info@ffbciowa.org

Officers

Byron Huff
President

David Cotton
Vice President

Joe Raetz
Secretary

David Wilfahrt
Treasurer



Newsletter Editor

WP Wade
Petersen

Webmaster

**David
Cotton**



Publication



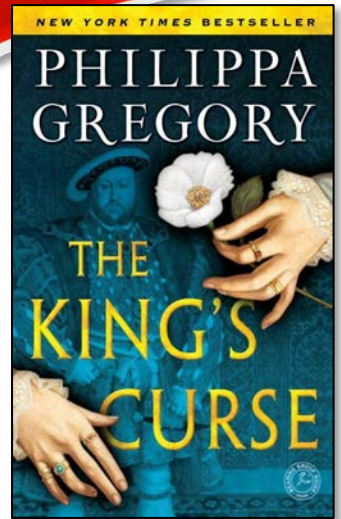
©2023
FFBC Board
of Directors

First Friday Breakfast Club
P.O. Box 41611
Des Moines, IA 50311
(515) 954-2996

The King's Curse

by Philippa Gregory

A
Book
Review by
Steve Person



Philippa Gregory is a renowned writer of historical fiction. *The King's Curse* is one of seven books pertaining to the Tudor Court. I've read two others in this series: *The Other Boleyn Girl*, sister of Anne Boleyn and mistress to Henry VIII long before Anne came on the scene, and *The Virgin Lover*, an account of Elizabeth I and her lover, Robert Dudley.

The current novel is told from the viewpoint of Margaret de la Pole, a.k.a. the Countess of Salisbury. Early in her life, Margaret is of the royal house of Plantagenet and the niece of two kings -- Edward IV and Richard III. Hers is one of the most important names of the Yorkist claim to the Crown. When the War of the Roses between the Red Rose of Lancaster and the White Rose of York settled, Henry Tudor of Lancaster, became King. With his defeat of Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field, he became popularly known as The Usurper, and those with connections to The Yorkist cause stood in mortal danger.

Even though the surviving Plantagenets swore fealty to Henry VII, he distrusted them, and he did everything possible—including beheading Margaret's brother whose claim to the Throne was more legitimate than Henry's—to make them subservient to him. As for Margaret, she was betrothed to a minor noble, Robert de la Pole, who was chamberlain to The Prince of Wales. With this marriage, Margaret's name changed from Plantagenet to de la Pole. Even though her name may have changed, the fact of her lineage could not be changed.

Henry VII, though distrusted and unpopular, was no fool. He chose as his wife the beautiful Elizabeth of York, thus combining the Red Rose of Lancaster with the White Rose of York, the result becoming the red and white Tudor Rose. (By the way, it is suspected the Queen of Hearts on a deck of cards is patterned after Elizabeth of York).

The title of this book derives from a secret conversation between Elizabeth and Margaret that the House of Tudor is cursed and male heirs will be difficult to come by. Henry VII's elder son is Arthur, Prince of Wales, to whom Margaret's husband is chamberlain. Henry VII's second son is also called Henry (the future Henry VIII). Arthur is pledged in marriage to Katherine of Aragon, a Spanish princess. Margaret is employed as a lady in waiting to Katherine.

Once the marriage of Arthur and Katherine is concluded, Arthur dies shortly thereafter. Katherine is now a princess with no hopes of becoming Queen of England yet has nowhere to go. Henry VII eventually devises the scheme that she will marry his second son, Henry Tudor. When Henry VIII becomes king, Katherine is his Queen. She gives birth to Mary Tudor, and Margaret is again employed to look after Mary and help with her education.

In the meantime, Robert de la Pole dies, and Margaret is left as a single mother to raise her five children. In the decades that follow, her life of poverty is sad to witness. She and her children are eventually restored to their rightful lands, but one by one she loses her four sons to the diabolical Henry VIII. By the time she is an old woman, she is left in the Tower of London to languish, even though she did everything she could do to keep her children (and herself) alive. Life is a precious gift to her. Her ignominious end is a harrowing account of her final days in the Tower of London and of the cruelty that the ogre Henry VIII became.