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# First Friday News & Views

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## AN INTERESTING CONVERGENCE

by Jonathan Wilson

In the same issue of **The Des Moines Register**, July 9, 2010, two stories were reported. One told about the recent discovery of a pair of naturally occurring antibodies that are able to kill more than 90 percent of *all* strains of the AIDS virus. There have been promising developments before and incredible advances in treatment for those already infected, but in this article the successful researchers were forecasting the real potential for developing an effective vaccine against the virus.

If there were any silver lining to the AIDS epidemic in the United States, it would have to be its influence upon the maturing of a more responsible gay community. First, it was learned that the best answer to the threat of AIDS, in the absence of a vaccine or cure, was monogamy and/or consistently following safer practices in sexual intimacy; lessons that the breeder community would do well to learn. Second, and ultimately more important, it was learned that in order to get gay people to adopt those more responsible behaviors it was necessary to cultivate self-respect among members of the gay community. Folks taught to hate themselves, as often as not by organized religion, felt little incentive to act responsibly. People with little sense of self-worth are less inclined to the self-discipline needed to protect themselves against all sorts of risks. As bizarre and twisted as it should appear to any sane person, the message from the churches has too often been that whether a gay person is responsible and in a committed, monogamous relationship, or utterly promiscuous, it's a moral equivalent. Such "moral teaching" led inevitably to a remarkably common sense of self-loathing among members of our community, a sense that there was no reason not to eat, drink, and make merry -- or, more accurately, "make" Tom, Dick, *and* Harry -- for tomorrow we die. The bizarre twist lay in the resulting reinforcement of the churches' attitude toward gay children of God. With a growing sense of self-worth -- gay pride, if you will -- our community has matured despite, not because of, organized religion.

The other article reported that a federal judge came to the novel conclusion that the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution actually means *equal* among all law-abiding citizens and, accordingly, struck down the federal, so-called Defense of Marriage Act. Politically true to form, candidate Branstad reiterated his support for "allowing the people to vote." How would you like to have him as the proverbial sheriff when the lynch-mob showed up at the jail? How would you like a person of such character as Governor -- "sheriff" of the state so-to-speak? Tellingly, neither he nor his right wingnut supporters tried to defend inequality on the merits or demerits -- but rather, premised their statements on the more appealing "principle" of democratic decision-making. Fact is, it's not the fault of our minority gay citizens that the term "marriage" was co-opted by the state as shorthand for access to a whole body of rights and privileges. Fact also is that the state shouldn't be involved with the "marriage" of gay people or breeders. The state should confine itself to civil unions providing both groups with

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### CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, August 6, 2010, at Hoyt Sherman Place.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by Tuesday Aug 3 to [JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com](mailto:JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com) or 288-2500 by phone.

like access to the same rights and privileges – then whoever wants a religious “marriage” can shop around for a church willing to tie the knot for them, or form a church of their own to do the job. But I digress. The point is that the church has made hay denouncing as immoral the gay children of God, and cited for support examples of promiscuity among those it insidiously encouraged to be promiscuous (while ignoring reflections upon the heterosexual community arising from the well-deserved reputations of Mardi Gras and Spring Break). Then, when the gay community developed a sense of pride and self-worth, and unapologetically claimed the birth right to equality under the law, the church has fought tooth and nail against that shift toward responsibility and commitment. Taken together, those two articles -- in the same issue of the newspaper -- portend a certain “coming of age.” Access to the institution of marriage, and societal acceptance of same-gender commitments within that institution, are arriving just as the motivating threat of AIDS infection may be lost for good. Does the Lord work in mysterious ways or what?

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## Effective Social Media Networking

By Tony Hansen

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Technology has made communications accessible to everyone with a computer, but we should consider what we share online in personal and in business communications for similar reasons. Here are some helpful guidelines for developing an effective social network policy and reputation.

- 1) Remember what you post has an endless lifespan despite your privacy settings or attempts at deletion. (A whisper in the ear can be heard for miles).
- 2) What is private should remain private (e.g., confidential information, private arguments, and your bedroom guests).
- 3) Create positive and interesting content.
- 4) Interactivity creates a positive reputation, and one should avoid negativity.
- 5) Understand your privacy settings, be wary of linking personal and professional profiles, and be suspicious of random friend requests.
- 6) Google yourself to find out what is being said in case someone were to ask.
- 7) Passwords and password hints are easily overlooked with all the polls and “questions” posed online.
- 8) When in doubt, leave it out.
- 9) More on [www.wpstudios.net](http://www.wpstudios.net)

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## Sarah’s Key Revisited

By Fred Mount

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As I approached having just 20 pages left to read of **Sarah's Key**, I found myself saving those few pages because I felt like I would be saying good bye to some dear friends who had become a part of my life, and I had become a part of theirs. This all started by my reading Steve Person's column in the June issue of the First Friday Breakfast Club Newsletter, reviewing this wonderful book.

It's a story about the terrible treatment of the French Jewish people in Paris, not-so-much by the Nazis, but rather, by the French police as they gathered them up for the Nazis and with no regard for their fellow countrymen. Sarah was a ten-year-old Jewish girl at the time who, along with her father and mother, was arrested on July 16, 1942, during the round up. To protect her three year old brother, Sarah locked him in a cupboard in the family's apartment, telling him that she would return later to let him out when it was safe. She took the cupboard key with her to the internment camp. Steve best sums this story up by saying, "Are some anniversary's best forgotten?" Should we do anything about them or not? Since this happened during my lifetime, I actually feel some guilt for all of this just because I was alive at the time. I sent an email to my niece in Alabama recommending this book for her to read, and she emailed back immediately; she had just finished the book. She had lent it to her neighbor, and they were going to discuss it. Also, she and her husband had recently returned from a trip to Germany, and she described for me the horrible feeling that overcame them as they toured the prison camps at Auschwitz and its cremation chambers. She, too, felt that sense of guilt even though they are much younger than I.

“Where are you my little Michel? My beautiful Michel. Where are you now? Would you remember me, Michel? Me, Sarah, your sister. The one who never came back. The one who left you in the cupboard. The one who thought you would be safe.” And one must ask on her behalf, “Would you -- did you -- forgive her?”

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*Who built the gas chambers and crematories, and what were they thinking?*

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*When you lose, don't lose the lesson.*

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# The Girl with the Dragon Tatoo

Review by  
Gary Kaufman

It may be a little hard to find because its Des Moines theatrical run will finish prior to this review's publication, but **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** is definitely a film worth seeing. It's a Swedish film with English subtitles; that fact does not diminish one iota the impact the film makes on the viewer. The narrative style reminds me of the film **Blow Up**, a 1966 film by Michelangelo Antonioni, in which a photographer, in blowing up some photos he has taken in a park, discovers that he has witnessed a murder and as he uncovers more and more, the artist himself is in danger.

In **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**, a financial journalist undertakes an assignment to investigate the disappearance and probable murder 40 years ago of a rich man's niece. The man is a member of the Vanger family, a rich Swedish family whose members all hate each other but are kept together because of a mega business that they share. The uncle suspects that the murderer could well be a member of his own family. Our heroine, Lisbeth, the bisexual girl with the dragon tattoo, is a professional computer hacker who lives in a society in which she is brutally assaulted with some degree of regularity, yet with her hot punk dress style and her "Don't mess with me, fellas!" attitude, she makes one of the more dynamic female heroines I have ever seen. The movie also includes one of the most despicable characters I have ever seen in a film—her guardian.

Lisbeth is informed by the Probate Department that her previous guardian died, and she has been assigned a new one. The new one takes control of all her money and then lets her know that if she is nice to him, he will certainly be nice to her. Or, at least that is what he says. He tells her that if she does not cooperate, he will make a negative report to the Probate Department, and she will be sent to a mental facility for the rest of her life. He then extracts a toll, first requiring her to perform oral sex, and then increasing his sadistic demands that build to a horribly detailed rape scene. Lisbeth eventually gets her revenge in another sadistic, horrific moment in the film, but because of what this person did to Lisbeth and to many other women under his control, I found myself cheering for her in her sadistic revenge.

Lisbeth eventually teams up with the journalist in the

investigation of the missing Vanger family member. As more and more is revealed, they discover that the members of the original Vanger family were three brothers, and one of the brothers had a son. Two of the brothers were Nazis during the war, and the son of one of those was a member of the Hitler Youth. It turns out that the missing person was just the tip of an enormous iceberg, and the children raised by Nazi parents can be quite brutal. The movie moves quickly, and the intensity of detail in this movie certainly makes it one not to miss -- if you're not too squeamish.

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*Best friend: Someone who will immediately clear your computer hard drive after you die.*

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*Ever wonder about those people who spend \$2 apiece on those little bottles of Evian water? Try spelling Evian backwards: NAÏVE. Coincidence or a comment on the customers?*

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*The best relationship is one in which your love for each other exceeds your need for each other.*

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*Judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it.*

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## BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the August 6 meeting no later than August 3. E-mail [JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com](mailto:JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com) or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Mark Vukovich, Executive Director of the Blank Park Zoo.



Thanks to Michael Thompson and Allen Vander Linden for hosting the July 24 party at their home in Urbandale.



Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome.



Consider making a tax-deductible gift to the FFBC Scholarship Fund.



# FFBC

*First Friday  
News & Views  
Des Moines, Iowa*

*AUGUST 2010*

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## My M. O. (Monthly Observations)

### What If He HAD Come Out?

**A Hundred or More Hidden Things: The Life and Films of Vincente Minnelli** by Mark Griffin is the latest biography of the renowned Hollywood director of such classic films as **Meet Me in St. Louis**, **An American in Paris**, **Tea and Sympathy**, **Some Came Running**, his Academy Award-winning **Gigi**, and **On a Clear Day You Can See Forever**. Griffin states in the book's introduction: "Was it possible that, just as people had looked 'too fast' at Minnelli's work, snap judgments had been made about him as a person? Had Vincente been stereotyped into a corner? Minnelli may have been effeminate, androgynous even, but did this automatically add up to gay?" The author seemed to be saying that Minnelli was as misunderstood as many of his films were. Yet when getting into the actual chapters, Griffin had no problem identifying Minnelli as a closeted gay man.

Mark Griffin's premise in this biography is that Vincente Minnelli's films were, indeed, a reflection of his own life, not just his work. Time and again the author makes a convincing argument that the films Minnelli directed succeeded (and sometimes failed) because he chose to portray the conflicted personalities of the characters. Griffin deftly points out that the roles the characters played in their so-called "real" lives were vastly different from what motivated them in private. Just so with Vincente Minnelli. Minnelli married four times, his first marriage to Judy Garland being his most famous. He was forty years old when he entered that one. Griffin makes it clear to the reader that these marriages were entered into to placate studio executives and the Hollywood gossip mill that permeated the 1940s and 50s.

When Minnelli was assigned in 1956 to direct the screen version of the successful Broadway play, **Tea and Sympathy**, the Production Code under the leadership of Joseph Breen let MGM know that the film could not, under any circumstances, be made because of its homosexual overtones. The adultery in the film version was just fine with the Breen crew, but "sexual perversion" was out of the question. After many meetings with the Code office and just as many revisions, the film was made with no mention of homosexuality. While it did make a profit, the film was a pale comparison to what Broadway audiences experienced when the play opened in 1953 without censorship of the homosexuality.

While directing all these Hollywood films for over thirty years, Minnelli kept his sexuality secret, just as so many of the characters in the stories he brought to the screen wrestled with in their double lives. I wonder what kind of work Minnelli could have accomplished if he had been allowed to live openly the life that he secretly led. Would he have made such important films? Did his closeted existence actually make his work all that much better? We will never know. Perhaps Lillian Gish said it best in 1983 at Minnelli's eightieth birthday party at the Museum of Modern Art in New York when she referred to Liza Minnelli as "Vincente's greatest production." I couldn't agree more.

- Steve Person

*If gay is a disease, let's call in gay to work: "Hello,  
Can't work today, still gay". —Robin Tyler*