

KINSEY BLAMED FOR ILLS OF SOCIETY

By Kevin Eigelbach

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When Bernie Kunkel lost his bid for the Republican nomination for the 69th House District seat last month, he said it was because his opponent had painted him as a liberal.

It was a paint job worthy of a Rembrandt.

One can't get much more conservative than the Walton resident. As the only paid trustee of the Bavarian Foundation Trust, Kunkel helps distribute thousands of dollars to charities and conservative groups. In recent years, the trust has made its biggest donations to First Principles, a Crestwood, Ky.-based organization dedicated to "restoring" social values and principles in America.

During 2004, the most recent year figures were available for, the Trust gave First Principles \$60,000. In 2003, it gave \$50,000 to First Principles and \$20,000 to another Crestwood-based organization called the Institute for Media Education.

The Institute and First Principles are both connected with Judith Reisman, whom Cincinnatians may remember as a witness for the prosecution in the Mapplethorpe photos trial. Reisman has made it her life's work to discredit Alfred Kinsey, whose reports on American sexuality published 50 years ago helped usher in the sexual revolution.

I was surprised to find that Reisman's not alone. A Web search yields any number of Web sites created by religious groups who want to discredit Kinsey. I wondered why, and I asked Kunkel. His reply was that people who want to liberalize laws on sexual behavior use Kinsey's research as ammunition.

One consequence is that we no longer outlaw sodomy, he said, which Kunkel obviously thinks was a mistake. "Kinsey acts like this is a natural or a normal thing, but it is not, really," he said, speaking of homosexual acts.

Kinsey, who experimented with homosexuality himself, took a dim view of people who argued that certain sexual behaviors were abnormal.

Based on his staff's thousands of interviews, Kinsey famously concluded that about 10 percent of American men would be actively homosexual for at least part of their lives and about 4 percent lifelong homosexuals. People have argued about that percentage ever since, with liberals saying it's about right and conservatives saying it's wildly exaggerated.

Religious conservatives lay at Kinsey's feet all the negative changes in American culture since the 1950s. They seem to want to return to an era when people had sex but didn't talk about it.

Kunkel confirmed this for me when I suggested one benefit of Kinsey's research is that it got people talking about sex. For example, children know about sexual abuse and can report it.

"The more they talk about it, the worse it gets," he replied.

People born before the sexual revolution, like my mother, hesitate to talk about sex. I remember how her voice would suddenly drop to a whisper when she had to use words like "penis." Of course, that only made me curious about all things sexual. What was this mysterious thing that everyone talked about in hushed tones, just as they did about God?

I resolved to try and demystify it for my kids. I found a child-appropriate but very frank book and read it out loud to them at the dining room table.

They laughed so hard they cried. I'll never forget how they covered their ears and jokingly cried, "Stop! No more," as I described the mechanics of intercourse.

Some adults would have had the same reaction, I suspect.

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