

On the subject of...

Queen for a Day

By Viki Eggers Mason



THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

The Aberdeen Advocate

Way back in the last century when I was a little girl, there was a TV game show called Queen for a Day. The contestants would each tell the heart-rending story of her particular hardship and then the “winner” (whomever the audience decided was the most sympathetic character) would be crowned Queen for a Day. As royalty, the woman would be treated to meals in fancy-schmancy restaurants and carted about in a limo. She would be given all manner of generous gifts, including new *electric* clothes dryers, food freezers, a year-long complimentary diaper service (in those days there were no Pampers – we put our babies in cloth diapers which we WASHED and re-used. Ewww!) There would be other extravagances like a lifetime supply of Kleenex tissues and Lifebuoy bath soap...you get the picture. Well, lately I’ve been thinking of my particular hardship and what wonderful wishes I’d grant myself if I were Queen for a Day.

My hardship is, of course, that I live in a lovely place run by wicked, ignorant men who play fast and loose with my money and give me what my Italian secretary, Addie, would have called “agita.” (Mind you, I don’t speak much Italian, but I got the impression that the word had something to do with my causing her to suffer with pain in the ankles and other anatomical parts.)

If I were Queen for a Day, I would make the decrees listed below which appear in no particular order.

- Aldermen’s wages are to

be cut by 50% retroactive to May 2004. (Not only do they get paid far too much, this might make it less tempting for the boys in the boardroom to spend so much time “supervising” other city employees and/or meddling in business which should not concern them like who pays which power bill and why a woman who threatens the Program Director’s life at a football game should NOT be banned from City programs and property for time and all eternity.)

- All city policy will henceforth be made by aldermen in OPEN MEETINGS in accordance with the law.
- Once policy is settled upon by the aldermen (that’s one of two things I think they are legitimately charged to do, the other being planning for the future), the policy will be given to the Mayor whose duty it shall ever be to see that the policy is implemented.
- Department heads shall be directly accountable to the Mayor. Should Aldermen receive complaints or have concerns about department activity, such complaints/concerns are to be discussed with the Mayor, as it is his legitimate duty (not the aldermen’s) to supervise all city employees.
- The flow-chart on page



three of this publication shall henceforth be the flow-chart of record.

- Replace all appointed members of the School Board.
- Replace all appointed members of the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- Reeducate all members of the Housing Authority Board.
- Retrain the Executive Director of the Aberdeen Housing Authority in order that she might better understand her duties and her responsibilities.
- Repeal the stupid smoking ban. (I think its bad policy for any governmental body to interfere with sacrosanct property rights. It’s also just bad business to interfere with the free market’s uncanny ability to stabilize itself. The free market is like a cat – it will always land on its feet if you leave it alone.)
- Replace Judge Adrian Haynes with somebody who has actually attended law school and has some small concept of constitutional rights.
- Repeal the stupid Pit-Bull ordinance. (It may have been a good idea in the beginning, but it is NOT enforced and only serves the purpose of irritating me when I see kids walking these potentially dangerous dogs without muzzles and/or the gear as required in the statute.)
- Require each dog and cat

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Queen for a Day

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in Aberdeen to be registered, tagged and vaccinated under penalty of law.

- Owners of each dog and every feline registered in Aberdeen must provide proof of their animal's spay/neuter unless a special "breeders license" is issued by the City.
- All animals at large are to be picked up by Animal Control and kept until such time as they are claimed by the owner, a fine paid and spay/neuter verified. Following a brief period to allow for owners to reclaim their pet, the animal will come into custody of the Friends of the Aberdeen Animal Shelter and be eligible for adoption.
- Pet owners who fail to feed and care properly for their pets will be neutered and I shall happily do the little procedure myself with my trusty pinking shears.
- Repeal the stupid "you can't work on a car on your own property" ordinance. (See property rights comments above.)
- Collect from Judge Haynes the taxpayer money she used when she used city equipment and other resources including labor to prepare campaign literature. Then allow me to drop kick her behind right out the doors of City Hall.
- Bestow upon all aldermen the status of "lowly citizen" in order that they may more easily understand that just because they are aldermen does not mean they are above the law or entitled to bend and stretch the laws of the land to suit their questionable motives.
- Cause aldermen who approved and ordered for themselves shirts bearing their names to repay the city treasury the cost of said shirts plus interest. (Who said we had to dress them?)
- Cause each alderman and every mayor of Aberdeen who allowed Willie A. Cook to serve for the past term to repay 1/6 of the total salary

he has been paid while seated illegally. This sum should include insurance premiums, mileage and meal reimbursements, as well as all incidental moneys collected by or for Cook during the current term.

- Cause all citizens of Ward 1 to know and understand BEFORE THE ELECTION that their precious Alonzo Sykes may have recently purchased another house in a different ward and is planning a move out of the Ward where he currently resides. They tell me he hopes nobody will notice. Trust me. I will.
- Cause each alderman to repay 1/5 of all insurance deductibles paid from the city treasury in association with any and all lawsuits brought against the City of Aberdeen and/or settled since May of 2004. (As I have it figured, each of them will owe in excess of \$5,000.
- Cause Cloyd Garth to repay any and all moneys "donated" by the City of Aberdeen to the 2006 Save Our Children Day debacle. Because of recent admissions made to me by Garth himself, this figure should also include the cost for copies he made at the Parks and Rec facility. (According to the original application for funding, the money "donated" to SOC by the city was to be used for printing and mailing of brochures. If the copies were then made on city paper using city equipment it might be called double dipping. Tsk. Tsk.)
- Following a full and independent audit of *all City finances* including those of the Aberdeen Public Utilities Department, cause each alderman and every mayor of the city to repay the legitimate electricity bills "written off" or otherwise ignored by city officials in total disregard of their fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers of Aberdeen—plus interest, of course.
- There shall be on this, my day as the Queen of 'Deen, a 24-hour amnesty granted to any city employee who will confess his/her theft of City property or resources provided



Becka's Burger Shack

North Hwy. 45

369-4275

Monday thru Wednesday 5 am – 2 pm

Thursday and Friday 5 am – 9 pm

that the employee be made to wear for a period of not less than six months a uniform upon which the words I'M A THIEF is printed. (The required term of uniform wear may be greatly influenced by the employee's willingness to co-operate with the authorities and, shall we say, "drop a dime" on other light-fingered Lewies or Louises currently in the city's employ.

I think this is much more fun than a year-long complimentary diaper service. (As the old saying goes, diapers and politicians need to be changed regularly and for the same reasons.) But as long as I'm in charge, I believe I'll request just one more little detail—one that will give me great joy!

- Aldermen shall wear shirts made at the expense of each alderman embroidered with these words "Viki Mason is a wonderful asset to Aberdeen and I shall be eternally grateful for her kind and generous (though usually unsuccessful) attempts to lead me away from my wicked ways. Thank you, Viki. I want to be just like you, if I ever grow up."

Your Temporary Municipal Employees

Cecil Belle, Mayor

369-4165

Ward 1 Alderman Alonzo Sykes

369-7705

Ward 2 Alderman Cloyd Garth

369-5734

Ward 3 (Seat Vacant)

Ward 4 Alderman Brunson Odom

369-2246

Ward 5 Alderman Jim Buffington

369-4985

Of dachshunds, daffodils and Caesar Milan

By Viki Eggers Mason

In order for an organization to function properly it must have in place a chain of command. This is just as true of your church as it is in the United States military. There are chiefs and there are Indians. When the chiefs and the Indians don't know their proper roles, things begin to fall apart.

The flow chart below indicates how city government ought to flow. You see that the voters of Aberdeen are the ultimate bosses. We are where the buck eventually stops. This is demonstrated by the way the dysfunctionality of the current administration can be seen in our declining property values, higher taxes and our poorly performing city services. These things, along with the shameful condition of our school system and the horrors of our public housing, go a long way toward telling us we're in the tank.

So, in a perfect world the voters call the shots. They elect a board of aldermen, a mayor and a police chief. The aldermen have the job of making policy and law. The Chief of Police and the Mayor are responsible for implementing the policies and statutes.

In our world, which is far from perfect, the flow-chart looks different. The voters only appear in the picture once every four years at election time. The aldermen have assumed the top position and

have conveniently re-arranged all the "who reports to whom" lines on the chart to "everybody reports directly to us" leading to pure chaos in the ranks and the anarchy which is brewing in our streets.

Instead of doing the jobs we gave them to do—things like planning and providing for our future economic health—our aldermen have kept themselves busy minding everybody else's business. The result is, the duly elected Chief of Police no longer leads the force, the Aldermen do. (Or don't, depending upon your perspective.) The mayor cannot properly control the activities of any department because he is walled up at City Hall while the aldermen are in the streets calling the shots.

It all reminds me of my old dog Vinnie. We were a three-dog family. We had Vinnie, an aging Albertson's Spaniel—the sort of dog you get at the door to the grocery store where dirty-faced little boys offer you a puppy which you take home because you simply cannot resist. Our other two dogs were dachshunds. They were called R. Oscur Mires and R. Axel Yippensnapper.

Dachshunds, who are generally worthless wastes of dog flesh, suffer from the canine version of "little man syndrome." They imagine themselves to be Great Danes and will take on any challenge, never recognizing for a moment how truly insignificant they really are.

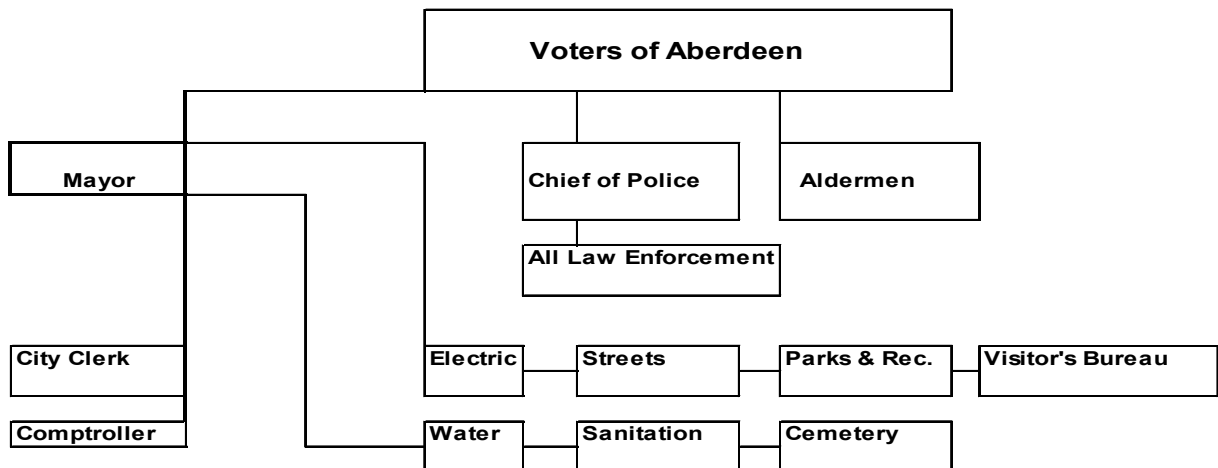
In the spring of the year, it would frequently happen at my Montana home that bison from next-door-neighbor Yellowstone Park would

wander onto my place in search of tender daffodil shoots. They would also use the opportunity to scratch their fannies on my perimeter fence causing it to list dangerously.

When the buffalo appeared, the little guys would be outraged. "Lemme at 'em! I'll tear 'em apart," they would yap at the door. Then Vinnie, being a joiner, would say in his slow monotone, "I will chase the big, bad buffalo. I will help you little fellers." At which point they would all barrel through the doggie door in hot pursuit of the shaggy beasts.

Now the little dogs were fleet of foot and more than a little cagey, while Vinnie was much slower and something of a dolt. The wieners would run figure-eights around the bison's hooves while, quite naturally, Vinnie would manage to get himself kicked across the length of the property. He would limp around for days. For weeks thereafter, the little guys would strut about shamelessly congratulating themselves on the fact that the interlopers had been swiftly driven from the yard by their fearlessness. (Or because their backsides had stopped itching and the daffodil's were gone.)

The moral of this story is this: If you insist upon keeping annoying pets (or inept people) on your payroll, it's best to keep them where they can't harm themselves or others. Please consider the flow chart below as your own short leash for use in exercising your pack of civic dogs.





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112 East Washington Street
Aberdeen, Mississippi 39730
Phone: 662-369-0449

Email: AberdeenAdvocate@bellsouth.net
viki@vikimason.com

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The Aberdeen Advocate is committed to the goal of improving the quality of life in Aberdeen and Monroe County by identifying and exposing waste and mismanagement in Government. To these ends we humbly offer our observations and opinions.

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“ Endeavors succeed or fail because of the people involved. Only by attracting [or electing] the best people will you accomplish great deeds.”

...Colin Powell