

On the subject of...

An open letter to Billy Crews From Contributing Editor Don Rowe



Dear Billy:

Early last summer, I sent you a packet of tear sheets from both the Aberdeen Examiner and the Amory Advertiser with the express purpose of pointing out just how much garbage was published each week in your newspapers here in Monroe County. If I remember correctly, I provided ample proof that both papers featured hundreds of errors, misspelled words, typos and incomplete sentences each and every week they were published.

In response in early July, I received a handwritten note

from you in which you admitted your organization had “numerous improvement opportunities” at the Monroe County newspapers. (I guess that’s CEO-speak for, “Good grief, those papers are totally screwed up, but we’re going to plead no contest and that way we won’t have to publicly plead guilty as charged.) But at least you did admit there were problems. Too, you mentioned the fact that Charlotte Wolfe, your choice to head up the weekly newspaper division, had also reviewed my feedback and was working with others to

address specific errors and weaknesses.

In addition, you also chided me because, in your estimation, “the tone of my comments was not constructive” and, upon reflecting on your statement, I came to realize that maybe you were correct – possibly “the tone of my comments was not constructive” after all because, I’ll admit, I am known as somewhat of a smart---

Too, I reached that conclusion because I surmised you

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THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

The Aberdeen Advocate

The Real McCoy...

A special Black History Month contribution

By George N. Morrow

He was born in Colchester, Ontario, Canada ,on May 2, 1844. Before he was born, his parents, George and Emillia, who were former slaves from Kentucky, escaped to Canada by way of the Underground Railroad. George joined the Canadian Army, and after his discharge, the family moved to a 160-acre homestead which was partial payment for his service in the military.

From an early age, he had a strong interest in mechanics. He loved taking things apart and putting them together again. His parents saved enough money to send their young son to Edinboro, Scotland, where he studied mechanical engineering. After he became a master mechanic and engineer, he returned to the United States just after the Civil War and moved to Ypsilanti, Michigan.

He could not find work as an engineer, but he was given the opportunity to take a position

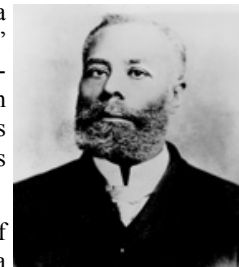
as fireman-oilman with the Michigan Central Railroad. As fireman, his job was to shovel coal into the fire box where the heat caused the steam to power the engine. As oilman, he was charged with keeping the moving parts of the train lubricated. About every 10-20 miles, the train would be brought to a halt in order to lubricate the axels and wheel bearings.

In order to prevent the frequent lubrication stops, the young man built what he called a “lubricating cup” which would automatically drop oil on the moving parts while the train was still in motion.

In the latter part of 1872, he received a patent for his invention. Other inventors tried to build similar cups but they were not successful. The customers would only be satisfied with the real thing.

Earlier, in 1868, he married Ann Elizabeth Stewart but lost her to death just four years later. He later married Mary Delaney and they were married until her death 50 years later.

Over the year, his lubricating cup invention was improved and utilized on all types of machinery. He later invented the portable ironing board for his wife and the yard sprinkler for himself. In all, this man held 57 patents.



In 1922, he and his wife were involved in an automobile accident and both were severely injured. After a time, she died from her injuries. He lingered on until 1929.

The name of this prolific inventor was Elijah McCoy.

Now, that’s what you call THE REAL McCOY!

Issues and Answers

Editor's note: Immediately prior to the last municipal election, our board of aldermen voted a \$200 per month raise for the board making their monthly salary \$800 which is far higher than surrounding communities.

This week's question: According to the city accountant, our corporate payroll is excessive. If you are elected, how will you go about bringing the payroll budget into line? Will you support a cut in Aldermen's wages?

John Allen—Candidate for alderman, Ward 5:

Alderman's pay should be in line with other cities, I would be willing to make appropriate adjustments. However, this will result in a relatively small reduction compared to the overall budget. By looking at all of the city departmental expenditures, we may find even more significant improvements. There is a need to review all outstanding balances on taxes, water and electric bills. I believe in charity, but I also believe that every able-bodied citizen should bear his/her own cost whenever possible. That burden should not rest on those who do pay their taxes or bills on time.

Ed Rayfield—Candidate for alderman, Ward 2:

If I am elected as alderman, I would work with the other aldermen to get the city payroll in line with the budget. This can be accomplished by reviewing each

department's budget to ensure they are in line. If any of the departments are out of line, then I would have the department heads justify the overages. If it can be justified, then we must bring the budgets in line with departments. I am convinced that if we promote what we already have in place, such as our waterway, ball fields, the Pilgrimage and tourism, this would allow us to bring new dollars to our city while we seek other industry.

We also need to keep our dollars at home. If there is something we need to buy for the city, we must buy it from our own businesses in Aberdeen. If they don't have it, they can order it. We must set examples for our citizens.

As for the aldermen's pay, we must all do our part to get the payroll in line with the budgets. If that means the aldermen's pay must be cut, then let's cut the pay. For I believe that we are elected to service the good people of Aberdeen, not seek election just for the money, trips or anything else we can get out of the people who put their trust in us. We should ask ourselves, "WHAT CAN WE DO FOR ABERDEEN, NOT WHAT ABERDEEN CAN DO FOR US."

Robert Duvall—Candidate for alderman, Ward 1:

On of the biggest problems Aberdeen faces is that the positive image of our community has been lost.

In order to begin to clear this up, we need a board of aldermen who stand together to govern this town in a way that will, first of all, regain the trust of the people who live here. We also need to regain the trust of people who live outside our town.

By having a leadership group which is available to the people—who serve the people and the community and not some personal agenda—we can get back on track toward economic development and responsive planning.

We should propose a plan to the police department to start a neighborhood watch program in every ward. This would help the citizens and the merchants feel safe—and we need our businesses and our citizens to feel safe in their town.

The board of aldermen must also look at all departments and work with all department heads to see how they can cut back and how they can maintain this cut back by having accountability. And, yes. I will support a cut in aldermen's wages.

It is time for accountability in government. It's time for change.



Issues and Answers

In our continuing effort to assist the voters of Aberdeen in their quest for a new and more effective city government, we offer to all candidates (who are not incumbents) space in this publication to address questions and offer solutions to Aberdeen's problems. Candidates, if you wish to play along, please provide a typewritten answer of 150 words or fewer to the following questions:

The symptoms of the disease which is killing Aberdeen include employee theft, low morale, ineffective city services, a shrinking tax base, plummeting property values and escalating taxes. What is our ailment and, more importantly, what is your prescription?

Deliver your answers to 112 East Washington Street, Aberdeen,

or email them to - advocate@vikimason.com -

Deadline 12 Noon, Wednesday, February 13, 2008

An open letter to Billy Crews

Continued from page 1

probably had no idea how bad things really were. Charlotte Wolfe did have that information, however, because I sent her numerous packets over the past several years and, knowing her like I do, I'm fairly certain she never passed any of those packets on to you. (Of course, had I been in her shoes, I would have been embarrassed to share that information with my boss, too.)

For that and for your being disappointed in me, I felt a need to extend an apology. But before I did so, I wanted to see if you would indeed keep your promise, so I decided not to send you any more corrected tear sheets in order to see if anything would change and to give you a chance to clean this mess up.

But, alas, your vow that Wolfe "was working with others to address specific errors and weaknesses" was just another empty promise – much like those you and Wolfe made on numerous occasions during my last stint at the papers. (As proof, a generous sampling of tear sheets from July 2007 through January 2008 featuring typos, misspelled words, incomplete sentences, botched ads and other foolish mistakes was presented to interim general manager Charlie Langford several weeks ago.)

So, my question to you now is: Who within the Journal Publishing Company is responsible for assuring the people of Monroe County they have newspapers which they can be proud of? If, as CEO, it is your responsibility, then shame on you, for you have failed miserably. If, as you said, that responsibility was given to Charlotte Wolfe, then she has once again failed to do her job and, because she still retains the same position over the weeklies, that failure comes right back on you.

One more question: As evidenced by the tear sheets presented to Charlie Langford, it's very obvious no one proofs either paper *before* it is published each week. So, does anyone critique the paper *after* it is published to ascertain how many mistakes made it into print? If you haven't delegated that particular task to anyone, may I suggest that duty should go to Wolfe and then maybe you would be assured that she's put in at least two or three hours of work per week. (It takes me approximately two hours to proof both papers each week.)

The bottom line here, of course, is that it's perfectly obvious that no one at the Journal Publishing Company gives a rat's rear-end about the papers here in Monroe County – other than the bottom line (translated, that means putting your product on the market the cheapest way possible). Your organization has reduced the workforce to the point that people can't even visit the Examiner office during normal business hours to place an ad or bring an article without running into a locked door. Too, Aberdeen has no one in authority based here in Aberdeen and only one writer on staff.

Worse yet, time after time you have hired (and promoted) so-called "writers" who consistently fail to proof their work; find ways to insult winless football teams; don't know the difference between "to/two/too," "for/four/fore," "route/rout" and "their/ there/ they're" (not to mention other similar gaffes); can't keep facts straight; and are – for the most part – lazy and sloppy, if not downright stupid. Thank goodness, greener pastures lured one of the aforementioned culprits away recently, but it's an even bet he left on his own and wasn't fired as he should have been had he been working at the Daily Urinal. (Knowing your organization's attention to detail, I'd be willing to wager he left with a glowing recommendation).

Now, here we are six months later and instead of keeping your promise to "address specific errors and weaknesses" in order to improve the content of both papers, you have taken a completely different tact and finally admitted your organization is toying with the idea of merging the Examiner and the Advertiser into a so-called Monroe County Journal.

So, after several weeks of rumors, I (and many others in the

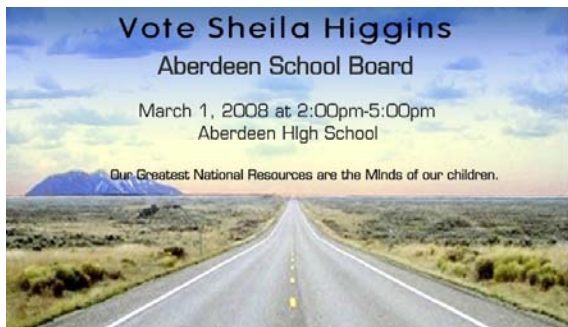
community) find it highly amusing that you and Chief Operating Officer Clay Foster have published a full-page survey to acquire feedback seeking information as to what the readers of Monroe County want out of their newspapers.

According to your survey in the January 30th edition, you claim that "at the request of local advertisers and civic leaders," merger discussions have been ongoing for several years and that the "genesis of this concept is mission driven – to build community by providing our readers a unified newspaper with more and improved content and our advertisers expanded coverage for their businesses."

Now I'm not privy to discussions you claim to have had with advertisers and civic leaders throughout the county, but I do know there aren't many so-called civic leaders here in Aberdeen – past and present – who would be in favor of a proposal which would do away with the town's newspaper which has been in circulation for over 100 years. In fact, I know one leader who made it quite clear several years ago the moment the Examiner closed its doors, there would be a replacement paper to take its place.

Too, just like the Aberdeen Examiner (also known locally as the Aberdeen Excuse), which rarely publishes any hard news as to what's really happening in Aberdeen and instead, features predominantly "fluff" pieces each week, your feedback survey is a lame attempt to make the readers of Monroe County think your organization actually has the best interest of Monroe County at heart. It's also quite laughable that you will determine "what best aligns with *our* (translation: your) community building mission and what best serves our readers and advertisers."

Next week: A closer look at the survey questions and what the people of Aberdeen expect from their newspaper.



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The Aberdeen Advocate

THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

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"The only bulwark of continuing liberty is a government strong enough to protect the interests of the people, and a people strong enough and well enough informed to maintain its sovereign control over the government."

...Franklin Delano Roosevelt

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