

On the subject of...

Helena hand basket

By Viki Eggers Mason



My mother is something of an inventor. She is forever fabricating new words—many of which have found their way into my vocabulary over the years. We still speak of flutterbyes, snattlerakes and cytermokels. Orchards, to her, were fruit forests and things (particularly the things in her fishing creel) often got intertwined. I cannot think of a better word to describe something which is both entwined and hopelessly entangled.

Mother frequently referred to people and situations which were beyond hope as going to “Helena hand basket.” I was never certain what the Capital of our great state had to do with it, but I trusted Mother’s descriptive way with language.

This week’s national news has been full of colorful words. My television has been overflowing with fire and brimstone! Presidential candidate and Illinois Senator Barack Obama has been under fire from the media because of the rhetoric used by his former minister Reverend Jeremiah Wright, whose message seems to be one of separatism and hatred against white Americans.

It is both surprising and sad for me to learn that the house of God is often used for secular and political teachings! Call me Pollyanna, but I’ve always been under the impression we go to God’s house to pray and to wor-

ship, not to talk politics or discuss worldly matters.

Of course, as often happens in my life, I learned this lesson right here in Aberdeen on a very personal level just last week.

As most of you know, I spend much of my time involved in activities designed to bring Aberdeen back from the brink of bankruptcy. It is my personal mission to change local government and to inspire voters here to demand integrity and honesty in their leaders. It seems that some leaders find that offensive.

I was stunned last week to

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THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

The Aberdeen Advocate

Elkin Candidates’ Forum a resounding success

The organizers of last Monday’s Candidates’ Forum are to be commended for organizing and producing an exciting event for both candidates and voters alike.

Approximately 150 Aberdeen voters attended the forum and brought a host of interesting questions to the roster of candidates who are currently standing for municipal election.

The candidates, with a few notable exceptions, seemed genuinely pleased to be afforded the opportunity to answer citizen questions in what turned out to be a civil, if occasionally edgy event.

The questions ranged from fiscal issues to questions regarding the problem of young men wearing their trousers around their knees. To which question Police Chief candidate Quinell Shumpert casually replied, “When their pants are sagging, it’s easier for us

to catch them. They can’t run very fast like that.”

This editor thinks the best answer of the evening was given by Dwight Stevens, candidate for Ward 3’s alderman seat. When he was asked if he would vote to return Judge Adrian Haynes to the bench he answered in one, loud and very clear word. “NO!” he told the audience.

While all municipal candidates were invited, some failed to either make an appearance or to otherwise decline to participate. One candidate, Robert Devaull, Ward 1, was caught up in a medical emergency and called from Jackson earlier in the day to offer his apologies.

Other absentee candidates who did not call to make their excuses were: Alonzo Sykes, incumbent alderman from Ward 1; Cloyd Garth, incumbent alderman from Ward 2; Don Dahlem, candidate, Ward 1; Randy Nichols, candidate,

Ward 4; and Dr. Henry Calvert, candidate, Ward 5.

Event organizers, John Finn and Bud Mason, wish to thank the candidates for their enthusiastic interest. They also wish to acknowledge the following people whose help was critical to making the event a huge success: John McArthur, Margaret Alexander, Ed Buchanan, Grover Jackson, Neil Monaghan, George Morrow, Don Rowe, Bob Seymour and audience facilitator Linda Underwood.

The committee also wants to recognize those individuals who donated money to the cause, helping with the cost of facility rental, lighting equipment and printing.

The Aberdeen Advocate thanks everyone who participated but, most particularly, the audience who demonstrated a healthy interest in the future of Aberdeen. Now get out there and vote!

Issues and Answers

(Otherwise known as the Ed Rayfield Show)

This week's question: **We know that there are countless numbers of funding opportunities available to assist small, rural communities like our own in revitalizing our economy. If you are elected, what steps will you take toward making those opportunities manifest in Aberdeen?**

Ed Rayfield—Candidate for Alderman, Ward 2:

The Federal government has billions of dollars in government grants available to qualified applicants. There are government loans and business services that go unclaimed every year. The reason these dollars are idle is because many are unaware of their existence or how to

go through the application process. Your tax dollars are set aside for government grants, government loans and business start-ups. Ninety-five percent (95%) of government grants remain idle when they could be helping a business or someone in need. **THIS IS A TERRIBLE WASTE TO OUR NATION'S ECONOMY!**

For example, rural and small schools educate nearly 40 percent of America's students, they receive less than 25 percent of the total federal, state and local spending on public education. Rural and small schools tend to be located in areas with low property values and few industries, making it more difficult to raise additional revenues. In addition, because federal grants are awarded based upon student population, rural districts often receive insufficient grant funds to accom-

plish the stated purpose. Rural school districts also often lack the expertise and capacity their urban and suburban counterparts in formulating grant applications for competitive federal grants.

If I am elected as alderman I will work with the school board and other departments, including the Police Department and Parks and Recreation, as well as the mayor and the other aldermen to secure any grants that are available for us. We (aldermen) can also help new business to get started with the grants that are available—this could serve to help fill the empty commercial business buildings around Aberdeen and put people to work.



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 current administration has been plagued by a string of lawsuits arising from the Board of Aldermen's failure to follow proper hiring and /or termination procedures. In your administration, how will you approach the daunting task of hiring and keeping good personnel?

Deliver your answers to 112 East Washington Street, Aberdeen, or email them to - advocate@vikimason.com

Deadline 12 Noon, Wednesday, March 26, 2008

If the world is run by those who show up, where were these guys last Monday?

<u>Mayor</u>	<u>Ward 1</u>	<u>Ward 3</u>	<u>Ward 5</u>
• Cecil Belle	• Alonzo Sykes (Absent)	• Roger Cooperwood	• John Allen
• Jim Ballard	• Robert Devaull (Excused)	• David Ewing	• Henry Calvert (Absent)
• Steve Lance	• Donald Dahlem (Absent)	• Jarrod Jones	• Tony Rogers
		• Dwight Stevens	
<u>Chief of Police</u>	<u>Ward 2</u>	<u>Ward 4</u>	
• Walter Sykes	• Cloyd Garth Sr. (Absent)	• Brunson Odom	
• Henry Randle	• Ed Rayfield	• Randy Nichols (Absent)	
• Quinell Shumpert	• Wilchie Clay	• Bug Jackson	
	• Curly Payne (Absent)		

Helena hand basket

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learn that the very Reverend Alderman Alonzo Sykes announced from his pulpit (in both his services that particular Sunday) that your humble correspondent has been relegated to the depths of Hell. (My horror lasted only long enough to remember the Lamb's Book of Life, where my name has been written for a very long time.)

My initial alarm gave way to amusement. Who does this silly man think he is? Do his parishioners actually think that Sykes, by his words alone, can undo what God Himself has done? Naturally, my amusement settled into sorrow shortly.

Like Reverend Jeremiah Wright, Sykes' church enjoys a tax-free world. In this country we believe that feeding the souls of Americans is important work which should not be interrupted or hindered by little matters of money. We (the people) allow churches to keep their coins in order that they may better tend to the needs of the flock. We don't expect those coins will be used to attack or undermine the freedoms of others.

It is interesting to me that the ACLU has prevailed in countless court cases resulting in court orders to remove religious symbols from public buildings, but nobody seems to care when some preachers, like firebrand Jeremiah Wright, or, new to the media spotlight this week, Illinois Senator Reverend James Meeks, blithely ignore the order of the Highest Court to (and I paraphrase), "Leave politics to the politicians—your job is to bring your flock out from among them."

Unfortunately, preachers like these sully the pulpit and track the mud of humanism into God's House. I guess Reverend Sykes is one of these not-so-reverent reverends. Pity, I would think his flock deserves better.

Mixing politics with religion is a dangerous business. It's a bit like putting nitroglycerine in a paint shaker. For one thing, politics is a dirty business. It always has been and ever will be. In my opinion, any man of God who wanders into the muddy waters of government is apt to come out unclean. (We have excellent examples of this phenomenon seated around our boardroom table.)

Over the past four years I have watched these men make business decisions for our city based solely upon their religious convictions. They are opposed to drinking, therefore they seek to impose every limit they can upon this otherwise legal activity. They are opposed to smoking so they gleefully snatch away the constitutionally guaranteed property rights of business owners in their attempts to legislate morality. They confuse charity (a fundamental religious obligation) with the business of running a successful electric department (a fundamental obligation for aldermen). The losses impacting the public as a result of this "charity" are astounding.

While I appreciate the hopes and aspirations of our ministerial candidates for municipal office, I'm not convinced that they will be able to put their higher calling aside and devote themselves, however briefly, to the worldly decision-making demanded by political office. Worse, they might be tempted, as Sykes obviously is, to mix up his mission and end up leading the flock *and* the city astray.

We get letters. Imagine that!

Every good-weathered Sunday, my husband and I have been out-of-doors cleaning up Aberdeen. We are proud to be residents of this city, but are ashamed of the trash dump appearance it gives to others. We pick up from 2 to 10 bags of trash in two hours and quietly leave those bags to be picked up.

Well, no more!! Today we left our trash bags in front of City Hall. The purpose of this is to publicize the AMOUNT of littering that occurs in our fair city. Of course, there must be an ordinance for littering, but is it enforced? It appears not.

We encourage others to pick up trash, to bag it, and to leave it so our Mayor and Aldermen realize the extent of the littering. Then SEND A LETTER to the local newspaper letting it know just how many bags of trash are picked up by the citizens. Perhaps the local paper will do its part by publishing the total number of bags picked up each week.



The purpose of this is not to pat ourselves on the back and to tell ourselves that we are such good citizens or that others are not. No. The purpose of this effort is to convince others to care by providing a visible sign that:

- The ordinance against littering needs to be enforced.
- Our children need to learn to become good citizens by example.

Help out! Become an example for your children! Leave all bagged trash that you pick up from around Aberdeen in front of City Hall. Show your support of Aberdeen in this small way and become a...

PROUD, CONCERNED CITIZEN

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your part in putting on the best event I have experienced since I came here eight years ago. The forum was professional, John Finn was very effective in his role as moderator and Ms. Underwood's voice itself was elegant.

The questions were insightful, the candidate's statements were informative and I have come to a singular conclusion: That Aberdeen would be well served to save the cost of alderman elec-

tions by appointing the 10 candidates who appeared, putting them in the boardroom and saying, "Fix this!" I believe they could and would do so.

Aberdeen has had grand days and, perhaps, the best are yet to come.

LuEllen Childress

Dear Ms LuEllen

"The Advocate" in me would love to take credit for this event, but I cannot. The organizers and I decided early on that my personal involvement might be counter-productive. I was very proud they asked me to be the facilitator, but felt I could not risk compromising the event with my sometimes polarizing presence. The credit goes to the volunteers, the audience and the candidates themselves. Thank you, though, for your very kind critique. VEM



Becka's Burger Shack

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369-4275

Monday through Friday

10:00 a.m.— 8:00 p.m.





The Aberdeen Advocate

THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

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BOY SCOUT TROOP 39

22ND Annual All-You-Can-Eat

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SATURDAY, April 5, 2008

First United Methodist Church, Downtown Aberdeen

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