



The Aberdeen Advocate

On the subject of...

Every litter bit hurts

By Viki Eggers Mason

One recent Saturday, I attended a lovely breakfast sponsored by the Monroe County Beautification Committee. When I was invited by committee chair Gladys Jackson, my handsome husband was very excited. He thought I could use a little beautification and was hoping, I think, for a complete makeover. Alas, I came home looking weary, old and altogether unchanged in my physical appearance. Since then, he has managed to hide his disappointment from most folks. He has, however, shown a glimmering of resentment toward Miss Gladys since she has obviously, in his eyes at least, become an Indian-giver.

The Monroe County Beautification Committee works to eliminate (non-human) eye-sores from our communities and to make our little corner of the world a little more, well, beautiful. They sponsor city and county clean-up projects and are singularly opposed to the nasty habit some folks have of tossing their junk just wher-

ever they happen to be when they deem said junk to be no longer useful. In my day, we called it littering and, I must confess, that in all my travels I've never seen a litter level anywhere close to what we have here in Mississippi.

The information I gathered at that Saturday breakfast made me think of the graffiti you sometimes find on restroom walls. And, as you may have come to expect from my tiny, little mind, it also reminded me of politics. (It seems that politics, politicians and toilets have come to be inextricably linked in my mind.)

On the subject of graffiti, I come well versed. You see, I learned in my restaurant days that if some fool writes on a public restroom wall it makes it all the more inviting for the next idiot to add his/her commentary. When I was charged with mentoring Montana Visitor Center staffs, I made certain every center had a handy can of spray paint to expunge

the musings of piddle-parlor poets.

And, so it goes with litter. I read somewhere that managers at McDonald's restaurants around the globe are trained to "police" not only their own parking lots, but also adjoining properties. People associate tidiness with success somehow, and such clean-ups positively affect the bottom line.

In the business of communities, the same is true. Visitors, prospective businesses, retirees in search of a happily-ever after-place pay attention to little things like apparent disorder. Dirty streets, like dirty politicians, send up big, red flags to the casual observer. Sadly, once you've watched the dirt and disarray accumulate over time, you sometimes cease to see the problem.

Of course, that brings us to tomorrow's runoff election.

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Booster flap heads to court

By Contributing Editor Don Rowe

Eighty-four dollars, the approximate cost of an Aberdeen High School letter jacket, is at the center of a nasty dustup between Ulaine Williams and the Aberdeen High School Booster Club.

"It's not about a measly \$84," said Williams, the mother of AHS junior Curtice Williams. "It's the principle of the thing. It's not fair that my child was denied what was rightfully hers and this thing won't be over until I get my money and she gets her letter jacket. If the Booster Club had gone by the rules and regula-

tions in place for the past eight years or so, my daughter would have the letter jacket she deserves and we wouldn't be having this conversation."

After Curtice was denied the jacket at a specially-called Booster Club meeting several weeks ago, Mrs. Williams hired a lawyer and, barring an out-of-court settlement of some sort, the case will apparently be decided by a judge.

According to Mrs. Williams, the root cause of the problem started back in January when she approached Booster Club

president Terry Morgan concerning the purchase of jackets for a Park & Rec 9-10 year-old Pee-Wee football team which had won the state championship in its age division.

"I asked Terry if he could tell me how some of us parents could get letter jackets like the ones at the high school," said Mrs. Williams. "He told me that children that young didn't need a jacket because then they wouldn't have anything to look forward to when they get in high

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Not to put too fine a point on it, I'm totally heartsick over the low voter turnout at the primary earlier this month. Because so many of you failed to go to the polls that Tuesday, we seem to be facing another term with Alonzo Sykes taking up Ward 1's alderman seat. Now tomorrow, if you're just as negligent, we will probably be looking at another four years of Cloyd Garth's nincompooery.

Of course, we can hope that these two will be hauled off to jail for the various and sundry crimes they have *allegedly* (our lawyers think we ought to slide that word in here since neither of them have yet been convicted in a court of law) committed against the people of Aberdeen, but as my grandmother used to advise me, "Hope in one hand and spit in the other. See which hand gets full faster."

I have attempted over the past few years to remind you how important your duty to your community is. I've attempted to help you understand that you have a duty to be part of what I can the "IN Crowd." The "IN Crowd" includes those individuals who are INformed, INvolved and IN touch with the needs of the community. I've urged you to attend meetings and let your concerns be heard. I've encouraged you to be part of the starting line-up of this full contact sport called government, but it seems I have failed in that effort.

Of course it might be said that the two wards in which the good guys were dealt such crushing blows might be inhabited by the Aberdeenians who are least likely to read or be motivated by *The Advocate*. Yeah. I could actually say that except for the sad fact that I know who voted in Ward 2 in the primary and I know who did not. There just isn't any excuse for it. The truth is, we have a something kin to a litter problem.



It starts with just a little neglect—like voting in the primary election but then not bothering to show up for the runoff. Then, when you discover that the world continues to turn even when you don't cast a ballot in a runoff, you begin to slide downhill. Eventually you end up in the place where going to the polls is just a nuisance—like bending over to pick up a candy wrapper off the sidewalk and depositing it in a refuse receptacle.

Pretty soon your world begins to look like the parking lot at Food Giant and, when the wind comes up, your shameful neglect lands in your neighbor's yard. Pretty soon it stops occurring to you to scold somebody's child for throwing his empty snow-cone container on the street. Pretty soon you can't even seem to remember what it was like to live in a clean and honest place. After enough time has passed, you become accustomed to living with filth and decay. Pretty soon you find yourself saying stuff like, "Problem? What problem?" or worse, "Hey, don't blame me! I didn't create this mess! I didn't vote for those fools. Hell! I didn't even vote." And so the garbage piles up.

In the coming weeks you will have the opportunity to take part in a little beautification project. No. You won't be asked to pick up litter from the ditches or the parking lots. You won't need to put on an orange vest and stab trash with those little-pokey-picker-upper-thingsies. Instead, you will be asked to do your

part to pull our community out of the gutter where you've left it. You will do this by simply going to the polls and casting a ballot for the candidate whose vision for Aberdeen will bring us back from the brink. Or, if you'd rather, just go and cast your ballot for somebody who hasn't already proven that he cannot lead and will not protect you. You can even vote AGAINST the status quo if you wish.

You may be tempted to tell me, "Viki, I don't even live in Ward 2. I can't vote there! What do you think I can do?"

Your address has nothing to do with it. You may not be able to cast a ballot toward saving our community, but you can certainly have an influence. Here's an idea. How about making yourself a big ole (a southernism for very large) sign that says something like "Get Rid of Garth" and, when tomorrow comes, join me with your lawn chair over across the street from the Monroe County Courthouse. There, we can influence the voters as they arrive. (Make sure you are farther than 150 feet from the door—we don't want YOU breaking the law.)

Or, here's another novel approach. How about just spending your Tuesday walking the streets of Ward 2 pleading with voters to go to the polls? They obviously need to be reminded of this simple fact: if we want change, we must vote for change. It's just that simple.

In the primary election, many of you did the right thing. You said, enough is enough. Together we have managed corral and capture some of the rubbish that was cluttering up our board room. Nevertheless, the extermination process is incomplete. The cockroaches survive. For now, at least.



**JUST SAY NO TO CORRUPTION IN
CITY GOVERNMENT!**

ON TUESDAY,

VOTE FOR ANYBODY BUT CLOYD GARTH!

THE RUNOFF—TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2008

WARD 2
CLOYD GARTH, SR.
VS
WILCHIE CLAY

**WOULD YOU BUY A USED
CAR FROM THIS MAN?**
(I DIDN'T THINK SO.)
**PLEASE DON'T VOTE FOR
HIM EITHER!**



CHIEF OF POLICE
HENRY RANDLE
VS
QUINELL SHUMPERT

Booster flap heads to court

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school.”

Williams said the conversation then switched to the criteria to be used for awarding AHS letter jackets to the school’s junior athletes. “Terry told me to my face in front of one of the Aberdeen staff members that he would go by what each individual coach recommended,” said Mrs. Williams. “At that point, I jokingly told him that if my daughter didn’t get her letter jacket, somebody was going to catch hell!”

Looking back, Mrs. Williams said that even though she said it in a joking manner, she thinks that’s what started the whole brouhaha. “That was the beginning of this whole mess,” she said. “I think he got mad and then he decided he would get even with me by hurting my child. All he’s doing now is holding a grudge. A member of an organization which exists for the benefit of the children shouldn’t hurt a child because of a conflict with a parent.”

Contacted for his side of the story concerning the controversy, Morgan said he didn’t want to comment. Reminded that without his version, what would have been a “he said – she said” story would turn out to be a “she said” only.

Morgan’s only comment to that was, “Isaiah 54.17.”

Asked to clarify his unusual reply, Morgan responded by saying, “What’s the matter, haven’t you ever read the Bible?” Morgan then began reciting the passage, “No weapon that is fashioned against you shall prosper, and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication from me, says the Lord.”

Asked one final time for his side of the story, Morgan again declined to comment.

“That doesn’t surprise me,” said Mrs. Williams. “He ought to quit playing with the Lord. If he was a true Christian man, he wouldn’t be carrying on like this and he’d better remember what else the Lord

said: “Vengeance is mine.”

She then quoted her own passage from the Bible – Proverbs 20.11: “Even children make themselves known by their acts, by whether what they do is pure and right.”

Morgan did tell his side of the story to a local TV reporter last month and claimed that according to the club’s by-laws, Curtice did not qualify for a letter jacket.

“He lied on TV,” said Mrs. Williams. “The rule used to be if a student played two consecutive seasons in any sport, they would qualify for a letter jacket at the end of their junior year at the school athletic banquet. That was the Booster



Club policy for at least eight years. That policy was in place when Terry took over as president two years ago and I’ve got the proof to show it. First he claimed they couldn’t find the policy, then said some-

thing about a three-year requirement. There’s no doubt they changed the guidelines to justify what they did.”

Mrs. Williams also said that in the past, each coach would make the determination as to which athletes would be granted a letter.

“The coach had the final say and no less than three different coaches told Terry Morgan that Curtice deserved a letter jacket,” said Mrs. Williams. “He was told who deserved a jacket, but he ignored the coaches and from that point on she was denied her jacket.”

Mrs. Williams said there are other problems associated with the Booster Club and she wants the school to take control of what she considers to be a rogue organization.

“These folks bring in a lot of money,” she said. “It costs \$20 dues to join, and money is also collected from program ads and T-shirts, basketball concessions and a fish fry. Yet, according to Williams, the club has been forced to pay up front for

the letter jackets because of past unpaid bills. “The word on the street is that several years ago before Terry took over, a large sum of money disappeared,” said Mrs. Williams.

She also has questions as to why Morgan refused to make a donation to help feed the basketball team before its last home game this year and why it took Ann Tackett and other individuals to raise money to purchase warm-ups for the basketball team to wear in Jackson.

“At a home basketball game, I asked several members of the booster club to donate food to feed the girls’ and boys’ basketball teams to show our appreciation for all their hard work,” she said. “I also asked Terry Morgan to make a donation and he said he’d get back to me. After the game, the booster club members were in the cafeteria counting the money from the concession stand, so I went to the door to see what the answer was. Terry came to the door and shook his hand to indicate the boosters weren’t going to do anything.”

Mrs. Williams said she took it upon herself to solicit food and money from local businesses and that booster members Imogene Dancy and Mr. and Mrs. Freddie Griffin, along with Mrs. Burnett and many other fans, donated food and different items needed to feed the teams after their final home game.

The on-going controversy has already cost the Booster Club one officer – treasurer Imogene Dancy, who resigned from her position March 24 – and has infuriated at least one member of the Aberdeen School Board who said the episode has cast the school in a bad light.

“After years of negative publicity about our school system, we finally start to turn the corner with a state championship in basketball and a spot in the football playoff and this happens,” said the board member, who wished to remain anonymous. “The bad thing about this is the Booster Club is responsible to no one. They have no official connection with the school and we can’t control what they do.”

Mrs. Williams thinks the Booster Club needs a new slate of officers. “If you can’t do what’s right for the children, then you shouldn’t hold any position in the boosters. There’s no doubt in my mind that Terry Morgan and the rest of the Booster Club officers are in the wrong and there’s nothing they can say to justify their actions. That’s why I called the TV stations and the newspapers. I want the whole world to know what’s going on with this organization.”



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**Aberdeen needs
YOU!**



**to vote on
Tuesday!**

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.

“I am amazed, o wall, that you have not collapsed and fallen, since you must bear the tedious stupidities of so many scrawlers.”

...translated from graffiti on a wall in ancient Pompeii

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Supporters!**

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Reflections

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