

On the subject of...

The Name Game

By Viki Eggers Mason



The Aberdeen Advocate

I don't know about you, but I'm about tired of elections! Oh, this little roller coaster ride has been exciting and extremely amusing but I, for one, am growing weary of the melodrama.

Today, April 29th, the Democrat Executive Committee announced the news that challenger Wilchie Clay had officially won the runoff election held on April 22, 2008, and it is to be his name, not Cloyd Garth's, which will appear on the general election ballot.

Because I'm something of a skeptic I'm holding off on the celebration until the blue smoke clears and the swearing in of our new city officials takes place. It will be at that point when you might see me turning cartwheels down Commerce Street. (Note to Finance Committee: We could probably sell tickets to that event and have enough money to invite EVERYBODY in Aberdeen to the party!)

Meanwhile, before we get too far off track we have some rocks which still need turning over.

I know it's difficult for some of you to imagine, but I am generally a positive person. I cling to the belief that human beings are right-minded and will usually do the lawful thing when it comes down to the nitty and the gritty. I don't usually mind playing the part of Sweet Polly Purebred, but based on my experiences in the past month or so, I can tell you that my faith in mankind is beginning to look a little threadbare. I have witnessed firsthand the most amazing evidence which points unequivocally to the fact that some folks are just crooked to the core. Sigh.

All of this bears repeating. First of all, as I told you a week or so ago, our fine board of aldermen have the responsibility to appoint a municipal election commission whose primary job it is to purge the

voter rolls. (Our election commission stayed vacant for most of the past four years.) I have also explained to you that the voter rolls may NOT be changed or tampered with any closer to election than 90 days. Why, then, did the aldermen finally get around to appointing members to that commission only AFTER the 90-day deadline had come and gone?

The obvious answer is that the aldermen must have wanted to use an old and inaccurate voter list in order to facilitate their own re-election. Hiss! Boo! Villains all!

Here's how it works. People sometimes move from one location to another. Once the move is accomplished, our migrating voter has a legitimate address in, let's just say Ward 1. He can then vote an affidavit ballot swearing he lives in Ward 1. Good for him. However, since the rolls rem-

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Shivers' saga continues

By Contributing Editor Don Rowe

NOTE: Last week's article chronicled the travails of one Travette Vasser, who was charged with disorderly conduct and breach of the peace by Shivers Junior High School teacher Harriette Jamison following a meeting in her classroom on Report Card Day last month. This week, the saga continues as Vasser, former Shivers' principal Dr. James Swindell and several members of Vasser's family move on the classroom of Lady B. Garth, who also filed identical charges against Vasser.

After leaving Mrs. Jamison's

room, Dr. Swindell, Vasser and the three members of her family headed to Garth's room. After waiting on another parent to finish her conference, Dr. Swindell and Vasser walked into the room. According to Vasser, Dr. Swindell informed Garth of the reason for the visit and requested a hard copy of her son, Carrington's, work.

"Just like in Jamison's room, Garth could not produce a hard copy of his work," said Vasser, "but she did show me several grades in her grade book, one of which was a zero for an assignment which was sup-

posed to have been done over the Christmas holidays. She then showed me another zero he got for his AR reading class and told me he had not done his AR reading testing since October of 2007.

"At this point, I was in disbelief and shock that from October of 2007 to March of 2008 that not one word had been said to me that Carrington wasn't doing what he should have been doing," said Vasser. "And what made even less sense was the fact that Carrington received a 92 in

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main cluttered with old information, Mr. Migration is ALSO listed as a voter in Ward 2 where he previously lived. So, if he were crooked enough, or well-paid enough or both, he could easily cast two ballots in two precincts with little or no trouble. So goes the game.

There is also the another version of this same scam. Suppose your name is Stanley Mandrake Edwards. Since you are not required to provide any identification when you register to vote, you could register as Stan Edwards, Mandrake Edwards, or even Drake Edwards in any number of our five voting precincts and successfully cast multiple ballots. (I would not recommend such since it is highly illegal and might earn you a decade or so in Parchman.)

Of course, this game is not limited to election fraud. It is played rather successfully, I'm told, by deadbeat dads who wish to avoid child support payments and other seedy underworld types who wish make themselves nearly invisible to the local constabulary who have it in mind to apprehend them on various and sundry criminal charges.

These tactics practiced by dirty politicians and the crooks whom they lead manifest themselves in many ways and in so doing, deprive you, the people, of a lawful and meaningful electoral process.

Here, for example, are just a few astonishing examples of felony voter fraud which manifested themselves in Aberdeen's Democrat Primary process. Rest assured, these are being studied by the FBI at this very moment:

- At least four registered voters in Ward 2 ALSO live and vote in Ward 1!
- At least 17 voters registered in Ward 2 now live outside that ward, and two voters manage to live in Ward 1 but ALSO have homes in places like Southaven and Columbus. (Those two voters are the children of the very Reverend re-elected alderman Alonzo Sykes.)
- Several voters who are registered in Ward 2 and who cast ballots on April 1st live in invisible houses located on obviously vacant lots. One ballot was cast by a voter who

lives in a vacant mobile home. That just seems odd to me.

- There must be something strange in the water over in Ward 2 because many voters who arrived at the polling place on April 1st had completely forgotten their names and addresses. Fortunately for them, Lady B. Garth, wife of the incumbent alderman, was there to remind the voters of their identities and to reassure poll workers that she was acquainted with them and that they were, indeed, legitimately registered voters in Ward 2.
- Somebody should tell Andy Hood he needs to crack down on security out at the new County Jail. One of his inmates seems to have managed a daring and successful daylight escape on April 1st in order to run on over to Martin Luther King Center to cast an affidavit ballot in favor of Alonzo Sykes. We believe he then went quietly back to his cell.
- Finally, I suspect that there just wasn't enough help at the County Courthouse on April first since the official ballot box was carried out of the courthouse by none other than...guess who...Cloyd Garth himself. Oops.

Now then, neighbors, please remember that the primary election might have been decided by **a single vote**. If that doesn't make you shudder, I don't know what will.

We have taken steps to make sure these cases of blatant election fraud are investigated and prosecuted, but that's not enough. You and I must be certain that every living, breathing *legitimately registered* voter in Aberdeen goes to the polls Tuesday. If you don't go for any other reason, go because it is not only your right, it is your sacred responsibility.

When our election process is tainted as this one was, we all suffer. I know that you are as tired as I am of making the pilgrimage to the polling places. You might even be tempted to say, "Why bother? We have effectively unseated six out of seven officials."

My answer to you would be, "Duh! Because it's **your job** to involve yourself in the business of making sure the process is kept squeaky clean. So, as this last day of the municipal election cycle plays out, I implore you to do whatever you can whenever you can – make phone calls and visit with your neighbors to let them know that if they want to get this new and improved city government off

to a grand start in its journey toward change, we must all show our support of this fresh and promising administration. Finally, and most importantly, we must be vigilant!

We must always be watchful at the polls for shenanigans which undermine the democratic process as have the ones I previously mentioned. We must report voter fraud and/or intimidation whenever and wherever we suspect it. I would love to report to you that all of the bad guys are gone and invite you to stand down, but such is not the case and we dare not get too comfortable.

Once the elections are over and done (a conclusion we all await with eager anticipation) we still have the obligation to watch for signs of lazy leadership. We must attend meetings, stay informed, involved and in touch with your City's administration. We are the bosses, remember. We need to supervise our elected employees carefully if we wish to avoid falling back into the same ugly rut.

Meanwhile, I'm still trying to be a good winner. (Do you suppose the folks at Blue Cross/Blue Shield considers injuries related to cart-wheel-turning to be self inflicted?)

Your ballot will look something like this:

Mayor

Jim Ballard (Democrat).....

Steve Lance (Independent).....

Chief of Police

Henry Randle (Democrat).....

Alderman Ward 1

Alonzo Sykes (Democrat).....

Alderman Ward 2

Wilchie Clay (Democrat).....

Alderman Ward 3

David Ewing (Democrat).....

Alderman Ward 4

Randy Nichols (Democrat).....

Alderman Ward 5

John Allen (Democrat).....

**There will also be clever little blank spaces in each race so that IF you don't like the primary winner, you can WRITE IN your personal favorite!
I just love the Democratic Process!**

Shivers' saga continues

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this class the first nine weeks and an 83 for the second nine weeks. So if he had not been doing his testing since October, how did he get an 83 for the second nine weeks?"

Incensed that a teacher would go that long with corresponding with a parent, Vasser asked Garth, "What kind of a teacher are you to let a 12 year-old child go this long without informing his parents as to what he's not doing or supposed to be doing?"

According to Vasser, Garth replied with a question of her own. "She asked me if I could make him do anything at home and I told her I don't give a damn about what he does at home. Again I asked to see hard copies of his work, so Garth then showed me some of his MCT practice work which does not count at all toward his class grade. I told her that's not what I wanted to see, so she asked another teacher who happened to be in the room to look for Carrington's folder, but once again, nothing was produced."

Before Dr. Swindell and Vasser started to leave the room, Vasser said she told Garth, "I've begged you to keep me informed of his (Carrington's) grades and he better not flunk this class after I have repeatedly asked this school to keep me informed."

Vasser said she and Dr. Swindell left Garth sitting at her desk. "At no time did she ask me to leave the premises like she has sworn on her affidavit and the only 'profane' word I uttered was 'damn,'" said Vasser. "Too, I didn't come into her room cursing her and making verbal threats and Mrs. Margie Clay was not a witness to my 'behavior and profanity' as she claims because Mrs. Clay was out in the hallway talking with other teachers. Based on her history and her past, if anybody should be arrested for disorderly conduct and breach of the peace, it should be Lady B. Garth."

After leaving Garth's room, Vasser said she wanted to see Mrs. Jones and several other teachers, but Dr. Swindell told her she could come back tomorrow and set up an appointment to see them. "I wasn't upset, but I did tell him that I saw no reason to come back and make an appointment when Report Card was the day to see all the teachers and that I thought it was bull---- to have to do so. He replied that I was welcome to leave and that he would see me tomorrow."

As a concerned parent, I was outraged over some of the grades my child was bringing home. I took it upon myself to be a student for a day in my child's classes – observing teaching styles, methods, classroom control and student-teacher interaction.

It was a total disgrace to me as a former student in the Aberdeen School District, as a parent having a child in the school district and as a Doctoral student in Mississippi State University's School of Education.

I found one 7th-grade teacher to be outstanding in the areas that I observed. I am very proud to have my son attending Mrs. Jones' class. If he does not understand what she is teaching, then the problems are on him as an active learner.

Why can we not have more Mrs. Joneses in our school district? Our children are deserving regardless of parent background, economic status and environment. Philosophy of Education has taught me that every teacher knows that education is a powerful instrument for shaping individual lives and society. The way in which teachers relate to their students depends upon their conception of human nature. One's view of reality shapes one's beliefs about knowledge.

We are not all 32 year-old grandmothers. We care about our children's education, and believe it or not, a lot of us are highly educated and capable of teaching our children, but we send them to school for the state's supposedly trained and paid teachers to do this. As parents, if we question the way our children are being taught (or not being taught) we should not expect our children to have to suffer the consequences of unfair treatment, comments and disciplinary actions by teachers and administrators.

Vasser said her problems with Garth (and Jamison) probably took root following the request she made to be included on the Aberdeen School Board agenda late last year to complain about the 7th-grade teachers at Shivers. After being told the agenda was full, Vasser wrote a letter to the editor to the Aberdeen Advocate which was published December 17, 2007 (see letter above).

Earlier this year, Vasser contacted

Garth about Carrington's grades and, according to Vasser, Garth became agitated and told her class the next day that "she didn't need parents calling her up all the time because she didn't have the time. She said parents complain all the time that their child was a straight A student, but in reality they were really straight F students. She then called Carrington out in front of his classmates and asked if anybody made straight As in her class. She then told the class in an arrogant manner that anyone who was unhappy could come up there to see her and everyone in the class knew she was referring to me."

That incident prompted the following email from Vasser to Aberdeen School Superintendent Dr. Gilreath:

"I am disappointed to know a professional teacher would continue to call out a child in front of his classmates, as well as in front of a special ed teacher, because of his mother taking action or writing about her inability to teach. Mrs. Garth's comments are derogatory, degrading and unprofessional and innocent kids should not be placed into fear and embarrassment because of a parent's concern about the way their children are being taught.

"Dr. Gilreath, my son has already been punished once this school term by Mrs. Jamison and Dr. Swindell with a two-day suspension because of a lie Mrs. Jamison told on him and students in his classroom called me from their cell phones and told me 'Carrington did nothing.' He's never been in trouble with a teacher or a problem in this school district from the time he started pre-K as a four year-old until after I reported my day observation to Dr. Swindell as a student for a day on the way or the lack of way the students are being taught in the 7th grade; and, of course, the school board agenda letter being printed in the Aberdeen Advocate by Viki Mason."

Vasser said she then received a call from another parent who said Garth accused her of being Vasser's friend. "She told her to tell me that her husband (Alderman Cloyd Garth) appoints people to the school board who are over the superintendent."

Vasser's plea date was last Wednesday, at which time she pled "not guilty."



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**Aberdeen needs
YOU!**



**On May 6th vote as
if your future
depends on it.
It does!**

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.

**“Constantly
choosing the lesser
of two evils is still
choosing evil.”**

...Jerry Garcia

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