

On the subject of...

My Cousin Leon

by Viki Eggers Mason



THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

The Aberdeen Advocate

I was born in the little town of Ontario, Oregon. The otherwise unimpressive burg is home to Ore Ida Foods of *Tater Tot* fame. It sits on the western bank of the Snake River – across the river, on the eastern bank, lays the great state of Idaho. Now the Snake River is a vital link to life for the farmers of Southeast Idaho and Eastern Oregon. Those farmers, because of water drawn from the Snake, are able to bring life to the high desert lands. Lots of the potatoes, onions and corn you eat, as well as much of the sugar you stir into your coffee (by virtue of the noble sugar beet) come to you courtesy of the great Snake River.

When I was very small (difficult to imagine, I know), my cousins and I would frequently escape to the river where we would wade and splash around until some adult would realize we were missing and come

to fetch us home. The trip back to the house was always punctuated by pronounced fanny paddling and a chorus of high-pitched yelps. We were not allowed to go to the river. It wasn't safe there. My cousin Leon learned that lesson the hard way.

Leon was missing for nearly three weeks before his little body was finally found pinned tightly against the intake screen of an irrigation pump under several feet of water. We didn't go to the river much after that.

In Mississippi, we have the opposite problem. Here, the trap is baited backward. Here, it is our abundant rainfall, not the thirsty land that threatens little lives. Right here in Aberdeen, open ditches designed to move the torrential rainwater away from town act as kid magnets and are, alas, tragedies in the making. There are places where these open ditches disappear underground for blocks at a time. A small child, once

swallowed up and trapped inside might, like Leon, be missing for a very long time.

I understand that several years ago, a child fell into one of the several open local ditches and was drowned. There was a lawsuit, I'm told, and a settlement agreement which included, in part, the covering of the ditch where the child fell in. As you can see in the photo on page 2, the ditch at the corner of Canal Street and North Matubba is secure now and safe from inquisitive small folks.

One Aberdeen business-woman, Sheila Higgins, has been trying in vain to eliminate Aberdeen's ditch dangers for many years. Her daughter and grandchild live near the deepest and most deadly of Aberdeen's ditches which runs between the houses at 204 and 206 Long Street in a neighborhood brimming over with children.

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Advertisers poorly served by

Monroe County papers By Contributing Editor Don Rowe

As defined in *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary*, "lifeblood" is described as, "a life-giving, vital or animating element." All things being equal, in most successful towns, the "lifeblood" of the community usually centers around two primary entities – good local government and a good newspaper.

We here at the *Advocate* think the people of Monroe County deserve the best in government as well as in their local newspaper, so

this week's article is yet another effort en route to our collective quest for excellence. To be sure, I am not criticizing simply for the sheer joy of finding fault, but rather to point out how we as a community have become so used to a shoddy product that we've failed to notice how really rotten things have become at our Monroe County newspapers.

Typically, advertising and promotion (in addition to a good product) are the "lifeblood" of any success-

ful business, and companies often look to advertising as a way to boost sales by increasing the public's exposure to a particular product or service.

A company can have the finest product in the world, but if no one is aware of it, that company is doomed to failure. Thus, advertising has become vital to most businesses and, as a result, advertisers are actually investing in their own businesses by allocating a portion of

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My Cousin Leon

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“I’ve been calling (Ward 5 alderman) Jim Buffington for years over this,” Sheila told me. “I’ve documented every call. The last time I spoke with him, which was in January of this year, he told me that he had talked with Street Department head Lee Cooper and the problem was going to get fixed.” In a subsequent conversation with Cooper, Higgins learned Buffington had never discussed the matter with him and, according to Cooper, the ditch problem was nowhere near being solved. (While Sheila’s daughter is a resident of Buffington’s Ward 5, Sheila does not live within the City. Perhaps that explains things?)

I’m not surprised that research into the cost of covering, fencing or otherwise securing these dangerous ditches hasn’t been done. That would involve planning, and planning is something to which the folks at City Hall seem to have an incredible aversion. They summarily dismiss projects such as this one as cost prohibitive and out of the realm of possibility. I would remind you once again, the tiny world in which our aldermen live has a horizon so near they can reach out and touch it. They can’t see beyond today.



A death trap! Here the ditch runs under-ground between Monroe and Hickory Streets

What we need here is a bit of creative problem solving. Instead of saying with a shrug that money isn’t available, our leaders, were they interested in fulfilling their obligations to the citizenry, should be finding out precisely how much money is needed. Instead of saying, “We don’t have that in our budget,” they ought to be looking to the larger world (the one the rest of us live in) for answers in the form of financial grants. If they started searching for grant money, of course, they would be stunned to learn most grants to municipalities are made only under certain conditions – including requisite annual audits! Our last audit was 2003! Oops. No money for Aberdeen!

The things an elected official does while he is in office speak volumes about his leadership skills. The actions he fails to take can tell us far more about his priorities, his vision and his worthiness to guide us into the future.

In less than a year, you and I will go to the polls to make leadership decisions for the lovely little town we call home. Will we put our stamp of approval on the record of the past four years? Will we endorse the “me first” mentality consistently demonstrated by our current elected officials? It is my fervent hope that we will send a clear and concise message to the current scandal-ridden administration, bless their hearts. “All y’all go on to the house!” (Translation for non Southerners—you’re all fired.)



Corner of North Matubba and Canal Streets—a properly closed ditch



Corner of Jefferson and Columbus Streets

Jesse’s Package, LLC
Home of Jesse’s Check Cashing
 718 South Meridian Street
Phone 369-4955

Your Municipal Officials

Honorable Cecil Belle, Mayor
 125 West Commerce, Aberdeen
369-4165

Ward 1 Alderman Alonzo Sykes
 1113 Elk Circle, Aberdeen
369-7705

Ward 2 Alderman Cloyd Garth
 310 James Street, Aberdeen
369-5734

Ward 5 Alderman Willie Cook
 505 S. Matubba, Aberdeen
369-9156

Ward 4 Alderman Brunson Odom
 1021 Murphree Circle,
 Aberdeen
369-2246

Ward 5 Alderman Jim Buffington
 402 South Matubba, Aberdeen
369-4985

Advertisers Poorly Served by Monroe County Papers

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their budget for such purpose (advertising.)

The beneficiary of all those advertising dollars spent by companies and corporations is the media (both the print and broadcast) and, for our industry anyway (although subscriptions and rack/store sales do contribute to the bottom line), the print media couldn't make it if it was not for its advertising revenue.

However, the major risk of advertising is that the ads won't generate enough sales to justify the cost of the ad campaign. There are many reasons for this, including layout, design, poorly written and/or boring text, typos and/or mistakes, etc. So, before companies/corporations commit their hard-earned cash to advertise in various publications or on TV/radio, they must be assured the ads will reach both users and those who aren't currently interested.

Now imagine, if you will, a prime-time broadcast ad in which a pitchman (or pitchwoman) claims a certain restaurant "uses fresh produce, vegetables, and meat as much as possible in the preparation of the food." Whoa, how's that for a comforting feeling? "Hope I'm not eating there when the cook runs out of fresh produce, vegetables and and/or meat," would be my first thought.

Or how about hearing an ad on the radio which said: "The lake is kept mowed," or "no live bait can be used for bait." Now that's something I want to see, someone stupid enough to try and mow a lake! As for the "bait" statement, wouldn't it have been better to write, "No live bait is permitted?"

Do these three statements sound ridiculous? Of course they do, and had a radio and/or TV station put them on the air, I would think the advertisers in question would have taken their advertising dollars elsewhere. But incredibly enough, I didn't make any of those three statements up, for they actually appeared in print recently in *The Amory Advertiser's* BusinessSpotlight – a weekly page which includes a feature story "spotlighting" a local business.

The question I now pose to you, our readers, is: Just exactly how much "bang for the buck" does a company get when it advertises in the *Aberdeen Examiner* and/or *The Amory Advertiser*? Because that's a question most can't answer without additional info, my task today will be to "spotlight" some recent ads in both the *Aberdeen Examiner* and *The Amory Advertiser* and then you decide if you would invest your advertising dollars in either publication. For openers, let's examine *The Advertiser's* BusinessSpotlight ads which run every week, usually in the "B" section.

One of my all-time favorite BusinessSpotlight ads and one which I was immediately drawn to ran this past January. What caught my eye right off the bat was the headline: "Frisco Grill to offer healthy food beginning January 2007." That same thought was reinforced in the lead paragraph which stated: "Kristy Stanford of Frisco Grill is looking forward to the 2007 year. She will be offering healthy foods beginning in January."

After reading the headline and the lead paragraph several times, my first thought was: "I'll bet Ms. Stanford can rest easy now that she has finally started offering healthy foods." My second thought was: "Does that mean everything they had served all those years previous to 2007 was unhealthy?" I don't know. You tell me.

Then, in the second paragraph I read: "Since recently being diagnosed with diabetes (diabetes), Stanford is (has) become pretty health conscious." Again, I wondered how "diagnosed with diabetes" and "Stanford is become pretty health conscious" ever made it into print, but after finding over a dozen more mistakes throughout

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MARINA ROAD PACKAGE STORE
 50187 Old Hwy. 25 • Aberdeen, MS 39730
662.369.8287 Jeff and Susan Doty Owners
GIVE US A "SHOT" AT YOUR BUSINESS



662-369-2416 662-369-2865

MOON'S OK Tire

For All Your Tire Needs
 Farm Auto Industry

Dennis & Cecilia Moon Owners 413 HWY 45 NORTH
 ABERDEEN, MS 39730

ABERDEEN MARINA
 50151 OLD HIGHWAY 25
 FUEL-FOOD-BAIT-TACKLE
 YOUR FULL - SERVICE MARINA
369 - 9803

Phone 662-369-9164



ABERDEEN MUFFLER & BRAKE SHOP

FERRELL MORRIS 20267 Coontail Road
 Aberdeen, MS 39730

Advertisers Poorly Served By Monroe County Papers

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the rest of the ad, I realized the person who wrote the ad lacked even the most basic of writing skills. Then, to compound matters, no one took the time to proof the shoddy effort before it was published.

Other goofs ran the gamut, from punctuation mistakes to a lack of knowledge concerning subject-verb agreement. For example, the writer loves to put commas in front of the “and” at the end of a series such as: “...grilled chicken strips, Italian spaghetti, and chicken Alfredo;carrot, caramel, and pumpkin roll;hot fudge cake sundae, and frosty mug root beer floats.”

On the flip side, when he needs a comma, it’s nowhere to be found and, call me picky if you must, but “&” should have been spelled out when used in a sentence and the “C” in “Cheese” and the “S” in “Steak” – as in “Philly Cheese Steak” – should have been lower case – not capitalized.

Too, good writers know people are “who,” things are “which” and neither one of them is “that,” as in “a peanut butter pie that (which) is sugar free.” Also, there are certain words, compound adjectives included, which need a hyphen, so it should be “sugar-added lemon” and “Golden-Oldies.”

And again, call me picky if you will, but the Frisco Grill is a restaurant and the word “restaurant” is singular. Therefore, “Frisco Grill’s grilled chicken tenders salad is still one of their (its) best salad sellers” is incorrect. Also, because the word “restaurant” is singular and just one owner was mentioned (Kristy Stanford), technically it is also incorrect to say, “their phone number is” or “they are open.”

And finally, I questioned what all-natural “homesale” (homemade, maybe) salsa was, and I also wondered if the writer has any grasp of subject-verb agreement after writing that “a popular tray for parties are (is) the homemade chicken tenders.”

The biggest unanswered question here, however, was how in the world *The Amory Advertiser* could charge the Frisco Grill for such a poorly written advertisement.

- With space at a premium, I’m forced to highlight only the most noticeable mistake in the following Business Spotlight ads. But rest assured, in addition to having composition problems, each and every one of them also contained dozens of typos, misspelled words, punctuation and capitalization mistakes, misplaced modifiers, incomplete and run-together sentences, comma splices, they-them-their miscues and subject-verb agreement mistakes.

- Home Changes Vinyl of Tupelo: “Haley said his work crew are (is) very honest.”

- C & M Monument and Casket Company: “They are now pleased to saw (say) they are doing the same....” Also, “take are (care) of” and “pre-need (pre-need) casket.”

- Coker Furniture & Appliances: “Coker Furniture & Appliances are (is) currently having a sale....”

- Amory Finance Sales/Sporting Goods: “If you drive down the road a see a naked deer hunter, don’t get alarmed he has Thermacell Mosquito Repellent.”

- Smithville Telephone Company: “Although wired networks have the best security and speed, getting the special wir-

wiring, called “Cat 5 cable,” run between computer locations in a home or business is best done when the building is constructed, which leaves most potential network users looking for other alternatives, and there are several.”

- Purple Martin Lake and Art Studio: “There are no rocks around the banks and the lake is kept mowed....” and, “No live bait can be used for bait.”

- Gilmore Nettleton Family Medical Center: “Family Nurse practitioner Peggi Seamen checks her receptionist, Laura Adams’, heart.”

- Amory Marine: “They carry Bayliner boats....starting at \$10.995 (\$10,995).”

- Cassie’s Creative Designs: “For your political needs such as cards, door hangers, hand fans, emory (emery) boards, signs, stakes, 4X8 large political signs, billboard design, pens, pencils, bumper stickers, and static cling stickers.”

- J & K’s Frisco Grill headline: “J & K’s Frisco Grill ready for their (its) first railroad (railroad) festival.”

Camera-ready ads which are furnished by the different advertisers are generally error-free, but display ads created by *The Advertiser* and *Examiner* are a different story. For example, a City of Amory trash collection notice featured the following sentence: “Construction contractors, builders and remodelers, tree trimming (tree-trimming) contractors, tree surgeons, landscape’s (landscapers) and the like must remove all the demolition, rubbish, trimmings and the like must remove all the demolition,

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Tues-Fri - 9-5
Sat. - 9-1

Phone
369-7111
369-7112

Reflections

119 South Meridian Street
Aberdeen, MS 39730

Vickie Pace
Owner / Stylist

Buddy's One Stop

306 Hwy 45 North

369-9721

Sheila and Hannah Higgins

Advertisers Poorly Served by Monroe County Papers

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rubbish, trimmings and trash resulting from their operations....”

On the same page, a house ad (an ad placed by the newspaper for self-promotion or to fill unsold space) states: **“Don’t miss out on your chance (to) be seen by thousands of readers....”** and **“We’re again, publishing (We’re again publishing) our yearly commemorative Railroad Festival section....”**

A house ad published this past January for *The Advertiser’s* Cutest Baby Contest stated, **“Any individual may vote as many times as they (he or she) desire (desires)”** and in a Jackson Hewitt Tax Service ad this past February we find the following: **“Every return we prepare some (comes?) with our basic guarantee.”**

And then there were the two full-color, top-dollar, full-page ads published last December and paid for by the Monroe County Board of Supervisors, one of which had a sentence which read, **“....remember to shop at home where your hometown businesses support you and the community (community).”** Not to be outdone, the *Examiner* carried a full-page, full-color ad the same week which

said: **“....may peace and good fortune (fortune) be with you, every step of the way.”**

While we’re on the subject of full-page ads, if you really want some laughs, check out the Bulldogs’ Bark and the Lion’s (sic) Roar pages in the *Examiner* sponsored by Georgia Gulf and Tronox respectively. They are so poorly edited that the *Examiner* should be ashamed to take a dime from either company.

And earlier this month, Carl Hogan paid for a “Congratulations” ad which ran in both papers to welcome Chris Davidson as a new sales manager. In the ad, we learn that Chris has been named **“salesmen (salesman) of the month and salesmen (salesman) of the year.”** If that wasn’t bad enough, we found the following sentence: **“His dedication is, greatly appreciated by the dealership, and by his customers.”**

Then there’s probably the worst ad of all time which was paid for by the American Legion Post #26 here in Aberdeen last Memorial Day. To be sure, a non-professional writer somehow affiliated with the Legion Post submitted the text, but the *Examiner* was the culprit here because no one on staff took the time to correct the dozens of mistakes

many of us in this day and time would also make. Suffice to say, the one-half page final product was a disgraceful effort which had so many mistakes it would take 30 more lines to list all of them.

But on a lighter note, my favorite all-time goof was found in an ad created for Gilmore Memorial Hospital which ran in *The Advertiser* not once, but for two weeks last December, in which readers were encouraged to come and visit with **“Santa Clause (Claus) and Mrs. Clause (Claus).”**

After sharing these “classics” with you, our readers, I feel fairly certain most of you would agree the answer to my question would be, unfortunately, local merchants get very little “bang for their buck” by advertising in either publication because the *Aberdeen Examiner* and *The Amory Advertiser* generated ads, for the most part, lack proper composition, editing and proofreading.

Next week: Think the ads were bad? Wait until you see the garbage which makes its way into the news stories.

Heard in Passing.....

My e-mail box is frequently filled with interesting messages passed along to me by readers. The following came to me just this week from one Hamiltonian who knew I’d love it. Hope you do as well. VEM

This is the message that the Pacific Palisades High School (California) staff voted unanimously to record on their school telephone answering machine. This is the actual answering machine message for the school. This came about because they implemented a policy requiring students and parents to be responsible for their children's absences and missing homework. The school and teachers are being sued by parents who want their children's failing grades changed to passing grades - even though those children were absent 15-30 times during the semester and did not complete

Enough school work to pass their classes.

The outgoing message:

"Hello! You have reached the automated answering service of your school. In order to assist you in connecting to the right staff member, please listen to all the options before making a selection:

* To lie about why your child is absent - Press 1

* To make excuses for why your child did not do his work- Press 2

* To complain about what we do - Press 3

* To swear at staff members - Press 4

* To ask why you didn't get information that was already enclosed in your newsletter and several flyers mailed to you - Press 5

* If you want us to raise your child - Press 6

* If you want to reach out and touch, slap or hit someone - Press 7

* To request another teacher, for the third time this year - Press 8

* To complain about bus transportation - Press 9

* To complain about school lunches - Press 0

* If you realize this is the real world and your child must be accountable and responsible for his/her own behavior, class work, homework and that it's not the teachers' fault for your child's lack of effort: Hang up and have a nice day!

*If you want this in Spanish, you must be in the wrong country.



The Aberdeen Advocate

THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

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

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

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<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Subscribe me!</p> <p>NAME: _____</p> <p>ADDRESS: _____</p> <p>PHONE: _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p>	<p><i>“Every good newspaper is muckraking to some degree. Its part of our job. Where there’s muck, we ought to rake it.”</i></p> <p><i>James P. Cannon</i></p>	
<p>http://vikimason.com</p>		