

On the subject of...

Bullies, liars and cheats

By Viki Eggers Mason



The Aberdeen Advocate

In the past week I've had a number of interesting conversations, but two of them have me doing a bit of self analysis.

The first conversation was with a subscriber who came to my office to drop off what he called a "a little thank you gift." (It was far from little. It was a lovely gift basket featuring a variety of Starbucks coffees and sundry sinfully delicious temptations. It took me some time to convince my husband that barbers don't like dark chocolate peanut clusters or biscotti.)

This particular reader friend wanted to thank me and to congratulate me on the outcome of the municipal elections. He also wanted to reassure me that, while we have not yet achieved the clean sweep we had hoped for, such a situation will come to pass eventually.

Naturally, I countered with my standard lines: 1) I didn't do it, the voters did; and 2) whatever I've done was for my own selfish purposes. (I have this silly notion that my real property ought to appreciate, not depreciate. I also think that government should be a paragon of ethical, honest man-

agement and, when it isn't, I don't sleep well—all of which makes me unusually difficult to get along with.)

Not to be dissuaded, he reminded me the effort I've expended over the past few years far exceeds any monetary gain for which I might have hoped in the first place. Ok. I was cornered. I had to cry "uncle."

The second conversation was with a man who wanted to caution me that I was allowing the Cloyd Garth situation to get under my skin. "It's become a personal thing with you."

It was at that moment that I was forced to confess. Yes, my friends, it has become a very personal matter and I'd like to explain why.

I don't like bullies. I can't abide them. Never have. Never will. I don't like liars and I don't like cheaters either. I especially don't like bullies who lie and cheat, which brings me, of course, to the subject of Alonzo Sykes and Cloyd Garth.

Here we have two men who so enjoy their power and influence that they are willing to do just about anything—

ANYTHING—to perpetuate their own power trip.

In the past couple of months, we have observed them as they systematically intimidated, coerced and bribed voters to commit acts of felony voter fraud. Yes, I know that there was testimony to the contrary during the last round of hearings over the Ward 2 Alderman's race, but I didn't live to be this old without learning how to know a lie when I hear one. Those people were either too frightened or too well paid to tell the truth. All I know for sure is, they are as guilty as Garth and Sykes and we hope they will eventually pay the price for their crimes against the people.

Speaking of untruths. I was mesmerized by Cloyd Garth's testimony in that same courtroom as attorney Jim Waide raked him over the proverbial coals.

Waide, in case you didn't know or have forgotten, is the attorney representing the two police officers who encountered Garth in the heat of one of his all too familiar temper

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The first hundred days

By Contributing Editor R. T. Mason

A few days before our recent General Election, I suggested to Viki it might be a good idea to write a story delineating city improvements which she would like to see our newly elected officials make in the first 100 days of their terms. My suggestion failed to gain the desired response. Instead, she counter-suggested that I write the story. The more I've thought about it, the idea of me writing such a story reminds me, more and more,

about another story that took place back around 1977.

Back in those days, I was managing a restaurant in Columbus. After midnight, Jack, an acquaintance of mine, came in and told me that he had just hit a deer and it was in the back of his truck. He went on to ask me if I knew anyone who might want the deer, since he was single and not inclined to do much dining at home. So, I took a quick look around the restaurant and my eyes

settled on another long-time acquaintance who had just come in after spending the evening at a local bar. I asked Mr. Smith, as I will refer to this gentleman, if he wanted a deer and he answered, "Sure." So, I asked him for his keys and, while he sipped his coffee, Jack and I went out and moved the deer to the trunk of Mr. Smith's car. Once again, all was well with the world.

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tantrums some time back at the Parks and Rec gymnasium. The police officers had been called to quell a disturbance at a basketball game being held there and, when they arrived, they were ordered by Garth to leave. Dispatched to investigate the disturbance, the officers declined to get off the property as Garth ordered. He became abusive (as is his habit when folks don't cower on cue,) causing the officers to warn him that he could be placed under arrest.

That's when the big, ugly words came out of Garth's mouth. He told the two officers that they would be fired the following Monday if they didn't obey his orders. (It actually took until Tuesday, if memory serves, for them to join the ranks of the unemployed.) Ultimately, the two filed a civil suit naming the City of Aberdeen and Cloyd Garth as defendants, but not before they charged both Garth and his wife with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest.

On the witness stand earlier this month, Waide enjoyed something of a dress rehearsal of the grilling Garth will get when the Powell/Shelton matter finally comes to trial.

"Is it true that you were named in a civil suit over the wrongful firing of two police officers here in Aberdeen?" Waide asked.

"Yes. Me and the other aldermen." Garth answered.

"Isn't it true that you were the *only* alderman named in that suit and isn't that because you had these two officers fired for no reason?"

"That's already gone to trial and I was found innocent." (Garth lied. The criminal matter has, indeed, gone to trial—in a closed-door session with an imported judge, the Garths' charges were dismissed. That's something far different from being found innocent, by the way.)

"It went to trial already? Was I there?" Waide asked, earning a chuckle from the audience. Garth, suddenly realizing that he had his back to the wall, became his usual cocky, sneering self and the rest of the cross-examination painted an astonishingly accurate picture of a bully who regularly threatens employees and all

too often, gets his way.

This line of questioning was, of course, the subject of strenuous objections by Garth's attorney, but because of the job-threats made against City Clerk Jackie Benson in the election matter, the judge allowed Waide to continue. When he was finished, there were no doubts anywhere in the courtroom about Garth's lamentable character.

After his testimony that day, the Judge called a recess at which time I overheard Garth telling somebody on his cell phone that the morning had been full of "the same old lies." Whose lies, I wondered? Oh, yeah, his.

Garth's testimony on the witness stand jogged a memory from my college days. Back when we were studying deviant behavior in psychology class, we identified a group of human beings who are concerned foremost with their own wants and desires and who have no regard whatsoever for the consequences of their actions upon others. This abnormal, antisocial behavior is the mark of a sociopath. People who suffer from this condition will get what they want at all costs. Worse, they can always find ways to justify their behavior. They somehow manage to knit their own version of truth from their fanciful imaginations. They actually believe the lies they tell and they are quite good at convincing unsuspecting others as well. Sociopaths whose names you might recognize include Adolph Hitler, Jeffrey Dahmer, Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden. (I would add Bill Clinton to this list, but it might confuse those of you who are fans of perjury and rape.)

Another friend of mine recounted a brief conversation he had with Cloyd Garth back before the primary. Garth had come to my friend's home to ask for his vote. My friend inquired about the Save Our Children scandal, which spurred Garth to produce a letter from the Mississippi Ethics Commission. The letter stated the investigation of Garth did not find him guilty of any ethics violation. What the letter did not say, though, is that the ethics commission has a very narrow jurisdiction and is strictly empowered to punish officials who make money by virtue of their official status. They don't investigate misuse of city funds, that's not their purview. So, Garth's letter might as well have said something like this: "Yes, it's true that there was a robbery and, yes, it's true that Garth was driving the get-away car. However, he was wearing his seat belt at all times, so we can't punish him."

Now, I'm no doctor, but I see an undeniable

pattern of antisocial behavior that stretches back at least four years. (I wasn't paying attention to politics in Aberdeen before that, but I feel confident this apparent descent into psychological instability started long before 2004.) Based on what I've seen and heard in Aberdeen's boardroom in the past four years, I am completely convinced that Garth is a dangerously delusional man who has convinced himself and others that he is regularly mischaracterized by folks like me. I'll let you make that determination for yourself. As you consider your own diagnosis, please take note of these actions:

When a woman who was somehow affiliated with Garth's brother wanted to open a business on Highway 25, Garth made it happen. He made it happen even though the structure, the lack of required fencing and the setbacks were not in compliance with zoning statutes. He made it happen even though, in order to do so, he was required to go over the heads of the planning and zoning commission. (The planning and zoning commission members were summarily replaced shortly thereafter.)

In the matter of the firing of police officers Powell and Shelton, even though Garth was personally involved in the incident and was advised to recuse himself from the discussion and the vote, Garth did not allow the decision to be made by uninvolved others. Instead, when he realized that the Mayor was about to cast the deciding vote (probably in favor of keeping the officers), Garth arrogantly ignored the advice of the city attorney and cast that deciding vote himself. As I said earlier, we await the outcome of that suit.

I cannot confirm this because I am not able to review the transcripts of the depositions taken in the civil suit brought by former city employee Theresa Estes when her application to transfer into the position of municipal court clerk was wrongly denied. Nevertheless, I have been told by very reliable sources that in the course of those depositions, Garth swore under oath that he had interviewed all of the candidates for that particular job. Since I was one of the candidates for that position and, since I was never interviewed, I can only conclude that he perjured himself. I would also be forced to conclude that his sworn oath is hole-y in a completely different sense of the word and cannot hold water.

Cloyd is a bully. He is liar and he is a cheat. Do you want him making decisions on your behalf? No. I didn't think so. Please, help us remove this tyrant from office.

The first hundred days

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About a week later, as I sat at the counter doing some paperwork, Mr. Smith again visited the restaurant. He sat down beside me and we spoke cordially. Then, he proceeded to thank me for putting a dead deer in the trunk of his car when he was rather inebriated, because he didn't remember the incident for several days and then only when he found a rather unpleasant aroma in his vehicle caused by the deer carcass in the trunk. He indicated that the subsequently required disposal of said deer carcass was such an unpleasant task that he believed it might have been just the encouragement he needed to stop drinking. His exact words were, "I'm either going to have to quit drinking or get me an entirely new set of friends." It's nice when friends appreciate you that much.

So, when my vivacious vixen suggested that I write about my hopes for the first 100 days of the new city administration, the more I thought about it the more I thought that I just might be a

good portion of the unpleasant aroma emanating from downtown Aberdeen.

As "involved citizens" go, I'm not much. I'm usually quite content to sit at home, reading a good book while the buzzards raid the outhouse. Thus, as far as Aberdeen is concerned, I've been more a part of the problem than I have been of the solution. Nevertheless, since the idea for this story was mine, what follows are my suggestions for improvements which the new administration can make within the first 100 days.

- Let the Mayor run the daily operations of the city through his department heads. We don't need aldermen acting as liaisons between department heads and the Board of Aldermen. The Mayor and the Chief of Police are those liaisons. We elected those officials to do a job, so let's give them a job to do and let them do it. No more micromanaging.
- Begin immediately to determine exactly where we are and agree on

where we want to be. Share your visions with each other. If there are six people around a boardroom table, and all six are going in different directions, then little progress will be made. You're a team now, and the rest of the citizens of Aberdeen are members of that same team. Together, choose a direction and then apprise the citizens of Aberdeen of that direction so that we may assist you.

- Plan, plan, and plan.

The Phyllis Wheatley Club and Home, in Chicago, had a motto, which read, "If you can't push, pull; if you can't pull, please get out of the way." We've elected a group of leaders to push the Aberdeen community forward. Many of you have the ability to either pull or help to push our city in the right direction. At the very least, the rest of us, who seem to have demonstrated absolutely no redeeming qualities during our lifetimes, should just stay out of the way.

Premature euphoriation?

By Viki Eggers Mason

I cannot let the paper go to print this week without mentioning the exhilarating experience I had at the May 20th meeting of the board of aldermen.

Because of my work schedule, I was unable to attend the first meeting of this new, improved body of elected officials. I was pleased to learn that City Clerk Jackie Benson was reappointed in spite of Cloyd Garth's recent threats that she would lose her job. They also appointed Tim Irvin to the city attorney's seat. They made Alonzo Sykes the "vice mayor," a term which might as easily describe the character of his close associates as it does his new duties to act as spokesman for the community when Mayor Ballard is unavailable.

Still, I was extremely disheartened to learn that at that first meeting, when it is their job to make appointments to the several offices whose duties are up for grabs each year, they failed somehow to remove municipal court jester Adrian Haynes from the bench.

I landed square in the chest of my alderman, David Ewing, who voted in favor of keeping Haynes on the payroll. In one of the more scathing letters I've ever written to public officials, I asked him to rethink his decision. I didn't put it that nicely. As a matter of fact, I don't think I've written a nasty-gram with that kind of vitriol since I fired Bill Clinton. (For whatever reason, Clinton stayed on as president for another six years even after my letter sending him to the house. He always was brash.) In any case, I've settled down now, and I shook David's hand the other evening and congratulated him and wished him the best. Ahh...but I digress.

I was extremely pleased to watch our new Mayor run his second meeting at the helm. He seems to have hit the ground running. He has already begun to make adjustments in schedules and activities around town. Better yet, he seems to understand that it is his job to oversee the entire operation. I came home that Tuesday evening fairly breathless with anticipation over the mighty things we Aberdeenians will accomplish in

next four years.

"There's hope, honey!" I shouted as I came through the door of our modest apartment. "I think I see a light at the end of our tunnel."

My handsome husband allowed me to gush on for 15 minutes or so before, in his most calm and collected monotone, he said, "You know darlin', the last time I heard you this excited and so certain that change was coming was almost exactly four years ago. That was the night you came home from the first meeting chaired by Cecil Belle."

Phooey!

He's right, of course. I do have a history of premature euphoriation. It's just that things have been so bleak for so long, I want to celebrate even the smallest glimmers of hope when they come my way. The war isn't won just yet, reader friends. But, now we have a better army with the hopes of even more improvement when the citizens of Ward 2 finally take the opportunity to eliminate Cloyd Garth from the ranks. Victory is right around the corner!



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YOU!



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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.

“When a resolute young fellow steps up to the great bully and takes him boldly by the beard, he is often surprised to find it comes off in his hand and was only tied on to scare away the timid adventurers.”

... Ralph Waldo Emerson

- ### Your City Officials
- Mayor
Honorable Jim Ballard
369-4165
 - Chief of Police
Henry Randle
369-6454
 - Alderman, Ward 1
Alonzo Sykes
369-7705
 - Alderman Ward 2 (Temporary)
Cloyd Garth
369-5734
 - Alderman, Ward 3
David Ewing
319-7652
 - Alderman, Ward 4
Randy Nichols
369-3352
 - Alderman, Ward 5
John Allen
369-4683