

On the subject of...

An Honorable Man

By Viki Eggers Mason



On my most recent 40th birthday, (to date I've celebrated 16 of them) my handsome husband gifted me several new books, two of which were written by Ann Coulter. If you aren't familiar with Ann Coulter, she is a dazzlingly beautiful lawyer turned syndicated newspaper columnist who makes Rush Limbaugh look liberal. I want to be Ann Coulter when I grow up.

Coulter's wit is razor sharp and she uses it to shred left-leaning thinkers who are members of the "Blame America First" club. She is a patriot who has no problem pointing out the nincompoopery which abounds in today's political climate. She is forever in trouble with somebody for her unflinching brutal honesty and in that respect, I suppose I'm following along in her footsteps quite admirably for I, too, tend to make folks bristle.

Lately I've been raising the

hackles of Aberdeen's municipal judge, Adrian Haynes and her supporters. I have this silly notion that judges ought to behave in an honorable way and, since Haynes' behavior includes activities like stealing from the people she has pledged to serve, I have been obliged to point out her failings. It's my job. I owe it to you readers to keep my eye on public servants, particularly when they are costing the taxpayers money and dishonoring our community. Honor is a rare attribute, it seems, but it is an ESSENTIAL element in the judicial mix. Without honor on the bench, we're all lost.

My mission to unseat Haynes was dealt a serious blow in the August 7th primary election when my favorite candidate, APD Officer Henry Randle, came in third. Adopting an "any port in the storm" approach, I quickly

took up the standard of Dennis O. Herndon and have been about the business of promoting his candidacy ever since.

On a recent Thursday evening, a group of Monroe County citizens got together to meet and speak with Dennis Herndon. I was armed with 'the goods' on the incumbent and was eager to share what I'd learned. As I spoke, I noticed a look of discomfort on my new candidate's face and for a moment, just a moment, I was bewildered. Then it dawned on me. Here, I said to myself, is a man of honor. He was obviously not willing to win an election by compromising his personal standards or stooping, however briefly, to levels beneath his dignity.

I don't imagine Herndon has yet taken the time to

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THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

The Aberdeen Advocate

Dog Days of Summer for AHS

By Contributing Editor Don Rowe

Most Mississippians associate the "Dog Days of Summer" with the unbearably hot and humid weather we suffer through on an annual basis every July and August.

Officially, "dog days" are defined in Webster's Dictionary as "the period between early July and early September when the hot, sultry weather of summer usually occurs in the Northern hemisphere."

(According to *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, the dog days of summer last 40 days – from July 3 through August 11.)

Originally, the term "dog days" was popularized by the ancients, who were fond of drawing images in the sky by a method known today as "connecting the dots" (of stars). Images of bulls (Taurus), bears (Ursa Major and Ursa Minor), twins (Gemini) and dogs (Canis Major and Canis Minor) became, to the ancients, star pictures (now known as constellations).

According to those in the know, the brightest star in the night sky in Canis Major (the big dog) is Sirius, the "dog star," and, for a while, anyway, the ancients be-

lieved it actually produced heat. In the summer, Sirius rises and sets with the sun, the brightest object in the sky during the day. That occurrence led them to believe the heat from the sun, combined with the heat from Sirius, was responsible for summer's hot and sultry days.

Locally, for the past 10 years or so, the dog days of summer have also coincided with the release of the previous spring's state testing results by the State Department of Education. In mid-August, the department reveals how

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An Honorable Man

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study the code of judicial conduct, but based on my experience that evening, he probably doesn't need to spend much time studying it. I can tell you this man is no stranger to ethics and ideals. He made it abundantly clear to us—his is and shall remain a clean campaign based on strength, not weakness. Whether he's read the Canon or not, he means to take the high road and leave the muckraking to the other camp.

This recklessly dangerous concept of bringing honor and dignity to the election process is making me a little nervous. How can one possibly hope to sway voters merely by being strong, straight and true? How can one aspire to win a mud-slinging match without getting even a little dirty? Perhaps that's why I've never wanted to run for a judicial seat – I prefer to trust guerilla tactics over marching like a Revolutionary War soldier in a straight line fully exposed and vulnerable. Nevertheless, such is the decision of Dennis O. Herndon and it is a noble one.



JUSTICE

There is a very good reason that we humans depict lady justice the way we do. She is blind – unable to see the color of skin or the manner of clothing worn by the people upon

whom she must pass judgment. To her, all people are equal. She carries a scale, the very symbol of equality, and she carries a sword, which, of course, symbolizes the swift punishment criminals must face when they fall afoul of society's rules.

In order for our great nation to function, each of these qualities must be brought to bear in the courtroom. It takes a special person to manage to uphold such righteous ideals and it is refreshing to actually observe such a man as he sets out to make his world a better place.

I desperately hope Mr. Herndon's high-road strategy works out well for him. He appears to be the embodiment of dignity and integrity, but I'm not entirely convinced the third judicial district of Monroe County is searching for a *real* judge. I suspect many of the residents of the third judicial district



are more interested in having a buddy on the bench than they are in ensuring that justice is served. We shall know for certain when the ballots are counted on the evening of August 28th.

In the meanwhile, the most important thing each of us can do is to get as many folks to the polls as possible on the day of the runoff. As in matters environmental where "dilution is the solution to pollution," so it is with elections. If we have a problem candidate with a significant supporter base (and we do), our only hope is to dilute her vote by flooding the race with as many new ballots as possible.

One might be tempted to hope that Haynes' supporters might be so busy resting upon their laurels they will feel safe enough to stay home on August 28th. Don't count on it. In the past few years, her constituency may have observed just how handy it can be to appear before a judge for whom you voted. (Which is precisely why the aforementioned judicial Canon steers candidates away from the untidy business of campaigning and the promises and/or indebtedness, which are occasionally made manifest in that process.)

We have the right to expect excellence in our judicial system. Moreover, we have an obligation to seek out and elect judicial candidates to whom the term "Your Honor" has a deeper, more fundamental meaning.

Please help elect Dennis O. Herndon on Tuesday.



A message for the voters of Monroe County from Dennis O. Herndon

On August 28th, 2007, there will be a run-off election for the position of Justice court Judge for the 3rd Judicial District of Monroe County. We are at a very critical time in the history of Monroe County where we the people can and should make a difference in what happens with our County justice system. We need to put aside our differences in race, friendships and family ties in order to do what is best for our county.

In order for us to have a better and safer place to raise our families, we need a Justice Court Judge who is willing to hold people accountable for their actions and to administer necessary and appropriate discipline using the laws of our state and county as the guidelines to apply the necessary actions.

I believe that all people are created equal in the sight of God, and that all people should be treated with RESPECT, HONESTY and FAIRNESS!

I am a life-long resident of Monroe County, living in the same community near McAllister Road for 47 years. I am married to Lisa Easley Herndon and have been for 21 years. We have three children, Matthew, Ethan and Rachel. We are members of Central Grove Baptist Church where I serve as Deacon, Sunday School Teacher and Music Director.

I believe my experience in dealing with people in all walks of life and in different situations qualifies me to be your next Justice Court Judge for the 3rd Judicial District of Monroe County.

I, Dennis O. Herndon, sincerely ask that each of you seek God's leadership in the way you vote on August 28th

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

Phone
369-7111
369-7112

Reflections

119 South Meridian Street
Aberdeen, MS 39730

Vickie Pace
Owner / Stylist

Dog Days

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well or how badly schools and school districts fared on the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT) for grades 2-8 and the Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) for high schools.

In releasing the test results, a composite score for each school or school district is given, along with the percentage of the students whose score placed them in one of four proficiency levels:

- Minimal – the lowest proficiency level.
- Basic – students are passing but need help.
- Proficient – students are doing well.
- Advanced – the highest proficiency level.

To put it into terms to which all of us can relate, these four groupings are similar to a modern-day report card, which grades students “A” through “F.”

- Minimal – these are the “F” students who are failing.
- Basic – these are the “D” students who are borderline, at best.
- Proficient – these are the low “B” and “C” students; the average, if you will.
- Advanced – these are the high “B” and “A” students.

The stated goal of the state department and that of all educators throughout Mississippi (including Aberdeen) is to have all their students perform at the proficient level or above.

In addition, these test scores, along with many other factors too complicated to mention, determine the level each school is assigned (to be released the first week in September). These rankings range from a Level 1 (unsuccessful) to a Level 5 (superior performing). In between are the schools ranked Level 2 (under performing), Level 3 (successful) and Level 4 (exemplary).

Again, to simplify these terms, Level 4 and Level 5 schools are the better schools; Level 1 districts are going to be taken over by the state; Level 2 schools are cause for alarm; and Level 3 schools, despite the

state’s “successful” tag, are nothing more than average schools – the middle of the pack. And remember, there is any number of Level 3 schools found throughout the state, so those districts toward the bottom of this grouping are much closer to Level 2 than they are to Level 4.

And that brings us to Webster’s second definition for “dog days,” which is: “A period of stagnation or inactivity” (rather appropriate for Aberdeen High School and Shivers Junior High).

Based on most (but not all) of Aberdeen’s reported test scores, there can be no doubt that “stagnation” applies to various parts of our school system (and has for the past 10 years or so), while “slip sliding away” would be a better description for the 7th grade through the 12th grades. As proof, we’ll start with the SATP scores for the high school, where it has been reported that AHS has dropped to a Level 2 school for possibly the first time in its history (under the current five-level scale).

(NOTE: The Subject Area Testing Program consists of five tests: Algebra, Biology, History, English II and Writing. What follows are the average scores for the state and Aberdeen, along with those for our Monroe County neighbors; Aberdeen’s overall rank in comparison to over three dozen North Mississippi schools and/or school districts; and the percentage of our students who tested out at the minimal, basic, proficient and advanced levels.)

Algebra I test scores: State average, 354.6; Aberdeen, 340.4; Amory, 371.3; Monroe County (Hamilton, Hatley and Smithville), 351.7.

Algebra I test score summary: Aberdeen’s score was 14.2 points under the state average and well below Amory and Monroe Co. Of 37 schools and/districts in Northeast Mississippi, Aberdeen was ranked four spots from the bottom (34th of 37). Booneville had the highest score at 420.9, over 80 points higher than Aberdeen. Incredibly enough, Tupelo Middle School posted a 408.9 average, which was 68.5 points better than Aberdeen *High School*.

Algebra I proficiency levels: State – 17.6% minimal, 26.7% basic, 35.4% proficient, 20.4% advanced; Aberdeen – 28.7% minimal, 31.9% basic, 24.5% proficient, 14.9% advanced; Amory – 8.7% minimal, 22.5% basic, 36.2% proficient, 32.6 advanced; Monroe County – 16.4% minimal, 31.5% basic, 34.5% proficient, 17.6% advanced.

Algebra I proficiency summary: No less than 60.6% of Aberdeen’s Algebra students fell into the minimal (28.7%) and basic (31.9%) proficiency levels (remember, these are the borderline and failing students).

Biology I test scores: State, 363.6; Aberdeen, 342.3; Amory, 357.6; Monroe County, 368.9.

Biology I test score summary: Aberdeen’s score was 21.3 points below the state average and again well under Amory and Monroe County. Of 36 schools/districts taking the Biology I test in Northeast Mississippi, Aberdeen was again ranked fourth from the bottom (33rd of 36). North Tippah had the highest average with a 413.0, 70.7 points higher than Aberdeen.

Biology I proficiency levels: State – 13.0% minimal, 18% basic, 39.6% proficient, 29.5 advanced; Aberdeen – 15.6% minimal, 36.4 basic, 35.1 proficient, 13% advanced; Amory – 14.2% minimal, 17.5% basic, 42.5% proficient, 25.8% advanced; Monroe County – 7.8% minimal, 18.2% basic, 45.5% proficient, 28.6% advanced.

Biology I proficiency summary: 52% of Aberdeen’s Biology I students finished in the minimal (15.6%) and basic (36.4%) proficiency levels.

History I test scores: State, 365.2; Aberdeen, 329.9; Amory, 358.9; Monroe County, 364.1.

History I test score summary: Aberdeen’s score was a whopping 35.3 points below the state average and again well below Amory and Monroe County. Of the 36 schools/districts taking the History I test in Northeast Mississippi, Aberdeen was ranked dead last (36th of 36). Booneville had the highest average score with a 409.6, 79.7 points higher than Aberdeen.

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Dog Days

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History I proficiency levels: State – 11.6% minimal, 25.2% basic, 39.6% proficient, 23.6% advanced; Aberdeen – 32% minimal, 44% basic, 21% proficient, 3% advanced; Amory – 10.5% minimal, 26.7% basic, 49.5% proficient, 13.3% advanced; Monroe County – 8.5% minimal, 22.9% basic, 48.4% proficient, 20.3% advanced.

History I proficiency summary: More than three out of four (76%) of Aberdeen's History I test-takers finished in the minimal (32%) and basic (44%) proficiency levels.

English II test scores: State, 326.5; Aberdeen, 310.8; Amory, 331.2; Monroe County, 329.2.

English II test score summary: Aberdeen's average was 15.7 points below the state average and again well under those of Amory and Monroe County. Of the 36 schools/districts taking the English II test in Northeast Mississippi, Aberdeen was tied with Oktibbeha County for next-to-last (tied for 34 of 36). Booneville had the highest average with a 346, 35.2 points higher than Aberdeen.

English II proficiency levels: State – 34.8% minimal, 34.2% basic, 26.6% proficient, 4.3% advanced; Aberdeen – 47.3% minimal, 33.3% basic, 17.2% proficient, 2.2% advanced; Amory – 27.6% minimal, 33.6% basic, 36.2% proficient, 2.6% advanced; Monroe County – 34.3% minimal, 34.3% basic, 28.6% proficient, 2.9% advanced.

English II proficiency summary: Nearly half (47.3%) of Aberdeen's test-takers dropped into the minimal proficiency level and over eight out of 10 (80.6%) were in the bottom two proficiency levels.

Writing test scores: State, 2.2; Aberdeen, 2.0; Amory, 2.2; Monroe County, 2.2.

(NOTE: The writing assessment test measures the ability of students to communicate in writing and is graded on a five-point scale – from 0-4. A score of two or better is passing.)

Writing test summary: Aberdeen, along with Oktibbeha County, Okolona and West Point, posted the lowest score (2.0) of the 36 Northeast Mississippi schools/districts.

Writing percent passing: State, 98.8%; Aberdeen, 96.7%; Amory, 100%; Monroe County, 100%.

Writing percent passing summary: Aberdeen ranked third from the bottom of the 36 Northeast Mississippi schools/districts, ahead of Corinth (95.6%) and Oktibbeha County (94.1%).

So, to recap, here are the hard, cruel facts pertaining to the most recent test scores at Aberdeen High School:

- AHS fell short of the state average in 17 of 18 measurable categories (not counting the proficiency level).
- On average, AHS fell 21.6 points below the state average on the Algebra I, Biology I, History I and English II tests.
- On average, 30.9% (three out of 10) of AHS test-takers fell into the lowest proficiency level (minimal), ranging from a low 15.6% in Biology I to a high of 47.3% in English II.
- On average, 36.4% (over three out of 10) of AHS test-takers fell into the second-lowest proficiency level (basic), ranging from a low of 31.9%

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**Monroe County,
save yourselves!
Don't give Adrian Haynes
another chance to steal
from the citizens!
Vote
Dennis O. Herndon
on August 28th.**

The political advertisement above was approved and happily paid for by the Viki Mason Committee to Stop Judicial Theft.

Members of the Aberdeen School Board

Elizabeth Clay

Leon Henley

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Royce Stephens



**RESPECT, HONESTY, AND FAIRNESS
TO ALL PEOPLE**

VOTE

DENNIS O. HERNDON

3RD DISTRICT

JUSTICE COURT JUDGE

AUGUST 28th, 2007



Phone 662-369-9164

**ABERDEEN
MUFFLER & BRAKE SHOP**

FERRELL MORRIS

20267 Coontail Road
Aberdeen, MS 39730

Found among our email treasures...

Words have always been my favorite toys. When you are a lexophile like me, little jewels like these are great treats...enjoy! VEM

- I wondered why the baseball was getting bigger. Then it hit me.
- Police were called to a day care where a three-year-old was resisting a rest.
- Did you hear about the guy whose whole left side was cut off? He's all right now.
- The roundest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference.
- The butcher backed up into the meat grinder and got a little behind in his work.
- To write with a broken pencil is pointless.
- When fish are in schools they sometimes take debate.
- The short fortune teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.
- The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine was fully recovered.
- A grenade fell onto a kitchen floor. The result was Linoleum Blownapart.
- A thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.
- A thief fell and broke his leg in wet cement. He became a hardened criminal.
- The math professor went crazy with the blackboard. He did a number on it.
- The professor discovered that her theory of earthquakes was on shaky ground.
- We'll never run out of math teachers because they always multiply.
- When the smog lifts in Los Angeles, U.C.L.A.
- The dead batteries were given out free of charge.
- A dentist and a manicurist fought tooth and nail.
- He broke into song because he couldn't find the key.
- A calendar's days are numbered.
- A lot of money is tainted: 'Taint yours, and 'taint mine.
- A boiled egg is hard to beat.
- He had a photographic memory which was not yet developed.
- A bicycle can't stand alone; it is two tired.
- A will is a dead giveaway.
- Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana.
- A dyslectic poet writes inverse.
- In a democracy it's your vote that counts; in feudalism, it's your Count that votes.
- If you don't pay your exorcist you can get repossessed.
- With her marriage she got a new name and a dress.
- When you've seen one shopping center you've seen a mall.
- If you jump off a Paris bridge, you are in Seine.
- Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead-to-know basis.
- Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses.
- Acupuncture: a jab well done.
- Local Hardware store in Australia: The LANN down under. **(Note to Big Walter: This shameless plug brought to you at no charge.)**

Dog Days

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in Algebra I to a high of 44% in History I.

- On average, 67.3% (two out of three) of AHS test-takers fell into the bottom two proficiency levels (minimal and basic).
- On average, just 8.3% (less than one in 10) of AHS test-takers finished in the top proficiency level (advanced), ranging from a low of 2.2% in English II to a high of 14.9% in Algebra I.

Caution, the no spin zone stops here: Aberdeen superintendent Lavon Fluker-Reed and her minions have in the past and will again point to the fact that the only proficiency group the state department is overly concerned with is the minimal, for the students who test out in this group are indeed failing.

So Reed's excuse will be that if you group the basic, proficient and advanced percentages together, we're doing just fine, thank you very much! (In much the same manner, Reed has in the past pointed with pride to the fact that most or all of her schools are Level 3 Successful. But again remember, with five levels of schools in this state, a Level 3 is in the middle of the pack – not failing, but not excelling either.)

But being a pragmatist, I look at our proficiency levels this way: True, those who fall into the basic group are indeed passing. But by the state's own defini-

tion, they need help and, because they are on the borderline between passing and failing, are only one short step away from failure. And it's the same for our test scores. Standing alone, they don't really tell the whole story. But when compared with the state average and with our neighboring schools in Northeast Mississippi, one gets a better picture of exactly where we stand in comparison.

So, based on the aforementioned test scores and proficiency level percentages, it's readily apparent to even the most casual observer that, despite the usual rosy picture painted by Reed as to her high school's performance, the job is not getting done at Aberdeen High School. To paraphrase the statement featured on the school's sign at the corner of Bulldog Boulevard, "Failure is not an option at Aberdeen High School, it's a certainty."

Next week: A look at Shivers and Prairie.



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369-4275

Monday thru Wednesday 5 am – 2 pm
Thursday and Friday 5 am – 9 pm



The Aberdeen Advocate

THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

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	<p><i>“Real improvement in our schools is not simply a matter of spending more, it is a matter of expecting more.”</i></p> <p>George W. Bush <i>(Amen, Brother Bush!)</i></p>	
	<p>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.</p>	

