



THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

# The Aberdeen Advocate

It was just over six years ago, about 24 hours into our marriage, when my handsome husband and I loaded a U-haul truck with my belongings and struck out from Montana southward. It was somewhere around Kansas City that we fell through the cosmic fault zone. Oh, I didn't notice it at first, but by the time I arrived a day or so later in beautiful downtown Aberdeen, Mississippi, I discovered that the world as I knew it had morphed into a place where things just didn't make sense anymore. I'm still wondering about all of that.

For example, I wonder sometimes how such nice people can make such stupid decisions. If we know, and we do, that our elected municipal leaders consistently fail to spend our tax dollars wisely, why do we keep electing them over and over again? Why do we stand silently by as they fail to improve our school system? How do we expect to grow as a community when we elect people who have demonstrated their total disregard for planning and preparing for the future? Do we honestly

expect prosperity to fall into our laps by magic? Can we hope to achieve better results by following the exact same process that failed us so miserably in the past? I wonder how long we can continue in this particular insanity.

Then there is the matter of the police department. Here, we often hire people right off the street who haven't the first bit of police training or experience. Then we give them a gun and loose them upon the public. We don't even bother to run a routine background check on them to see if they are loonytoons or criminal types before we arm them. We just send them out to keep the peace. We eventually get around to training them, but once they know what they are doing and/or try to do their job correctly, we reprimand them. We occasionally fire them for disrespecting an alderman or, as in two cases recently, subject them to public ridicule for stopping an alderman's

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### Correction!

It has come to my attention that I may have made an error in the August 13th edition of *The Advocate* when I stated that Tony Ewing assaulted Monroe County Tax Collector Nancy Stockton in 2005 when she refused to sell a vehicle tag to his business partner Steve Jamison.

When I re-interviewed my eyewitness at Steve Jamison's request, I learned that the vehicle tag *may* have been meant for another Ewing associate, one Norman Jamison, who happens to be Steve Jamison's brother.

If this is, indeed, the case, I sincerely regret the error and apologize for any inconvenience it may have caused Steve Jamison and his family. (Who, by the way, includes Tony Ewing who, as I understand it, is married to Jamison's daughter.) VEM

## Shivers Carbon Copy of High School

By Contributing Editor Don Rowe

In last week's edition of *The Aberdeen Advocate*, I chronicled the abysmal test scores turned in by Aberdeen High School – part of the reason AHS has reportedly dropped to a Level 2 school this year. This week, it's time to look at Shivers Junior High.

Unlike the high school, students in grades 2 through 8 take the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT), which includes three tests – reading, language and math—the results of which are released by the State Department of Educa-

tion in mid-August. These results reveal how well or how badly schools and school districts fared on the MCT.

To recap last week's article, 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 in which the students are failing. Basic – the second-lowest level in which the students are pass-

ing but need help. Proficient – students are doing well. Advanced – the highest proficiency level where the students are excelling.

To put it into terms all of us can relate to, these four groupings are similar to a modern-day report card, which grades students "A" through "F." Minimal – these are the "F" students who failing. Basic – these are the "D" students who

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# Wonderland

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brother-in-law or curbing a riotous mob of youngsters led by, of all people, a MINISTER!

We suspend our officers for taking a vehicle home, but do not take disciplinary action when one of them is arrested for allegedly peeking into an ex-wife's bedroom window. I wonder how or even why we expect these people to protect us.

Here, we allow five civilians (called aldermen) to ride roughshod over the duly elected Chief of Police. We allow these men to make the everyday decisions at the police department and encourage the Chief to simply sit down and shut up. Ultimately, the Chief, being a bright fellow, catches on to the fact that he is in the enviable position of being able to blame the aldermen for each and every mistake made by the entire department. (They never let the Chief do his job – how can he be at fault?)

Eventually he might learn to pass the buck well enough to make sure he is never held accountable. He can collect his paychecks and then, when serious problems arise, he is free to adopt a position of what I call "malicious obedience" by handing the issues off to the aldermen who dearly love to micromanage and who, of course, make matters much worse. He loses no "face," and they have mud on theirs.

I wonder what it would have been like if three years ago, instead of hoping the situation might be finessed into something more manageable, the Chief had taken a hard, no-nonsense stand and refused to abdicate his authority. What if he had really gone to the mat for fired officers Powell and Shelton? What if he had hired a lawyer and taken the aldermen to court over their interference? Would our officers today be able to simply arrest criminals for their criminal behavior without agonizing over how the perpetrator might be related to or affiliated with one of the aldermen? Would the morale of our police department be better? Yes. Would our police officers feel more confident in their roles as peace keepers? You bet. Would we be better off

with them working as a team? I wonder.

I wonder why, in a town with dozens of well-kept, stunningly beautiful old two-story buildings, we don't have a fire truck suited to battling multi-story blazes? I wonder why, when so much of what attracts visitors and their money to our



little village revolves around those old architectural treasures, we don't take steps to better protect them? I wonder if the problem lies in the fact that, to some, those lovely old mansions are symbols of slavery and, therefore, unworthy of protection. I wonder what kind of fool thinks like that.

We live in a community with the foresight to prohibit the placement of single-wide mobile homes. We have a zoning plan and a board to administer it. Why, I wonder, did we allow at least one single-wide to be affixed to a lot on Short Street last year over the objections of the Planning and Zoning board? I suppose it doesn't matter now since we've replaced the cantankerous board members with a new, more "reasonable" group of folks who are willing to bend that silly old zoning map when somebody wants a variance. Wonderful.

And now, with the votes counted in the runoff election, I wonder how the honest and upstanding members of the community we call Monroe County have managed to elect a judge who demonstrates total disregard for the law? This puzzle has me tearing my hair out. Is the act of making copies of campaign literature on a copy machine belonging to the citizens of Aberdeen somehow *not* stealing from the citizens? How can we excuse this kind of criminal behavior in, of all people, a judge? We must have taken leave of our senses. I suppose it is possible that here in Wonderland, we are so backward and so twisted in our thinking that we can no longer distinguish right from wrong. Or, perhaps the larger problem is, once

again, a matter of pigmentation.

I try valiantly, but still cannot comprehend the reasons why local black leaders seem to want to perpetuate the segregation icons like Dr. Martin Luther King fought so hard to end. Why, when white people recognize the talents and potential of a black candidate, does that candidate suddenly become an "Uncle Tom" in the eyes of his black neighbors? What's up with that? The result is that an excellent opportunity is lost and we are all poorer for it. I'll be wondering about that for a long, long time.

It puzzles me that, to some, it is more comfortable to cling to the role of victim even when equal opportunity stands before them with open arms. How can we be so quick to accept less in life when the world is rich and full and beckoning to us? Perhaps it's because some among us have been told for so long that we "can't" that we've begun to believe it. Perhaps we are afraid to even try. Could it be that others among us who call themselves "leaders" benefit from keeping us "under the circumstances?" After all, if people learn to be more, will they not learn to expect more from their public servants? Yes. I'll bet that's it. I wonder how those "leaders" sleep at night.

I am inclined to agree with Alice. It all just gets curiously and curiously.

## Your Municipal Officials

**Cecil Belle, Mayor**

**369-4165**

**Ward 1 Alderman Alonzo Sykes**

**369-7705**

**Ward 2 Alderman Cloyd Garth**

**369-5734**

**Ward 5's OTHER Alderman Willie Cook**

**369-9156**

**Ward 4 Alderman Brunson Odom**

**369-2246**

**Ward 5 Alderman Jim Buffington**

**369-4985**

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369-2188



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are folks to help us maintain our  
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heart with these loveable critters.

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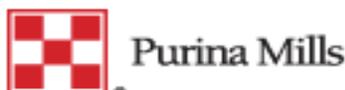


Somewhere between Bassett  
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something called a Bassadore. We  
have two such charming crea-  
tures! Get 'em while they last!

Furry friends like those depicted above are available for adoption at the Aberdeen Animal Shelter. We welcome gifts and donations of all kinds. Currently, due to our feline population, dry kitten chow is desperately needed! Also, gifts of laundry detergent and chlorine bleach are always appreciated.

Please find room in your heart and home to adopt one of these homeless pets.

**MATTOX FEED MILL AND NURSERY**  
**123 NORTH MAPLE STREET—ABERDEEN**  
**369-4546**



# Shivers Carbon Copy of High School

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are border line, 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. Please note: 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.

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.)

**Eighth-grade reading test scores:** State average, 554.9; **Aberdeen’s average, 541.0;** Amory’s average, 567.3; Monroe County’s average, 547.7.

**Eighth-grade reading summary:** Aberdeen’s score was 13.9 points under the state average, 26.3 points below Amory and 6.7 points worse than Monroe County. Of the 38 schools and/or districts in Northeast Mississippi, Aberdeen’s test score ranked 34th out of 38.

**Eight-grade reading proficiency levels:** State – 19% minimal, 28.4% basic, 38.7% proficient, 12.9% advanced; **Aberdeen – 25.6% minimal, 35.7% basic, 32.6% proficient, 6.2% advanced;** Amory – 14.7% minimal, 17.2% basic; 45.4% proficient, 22.7% advanced; Monroe County – 22.2% minimal, 30.4% basic, 37.7% proficient, 9.7% advanced.

**Eighth-grade reading proficiency level summary:** One out of four (25.6%) of Aberdeen’s students finished at the minimal level and over six of 10 (61.3%) of Aberdeen’s test-takers fell into the minimal and

basic (35.7%) proficiency levels. Remember, these are the failing (minimal) and borderline (basic) students. Also take note of the fact that only 6.2% of Aberdeen’s eighth-grade students made a score high enough to rank them in the advanced proficiency level – half that of the state average (12.9) and well under Amory’s 22.7%.

**Eighth-grade language test scores:** State, 559.3; **Aberdeen, 548.7;** Amory, 576.5; Monroe County, 558.3.

**Eighth-grade language summary:** Aberdeen’s score was 10.6 points under the state average, 27.8 points below Amory and 9.6 points below Monroe County. Aberdeen’s test score ranked fourth from the bottom (35th of 38).

**Eighth-grade language proficiency levels:** State – 7.4% minimal, 36.7% basic, 42.5% proficient; 13.3% advanced; **Aberdeen – 9.4% minimal, 46.9% basic, 36.7% proficient, 7% advanced;** Amory – 5.5% minimal, 18.4% basic; 50.3% proficient, 25.8% advanced; Monroe County – 7.7% minimal, 36.7% basic, 41.5% proficient, 14% advanced.

**Eighth-grade language proficiency level summary:** Over half (56.3%) of Aberdeen’s eighth-graders finished in the minimal and basic proficiency levels. Too, just 7% of Aberdeen’s eighth-graders managed to test out at the advanced level, approximately half that of the state and Monroe County and well behind Amory’s 25.8%.

**Eighth-grade math test scores:** State, 587.8; **Aberdeen, 564.9;** Amory, 606.1; Monroe County, 586.1.

**Eighth-grade math summary:** Aberdeen’s score was 22.9 points under the state average, 41.2 points below Amory and 21.2 points below Monroe County. Aberdeen’s math test score ranked third from the bottom (36th of 38).

**Eighth-grade math proficiency levels:** State – 21.6% minimal, 24.6% basic, 29.5% proficient; 24.3% advanced; **Aberdeen – 30.2% minimal, 34.9% basic, 21.7% proficient, 13.2% advanced;** Amory – 14.1% minimal, 17.8% basic; 24.5% proficient, 43.6% advanced; Monroe County – 21.5% minimal, 24.9% basic, 34.1% proficient,

19.5% advanced.

**Eighth-grade math proficiency level summary:** Three out of 10 (30.2) Aberdeen eighth-grade students failed the math portion of the MCT and if the basic students (34.9) are added, nearly seven out of 10 (65.1%) students who took the test finished in the lowest two proficiency levels (minimal and basic). In addition, just 13.2% of Aberdeen’s eighth-graders managed to test out at the advanced level, approximately half that of the state (24.3%) and well behind Amory’s 43.6%.

**Seventh-grade reading test scores:** State, 540.9; **Aberdeen, 519.1;** Amory, 541.4; Monroe County, 540.5.

**Seventh-grade reading summary:** Aberdeen’s score was 21.8 points under the state average, 22.3 points below Amory and 21.4 points below Monroe County. Aberdeen’s test score ranked fifth from the bottom (34th of 38).

**Seventh-grade reading proficiency levels:** State – 16.9% minimal, 25.1% basic, 38.7% proficient; 19.3% advanced; **Aberdeen – 21.7% minimal, 37.2% basic, 34.9% proficient, 6.2% advanced;** Amory – 18.4% minimal, 19.9% basic; 39.0% proficient, 22.8% advanced; Monroe County – 18.4% minimal, 23% basic, 37.8% proficient, 20.7% advanced.

**Seventh-grade reading proficiency level summary:**

Again, three out of 10 (21.7%) Aberdeen students finished in the minimal proficiency level and nearly six out of 10 (58.9%) fell into the bottom two proficiency levels. In the advanced grouping, Aberdeen’s paltry 6.2% fell well short of the state average of 19.3%, Amory’s 22.8% and Monroe County’s 20.7%.

**Seventh-grade language test scores:** State, 550.3; **Aberdeen, 535.4;** Amory, 557.3; Monroe County, 552.5.

**Seventh-grade language summary:** Aberdeen’s seventh-grade language





Phone 662-369-9164

**ABERDEEN  
MUFFLER & BRAKE SHOP**

FERRELL MORRIS

20267 Coontail Road  
Aberdeen, MS 39730

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# Shivers Carbon Copy of High School

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14.9 points under the state average, 21.9 points below Amory and 17.1 points below Monroe County. Aberdeen's test score ranked sixth from the bottom (33rd of 38).

**Seventh-grade language proficiency levels:** State – 9.7% minimal, 36.3% basic, 40.9% proficient; 13.1% advanced; **Aberdeen – 13.3% minimal, 42.2% basic, 38.3% proficient, 6.3% advanced;** Amory – 11.8% minimal, 27.9% basic; 42.6% proficient, 17.6% advanced; Monroe County – 7.4% minimal, 37.7% basic, 40.5% proficient, 14.4% advanced.

**Seventh-grade language proficiency level summary:** Once again, over half (55.5%) of Aberdeen's seventh-graders finished in the minimal and basic proficiency levels. Too, just 6.3% of Aberdeen's seventh-graders managed to test out at the advanced level, half that of the state and Monroe County and approximately one-third of Amory's 17.6%.

**Seventh-grade math test scores:** State, 576.2; **Aberdeen, 549.3;** Amory, 585.3; Monroe County, 573.6.

**Seventh-grade math summary:** Aberdeen's score was 26.9 points under the state average, 36 points below Amory and 24.3 points below Monroe County. Aberdeen's test score ranked second worst (37th of 38), ahead of only Holly Springs.

**Seventh-grade math proficiency levels:** State – 21.9% minimal, 15% basic, 30.4% proficient; 32.7% advanced; **Aberdeen – 41.4% minimal, 17.2% basic, 26.6% proficient, 14.8% advanced;** Amory – 15.4% minimal, 14% basic; 30.9% proficient, 39.7%



advanced; Monroe County – 22.4% minimal, 11.2% basic, 36.9% proficient, 29.4% advanced.

### Seventh-grade math proficiency

**level summary:** Over four out of 10 (41.4%) of Aberdeen's seventh-graders failed the math portion of the MCT and almost six in 10 (58.6%) finished in the two lowest proficiency levels. At the advanced level, the state (32.7%), Amory (39.7%) and Monroe County (29.4%) all finished well ahead of Aberdeen (14.8%).

To recap: Shivers finished under the state average on the six tests by an average of 18.5 points. Shivers' proficiency level percentages were worse than the state average in all 18 of the minimal, basic and advanced levels. On average,

23.6% (almost one in four) of Shivers' test-takers finished at the lowest proficiency level (minimal), ranging from a low of 9.4% in eighth-grade language to a high of 41.4% in seventh-grade math. On average, 35.7% (almost four in 10) of Shivers' students fell into the second lowest proficiency level (basic), ranging from a low of 17.2% in seventh-grade math to a high of 46.9% in eighth-grade language. On average, over four in 10 (42.5%) of Shivers' students fell into the lowest two proficiency levels (minimal and basic). Conversely, less than one in 10 (8.95%) Shivers' students tested out at the advanced proficiency level.

So, based on the aforementioned test scores and proficiency level percentages, is it any wonder local parents – both black and white – have pulled their children out of Aberdeen's school system and enrolled them elsewhere in Monroe County and at Oak Hill in West Point? To be sure, racial considerations have most assuredly played a part in what Aberdeen superintendent Lavon-Fluker Reed calls the district's "white flight," but the underlying concern of most of those parents was the undeniable fact that their children were not going to receive a top-notch education at Aberdeen High School or Shivers Junior High.

## Our first anniversary—And now, phase two

This month, *The Aberdeen Advocate* will celebrate its first birthday! It was just a year ago that the local newspaper stopped publishing my "controversial" weekly column and I suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, found myself in the publishing business.

When I became a "Newspaper Typhoon" my goals were simple: I wanted to continue my efforts to expose waste and mismanagement in local government by getting the truth into as many hands and minds as possible. I believe we have been successful in doing that.

As I've told you before, the one rule I had from the beginning is that *The Advocate* could not become a financial burden on my family. (Bad enough that they must so often fend for themselves while I spend countless hours at

this keyboard.)

In phase-one of our operation, thanks to the monetary support of several local businesses, we have managed to print an average of 500 hard copies of our paper each week for free distribution.

We now enjoy a healthy subscribership and an amazingly active presence on the internet. (In the week leading up to Monroe County's primary election, our website saw over 37,000 individual "hits.") As a matter of fact, in a recent reader survey, we learned that most of you read your *Advocate* online. With that in mind we begin our second year by significantly downsizing the number of hard copies we pay to print and distribute each week.

Effective September 10th, 2007, we will no longer be accepting advertisements for this publication. Instead, we will be printing only the number of copies required to fulfill our obligation to our subscribers who will, of course, be serviced as always.

If your business is already a distribution site for *The Advocate* and/or if you wish to make complimentary copies of *The Advocate* available to your customers, we will be delighted to order additional copies and supply them to you for the cost of printing—25¢ each.

We remain deeply grateful for your support and, as always welcome your questions and comments. Please don't hesitate to call us at 662-369-0449.



# The Aberdeen Advocate

## THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

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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.

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*"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.*

*"Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat. "We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."*

*"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.*

*"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."*

*Lewis Carroll*