

# Opinions, yours and ours

## Jockey speaks with “forked” tongue

Jockey International’s best-kept secret was released last Wednesday morning on an unsuspecting workforce and community, creating havoc and disbelief among all. The announcement that 203 workers at the local plant would lose their jobs to foreign counterparts is devastating.

Jockey International has been a major employer of the citizens of this county for over 55 years, providing a means of financial security for approximately 300 persons. The sudden removal of that financial support will have an enormous economic impact upon the workers, their families and this community.

Adding insult to injury is the fact that Jockey President and Chief Operating Officer Ed Emma only last year told employees and *The Millen News* that approval of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) would provide security for local jobs. Jockey top executives even lobbied Congressman John Barrow with the same message, seeking his approval of the legislation.

CAFTA was approved, yet the local Jockey jobs are now on the chopping block with Jockey executives saying that CAFTA played no role in their decision. Mr. Emma now blames changes in the industry and the increasing cost of products and raw materials for the loss of local jobs.

Cong. Barrow opposed CAFTA believing it would only shift more American jobs overseas. Jockey has proven him right this week, and Jockey executives appear to speak with a “forked” tongue as local employees face an uncertain future.

## The Chatter Box

By Deborah Bennett

The news last week that Jockey International is closing its sewing operations at the Millen plant was a shocker to everyone. Rumors have circulated from time-to-time in recent years to this effect, but until last week it was only rumors.

Most of the employees at Jockey have been there for many years, and this is like a death in the family for them. Not only are they losing the financial security upon which they have relied for so long, but also the personal contact with coworkers who have become friends through the years.

Employees will be eligible for longtime benefits and retraining from the Georgia Department of Labor and other sources. While this is certainly good news in the midst of bad, it does not, in my opinion, change the severity of the situation. When 203 persons lose their jobs, it is “bad”, regardless of the benefits available to them. It is doubtful that the benefits will measure up to what the employees are accustomed to earning.

I have spoken to several employees over the past week and the one thing I have gotten from every conversation is that these people are used to “working” for a living, and the idea of not having a job to go to every day is devastating for them. They want to “earn” a living rather than be dependent upon “benefits.”

I sincerely hope and pray that each of them will be able to do just that in the future.

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Happy birthday this week to: Margaret Larisey, Jimmy Knight, Jerry Dailey, Felicia Dailey, Christian Chance, Frank Wilson, Aaron Tanner and Amanda Elizabeth Bragg, Dougie Spinger, Betty Coulter, Loretta Price, Tammy Jenkins, Larry Jenkins and Dreta Kent.

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Celebrating wedding anniversaries this week are: The Rev. and Mrs. Steven Adams and Dr. and Mrs. Joe Griffin.

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Military Active Duty List: **SPC Grade E4 Arthur Lamont Milton Jr.**, HHC 1-36 Infantry Support, Friedberg, Germany; **Staff Sgt. Gilbert C. Sheppard III**, 48<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 118<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, Ft. Stewart; **Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Jamie A. Yager**, U.S. Navy, Maryland; **Petty Chief Officer Andy D. Crosby**, U.S. Navy, Elroy Destroyer, Norfolk, Va.; **Stephanie Crosby, R.N.**, U.S. Navy, Lafayette Destroyer; **LCPL Dwain “Cade” Lee**, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division Combat Service Support Group II Security Element, ArRamadi, Iraq; **Jimmy Cooper**, U.S. Army National Guard, 878<sup>th</sup> Engineering Battalion-Augusta, Persian Gulf; **1<sup>st</sup> Lt. J.R. Taylor**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, Iraq; **SPC. Daniel Stuart**, 18<sup>th</sup> MEDCOM, 121 General Hospital, Seoul, Korea; **SFC Floyd Bolton Jr.**, 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 159<sup>th</sup> Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, Ft. Campbell, Kentucky; **SFC Maria Bolton**, 61<sup>st</sup> Medical Detachment, 21<sup>st</sup> Combat Support Hospital, 4<sup>th</sup> Medical Brigade, Ft. Campbell, Kentucky; **1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Andrew P. Thomas**, U.S. Marines, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, F.A.S.T. Company, Yorktown, VA; **Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Steven Yager**, 362<sup>nd</sup> Sig. Company, Korea; **MM3 Jeffrey Sweat**, U.S. Navy, USS Kauffman, MM3 59/E-Division, A-Gang, Norfolk, Va.; **Cpl. Larry Lamont Clark**, U.S. Marine Corp, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C. Bagdad, Iraq; **Khan Young**, U.S. Navy, U.S.S. Kitty Hawk, Persian Gulf; **Robert Milton Jr.**, E-3, U.S. Army, Ft. Stewart, Hinesville, Ga., Mission Kuwait; **SFC Ronnie Perryman**, E-7, Georgia Army National Guard, Battery A, 118th Field Artillery Regiment, 48<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team; **Arnold R. Mosley**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt., U.S. Air Force, Randolph AFB, Texas; and **Debra A. Mosley**, Tech. Sgt., U.S. Air Force, Randolph AFB, Texas.



## Bill Shipp

### A NOVEL STRATEGY

Gov. Sonny Perdue and Lt. Gov. Mark Taylor should take a close look at the wreckage of Ralph Reed’s primary campaign. They might figure out quickly why Reed lost his bid for lieutenant governor.

Most voters did not believe what he said. They did not believe Reed was mostly motivated to fight Texas casino gambling and the Alabama lottery because of his Christian beliefs.

Voters did not believe RR could be innocent of the origins of \$4 million in fees paid his firm to fight gambling in Texas. Nor did voters believe his association with corrupt Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff was rooted in friendship instead of greed.

They also did not believe Reed helped Pacific Island sweatshops avoid U.S. labor laws because he wanted to “promote family values.”

Disbelief was the common thread linking all the stated excuses for Reed’s downfall. So ...

If Georgia voters did not believe Reed, why would they believe Gov. Perdue when he says the state’s economy is booming? Georgia ranks at the bottom among the states in net creation of jobs. A major pharmaceutical company just announced it would not locate its plant in Georgia because North Carolina offered a better-trained workforce. Gasoline selling for more than \$3 a gallon and crude oil for nearly \$80 a barrel do not portend boom times.

If voters did not believe Reed, why would they believe Lt. Gov. Taylor when he takes credit for the lottery and the HOPE scholarship? Just about everybody knows that the lottery and the education scholarship were election-year gimmicks created by campaign strategist James Carville to help Zell Miller win the governor’s office.

For Perdue and Taylor, the lesson of Ralph Reed is obvious. Tell the truth. No matter how bad it looks, glossing over reality or trying to make a bad situation look good won’t work. Voters are wising up – I think and I hope.

What if Perdue and Taylor tried the un-Reed strategy of laying out the truth about Georgia and explaining what they intend to do about our truly awful state of affairs?

For instance, suppose both candidates admitted that public education in Georgia has turned into little more than a jobs program for teachers who are paid more and more while students achieve less and less.

What if the candidates told us that the Legislature is now owned by out-of-control environmental despoilers who will do anything, pave anything and build anything just to make a few bucks? What if the guys who aspire to be the next governor said they intend to try to control growth and clean up the air and water to improve Georgians’ quality of life? What if they made such an unusual pledge, and it turned out to be the truth?

Consider what might happen if the candidates came clean and told the voters this: “The much-touted reformed medical malpractice law is a fraud. The so-called tort reform laws did not reduce doctors’ insurance premiums. In fact they rose. It did nothing but make it impossible for little people to sue butcher physicians and their insurance carriers. Malpractice tort reform was sold as a boon to the middle class. Instead, it was simply a way for insurance companies to reap more prof-

its. It stripped regular folks of their right to seek legal redress for injuries.”

Or suppose the candidates stepped before the cameras and declared: “The gay-marriage issue is a scam. Gay marriage in Georgia is no threat to conventional nuptials. Never has been. Never will be. Gay marriage was meant to divert attention from real stuff. That’s all. And, oh yeah, all that talk about how activist judges might decree same-sex marriages as valid — that was just bull, too. There may be one or two trial judges who ought to have their heads screwed on tighter. However, Georgia’s appellate bench is about as conservative and dull and precedent-bound as they come. We promise to appoint qualified and experienced judges. That’s the truth.”

“As for Voter ID – that was an idea dreamed up by a back-bench state senator who yearned for more media exposure. We let it get out of hand. Yes, indeed, that law worked a hardship on old people who have no drivers’ license and, yes, the KKK branch of the GOP thought the law might keep blacks away from the polls. Voter ID made Georgians look like saps on the national stage – again. Voter ID is the kind of thing that hurts us in recruiting new industry and promoting tourism. It makes us seem backward and racist. We promise not to travel down that road any more, and that’s the truth.”

Thirty years ago, Jimmy Carter pledged, “I will never lie to the people.” That simple declaration helped him win the presidential nomination and move into the White House. How well he kept his promise is a matter of debate. Yet, the recycled idea of swearing to speak truth ought to have appeal in this age of trying to remake the real, flawed Georgia into something that it is not. So perhaps the gubernatorial candidates will consider a campaign based on truth-telling even if their consultants tell them it is a lousy idea.

It’s just a thought. I don’t expect it to be taken seriously. Even the candidates have difficulty separating truth from fantasy. Still, voters seemed to know the difference in the Cagle-Reed match, and they might see the light in the Taylor-Perdue contest as well.

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## Letters policy

Letters to the editor of *The Millen News* are welcomed and encouraged. These are pages of opinions, yours and ours.

The unsigned editorials generally appearing on the left side of the editorial page represent the opinion of the newspaper and not that of any one person on our staff. Personal columns represent the opinions of the writers whose names appear on them and are not to be considered the opinion of this newspaper, its management or owners. Letters to the editor voice the opinions of the newspaper’s readers.

*The Millen News* reserves the right to edit any and all portions of a letter. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters must include the signature, address and phone number of the writer to allow our staff to authenticate its origin. Letters should be limited to 500 words.

## The Millen News Deadlines

**FRIDAY AT NOON:**

Wedding Announcements  
Engagement Announcements  
Anniversary Announcements  
Birth Announcements  
Memories and Thank You’s

**FRIDAY-5PM:**

School News, Letters to the Editor, Chatter Box Items, General News Items

**MONDAY-10 AM:**

Datebook Items, Church News & Obituaries

**MONDAY-11 AM:**

Classified & Legal Ads

**MONDAY-NOON:**

Retail Display Ads