

Haddens Deny Allegations in USMRF Case

HATTIESBURG – Former USM employees Richard and Helene Hadden have, according to *The Hattiesburg American's* Ed Kemp, denied any claims of wrongdoing being made by the USM Research Foundation against them vis-à-vis Richard Hadden's management of a USMRF-owned commercial concern. As Kemp's 21-July-2010 [report](#) reminds readers, the Haddens are alleged to have perpetrated a breach of trust in an \$860,000 stock purchase involving the Haddens' Saone Corporation and the USMRF's Pinion Properties LLC. Richard Hadden was, as Kemp points out, Pinion's managing agent at the time of the 2008 purchase, as well as USM's director of strategic venture development. In his capacity as USM's DSVD, Hadden was paid a salary of \$150,000 per year. Hadden's wife, Helene, also served USM as a visiting research assistant.

Mississippi Auditor Stacey Pickering is investigating the claim that, in 2008 under Hadden, Pinion purchased a large number of shares in the Haddens' Saone Corporation. These shares were sold to Pinion for \$860,000. As Kemp explains, a few months later in 2008 Pinion sold the shares back to Saone for only \$38,671, resulting in a 96% loss for the USMRF. Kemp explains that also on the day the stock shares were returned to Saone, Richard Hadden "entered into a services agreement with Pinion as manager of a newly-formed company called JMH Consulting that would pay him \$260,000 per year." This agreement was, according to Kemp, signed off on by the then chair of Pinion *and* the USMRF, Jay Grimes. Long-time readers of USMNEWS.net will recall that Grimes served as the USM provost during the Shelby Thames administration (2002-07).

Pinion alleges that Hadden's duties to USM as Pinion's managing agent were nearly identical to those that he agreed to provide for JMH Consulting with regard to Pinion. Thus, as Kemp suggests, the USMRF alleges that Hadden was being paid twice by the USMRF for managing Pinion. The total sum for that allegedly singular effort was a whopping \$410,000 per year. If allegations prove true, the Haddens, who now live in Maryland, were garnered more than \$1 million from USM/the USMRF during the relatively brief time period covered by the alleged activities. Of course, this sum will remind USM faculty and staff of the oft-promised "USM millionaires" reward Thames once promoted for so-called enterprising and innovative USM employees.

As Kemp indicates, the USMRF board consisted of Grimes, former USM VP Cecil Burge, USM associate vice president Julian Allen, Jan Lacy, Lawrence Warren and Brad Brian during the time covered by these allegations. Long-time USM faculty will recall that Warren and Brian were staunch supporters of Thames. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that Warren is believed to have made millions from contracts to provide roads and sidewalks throughout the USM campus in Hattiesburg. According to Kemp's report, USM president Martha Saunders "shook up the board" in late 2009, in order to comply with IHL guidelines. Forrest County DA Jon Mark Weathers now serves as chairman of the USMRF.