

Dean Chatterbox

by Duane Cobb

"Elliott's eye was on the future. He would never stab you in the back or cut your throat -- he did so many things that document how outstanding, how truly fine a man he was."

CoB Dean Harold Doty on the late CoAL Dean, Elliott Pood
The Hattiesburg American, 19 January 2007

If you want to give your institution a bad public impression, then the CoB's (almost-)Gen X Dean, Harold Doty, is your man. If it isn't enough that he goes to Tampa to interview for a Dean position at USF and tells the world that the "fun money" is private money, we now have the latest gaffe courtesy of a front page article in the 19 January 2007 *Hattiesburg American*.

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That front-page article is dedicated to the late Elliott Pood, the Dean of USM's College of Arts & Letters who passed away suddenly on 18 January 2007. There is little doubt, given his position in the Hattiesburg community, that the Pood family, as well as all of those friends, local and distant, who cared about Dr. Pood expected nothing less than a front page story in the local paper about his life as a family man and his contributions to his community and to academia. Well, true to form, what the *Hattiesburg American* sought to deliver the CoB's Dean took away.

When asked to describe Dean Pood, Doty started strong, but fizzled quickly. In almost his first breath about Pood, Doty said, "He would never stab you in the back or cut your throat . . ." Thus, after more than three years of working closely with Pood, and reportedly spending time with Pood as a friend, the first thing Doty can think of is to say that Dean Pood compares favorably, as a person, to O.J. Simpson.

I don't imagine that the Poods and their friends and relatives ever expected to see the phrases ". . . stab you in the back . . ." and ". . . cut your throat . . .," even if stated in the negative and

meant only figuratively, written in a newspaper article commemorating the life of Dean Pood. It is also unlikely that many people were able to continue reading the article without having this remark cloud the whole experience. What was to have been a keepsake for all Pood's family and friends is forever tarnished by Doty's words. Thus, this episode, like so many before it, shows us that the "black eye" that Doty is on the CoB stems from much more than simply his deeds.

No one loves to hear Dean Doty talk more than Doty himself. And, as long as Doty remains as Dean of the CoB, the entire "USM family" will continue to pay the price of bad publicity that often comes from the enjoyment that Doty gets from hearing himself speak.

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Of course, the next USM president can "down-size" these costs away, and should. Whether that happens, or whether the "USM family" decides to keep paying the bill, remains to be seen. One thing is certain -- if Doty is retained, that bill will not only continue to arrive, it will have to be paid. After more than three years on the job, it seems clear that Doty is incapable of acting any other way.