

# Anne Jordan's Case Typifies USM

by Duane Cobb

Anita Lee's (of *The Sun Herald*) article in the 19-July-07 issue of *The Hattiesburg American* entitled "Despite long legal fight, woman hasn't gotten \$300K from USM" describes an historical situation involving former USM professor Anne Jordan that typifies the sort of malevolence that seems to ooze out of the administrative corridors of USM. In her final year before retirement, Jordan was fired by USM administrators. In January of 1995, Jordan sued USM for wrongful termination. Nine years later Jordan's suit came before Judge Robert Helfrich and a Mississippi jury in State court. The jury found in favor of Jordan, and awarded her \$300,000 in damages. That was 2004. Three years later, in 2007, Jordan, now 71, has yet to receive any money from USM.

According to Jordan, "When I finally got into the courts, I really expected to be treated fairly. I think it's USM's strategy to just put it off and put it off and the court is complying with that." Lee questioned USM counsel Lee Gore about the delays. Gore told Lee that USM is not to blame for the delays because USM petitioned to move the case to federal court after it was filed by Jordan in 1995. Gore says this was done to avoid the growing backlog of cases in the State Circuit Court system. To that we echo "tiggersmom," who states in *The Hattiesburg American's* online forum: "Gore's answer addresses why the suit took nine years. What is his answer as to why nearly three years later, this lady doesn't have her money?" Great response and question, "tiggersmom." We'd like some clarification on that issue as well.

Though Lee's news report focuses on the length of Jordan's quest for damages, the particulars of Jordan's case are interesting to those of us following events at USM and the CoB in recent years. According to Lee's account, Jordan's troubles began when she started administering a grant (at USM) during the early 1990s. According to Lee's report, Jordan discovered that a USM administrator was misappropriating grant funds and she recounted this story to one or more USM administrators. USM's response was to fire Jordan, a move that was backed by then-USM President Aubrey Lucas.

It was about this same time that the CoB's Trellis Green, then an assistant professor of economics, filed a lawsuit against Lucas, then-CBA Dean Tyrone Black, then-EIB Chair George Carter, and former USM VP for Academic Affairs David Huffman. Green filed for wrongful denial of promotion (to associate professor), and in State Circuit Court as well. Three years later USM and the four named defendants settled out-of-court with Green, who was awarded promotion, a \$4,000 per year raise, and an undisclosed financial settlement.

What is it with USM administrators? It's like a flawed paint-by-numbers scheme that goes something like 1 – make bad decision, 2 – cover it up and delay, 3 – end up in court, and 4 – settle out of court/get creamed in court. Jordan told on an administrator, and *she* (Jordan) was fired. That rings familiar. Frank Glamser and Gary Stringer told on an administrator (former USM VP for Research Angeline Dvorak) in late 2003 and got fired (by former USM President Shelby Thames) in early 2004. What were Glamser and Stringer ultimately awarded? Two years full pay from USM, even though they were teaching elsewhere (Tulane and Texas A&M, respectively). Talk about a windfall.

I wonder if Jordan sought the advice of associates regarding "what to do" with the information on the administrator's malfeasance. We know Glamser did. He asked George Carter, the same EIB Chair who had earlier settled out-of-court with Green, what he (Glamser) should do with the information about the potentially fraudulent vita claim made by Dvorak. Carter, whose vita states he was the Mississippi Commissioner of Higher Education in 1987, told Glamser to report the potential transgression to Thames. Thames fired Glamser.

Yes, Anne Jordan's case typifies the way things work at USM. Messengers get shot. Potentially bad acts aren't investigated properly. At least we learned something new from Lee's article, and that is Gore actually wants USM plaintiffs to get speedy trials. If that's so, why doesn't he support former CISE professor Melissa Whiting's request to be heard in federal court?