

There's No Denying It, They Were All There

by Duane Cobb

The opinion that the 2002-07 USM Presidency of Shelby F. Thames was an unmitigated disaster is one that is widely held. One gets glimpses of why this is so from (the pages of) the various news media (e.g., *The Hattiesburg American*, *The Clarion Ledger*, *The Student Printz*, etc.) and web blogs (e.g., the *USM Forum -- to build trust, a team and a campus -- Message Board*, *Liberty & Power*, *USMNEWS.NET*, etc.) that reported on the USM issues of the day. One can also sense the devastation wrought on the institution (USM) by the Thames administration from the oral histories passed on by those (faculty, staff, students, etc.) who were "there" during that awful time. In addition to these, former USM professor Theron Manley's novel -- *Quest for the Mace* -- paints an entertaining picture of the mess that was the Thames administration. There is little doubt that future written histories, as they appear one by one, will do so as well.

If we took stock in just what the phrase "the Thames administration" means, many would quickly respond by reciting the names of (arguably) its two highest-profile figures -- former President Shelby Thames, and Thames' former Provost, Jay Grimes. Beyond these two, names like Tim Hudson, Ken Malone and Dana Thames also play a prominent role in stories about the demise of USM whilst in the clutches of "the Thames administration." Even the once-revered Aubrey K. Lucas, another former USM President, will never be viewed by much of the "USM family" in the same adoring light because of his reticence to speak publicly against the misdeeds of Shelby Thames and those of whom participants on the *USM Forum* refer to as Thames' "minions."

Consistency dictates that, if Lucas faces denigration for his *inaction*, those who took *active* roles in the Thames' administration be called to account for their decisions. That holds for the CoB, as well as for other parts of the USM family. To answer this call, this column calls out those current and former CoB faculty who, by their decisions to retain or accept administrative posts during 2002-07, were also part of "the Thames administration." One only has to sit at the altar of the CoB's ethicist-in-residence, George Carter, to understand why being part of the CoB administration from 2002-07 meant being part of the Thames administration. It's plain and simple: at schools like USM, lower level administrators represent upper level administrators, not their faculty. USM, like so many other Tier IV institutions, runs on the plantation model, wherein terms like "faculty governance" are, to borrow a famous phrase, nothing more than "punch line[s]" in a joke.

Those current and former CoB faculty who "served in" the Thames administration are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1
Current and Former CoB Faculty Who Served in the Thames Administration of USM, 2002-07

Name	Position
Babin, Barry	Chair of MGT & MKT
Becker, Cherylynn	Chair of TM
Carter, George	Chair of EFIB
Doty, Harold	Dean of CBED (CoB)
Gunther, William	Dean of CBA (CBED)
Jackson, Steven	Interim Director of SAIS
Klinedinst, Mark	Chair of EFIB
Lewis, Stanley	Interim Director of SAIS
Niroomand, Farhang	Associate Dean of CBA (CBED) [CoB]
Peyrefitte, Joseph	Interim Associate Dean of CoB
Posey, Roderick	Director of SAIS
Williams, Alvin	I Interim Dean of CoB; Chair of MGT & MKT; Interim Chair of TM

Notes: Babin is now chair of marketing at Louisiana Tech University. Lewis is now on the faculty at Troy University. Williams is set to join the faculty of the University of South Alabama as the *Distinguished Professor of Marketing* after June 30, 2008.

Think about the list above for a moment. It contains 12 names. Sure, there could've been more, but these are the big ones. Two, maybe three, of these 12 has had an academic career comprising noteworthy scholarship. All but perhaps one of the 12 has been involved in one misdeed or other that has been reported by at least one of the print/online media listed above.

Why Gunther? Good question. Afterall, he was fired by Thames in January of 2003, and, up until that point, Thames hadn't done anything publicly at least to brand "the Thames administration" in any lasting negative way. Gunther and six other USM deans were disgraced and humiliated by Thames in January of 2003, when they were fired (essentially) at a faculty-wide convocation. Only later did members of the USM family learn how Thames had tipped off the local business community at a gathering the previous evening.

The seven deans were told by Thames that they would be replaced by only five individuals, and that they would retain their current positions only through June 30, 2003. Gunther, after seeing what the world saw as the beginning of a despotic reign, could've resigned. He didn't. Gunther had material needs to tend to, and his desire to keep his lofty lifestyle lofty, as least through June 30, 2003, trumped any principled moves he might've made. Gunther was a part of the Thames administration, like it or not, and he proved that by continuing to

serve the man he knew by then (January of 2003 and onward) was not good for the institution or its people.

The appropriateness of the other names, though surprising in some cases, is much more straightforward. Perhaps one surprise is Klinedinst, who had been on the faculty senate and was (is) a prominent figure in the USM chapter of the AAUP. Klinedinst, whose liberal leanings are known across campus, surprisingly (to some at least) accepted former CBED (CoB) Dean Harold Doty's summer 2003 offer to join the Thames administration. Like it or not, Klinedinst knew what he was getting into. Some would say he sold out, and cheaply at that. Others knew his price was low.

As for the rest, they knew what they were getting into at the time as well. That goes for Stanley Lewis and Barry Babin. It always goes for George Carter and Farhang Niroomand and Alvin Williams. But, what about Doty? Isn't he the one who told CBED (CoB) faculty over and over that he was thwarting the Thames administration's desires at every turn? Sure, but only once did he do so in any real way, and that one was a "no-brainer." When your very existence is threatened, as the business school's was through Grimes' edict to cease and desist on basic research, you have no choice but defiance. Other than that, Doty was as "on board" as one could be, that is up until the point where Thames and Grimes "resigned" Doty as Dean of the CoB. That was April 9, 2007, about one month before Thames and Doty exited stage left themselves. And they (George Carter at least) said it couldn't happen.

As you think back on "the Thames administration," don't forget to include the names above. They deserve it, every one.